

Step-by-Step Process for Obtaining a Visa

1. Complete the [Visa Request form](#) and collect the necessary supporting documents for financial certification.

The [Visa Request form](#) is used to provide details about your immigration status and funding sources. Before completing the form, carefully review the details about funding amounts and financial support documents under Financial Certification. The “Official Certification by Family of Individual Sponsor” section of the Visa Request form must be completed by your sponsor, and both you and your sponsor must sign the form. If you are planning to bring a spouse or dependent with you to the U.S., you must also complete the [Dependent Information form](#). Retain the original copies of all materials documenting financial support. You will need to present the original copies to the consular officer at your visa interview and to the U.S. immigration inspector when you enter the country.

2. Scan the [Visa Request form](#), financial support documents, [Dependent Information form](#) (if required), and all other required documents and upload these materials to your online application for admission.

Please note: you will be considered for admission and University funding (if available) regardless of whether you submit your Visa Request form and supporting documents. Uploading these documents to your application, however, will allow the University to expedite the processing of your I-20 or DS-2019 should you be admitted. Scanned copies are typically sufficient to process I-20 or DS-2019 requests. The University reserves the right to request official copies of these documents when necessary. Please do not submit official copies unless you are specifically instructed to do so by the school to which you have applied.

3. If you are offered admission, promptly submit the [Enrollment Decision form](#) (linked from your online letter of admission) to indicate whether or not you plan to enroll at GW. If you accept admission, the admissions office will then review your Visa Request Form and supporting documents. The admissions office will contact you if any additional or updated materials are needed. Once the admissions office has received all of your required documents, your file will be forwarded to the GW International Services Office for review and issuance of the visa forms. As soon as the I-20 or DS-2019 is available, your school’s admissions office will mail the form to you.

4. Upon receipt of your I-20 or DS-2019, pay the SEVIS fee. The [Student and Exchange Visitor Information System \(SEVIS\)](#) is an online system that maintains data on foreign students and exchange visitors before and during their stay in the United States. The SEVIS fee must be paid at least three business days prior to the visa interview if paying electronically, or at least 15 business days prior to the visa interview if submitting payment through regular mail. Be sure to get a receipt. You must be able to prove the fee has been paid when you appear for your visa interview, before leaving your country, and when you enter the U.S. Full details on the fees are available from [SEVIS](#).

5. Schedule an appointment for a visa interview with the nearest U.S embassy or consulate. An interview is required for almost all visa applicants. To schedule an interview, visit the website for the [embassy or consulate nearest you](#). Be sure to review the [estimated wait times for interview appointments and visa processing](#) at each location. Be sure to take all required documentation with you to the interview. Your local [EducationUSA Center](#) can help prepare you for the visa interview.

6. Make your travel plans. As you cannot be assured of a visa before the embassy has fully processed your application, you should not make final travel plans or purchase nonrefundable tickets until a visa has been issued. Please note that your visa cannot be issued more than 120 days before the start of your academic program in the United States. If you are an initial entry student, you will not be allowed to enter the country more than 30 days before the start of the program.

7. As soon as possible upon arriving in Washington, DC, you must check-in at GW's International Services Office (ISO). The staff will collect your immigration documents, confirm that you are legally ready to begin your studies, and answer any questions you may have about your visa status. The International Services Office is located at 2033 K Street, NW, Suite 310 (Third Floor), Washington, DC.