



APPLYING FOR A US VISA

OVERVIEW

Continuing UCSD international students who are traveling outside the USA and have expired visas, or have changed status while in the USA must apply for a new visa at a US embassy or consulate abroad in order to reenter the USA. All visa applications also require a face-to-face interview with a US consular officer. The visa application process can take up to 6-8 weeks, so plan accordingly.

DOCUMENT REQUIREMENTS

Prior to your visa appointment, consult the website for the US embassy or consulate that you will visit at <http://usembassy.state.gov>

Go to the *Nonimmigrant Visa* section and follow the instructions. Many people are denied visas when they are unprepared.

At the visa interview, you must present:

- 1) Passport which is valid up to six months after date of entry into the USA
- 2) Form I-20 (F-1 students) or DS-2019 (J-1 students) with valid travel signature or copy of your I-797 approval notice
- 3) Evidence of financial support
 - Bank statement or financial support letter from sponsor or UCSD academic department
- 4) Home country address and documentation of home ties (if available).
- 5) In some instances, you may be asked for additional documentation so we also recommend that you bring the following:
 - Copy of your transcript and academic history at UCSD
 - Letter from your academic department verifying program start date, good standing, expected program completion, and brief description of the nature of your research (graduate students only)
- 6) Students who completed their program of study and received employment authorization should also bring:
 - Employment Authorization Document (EAD) card (F-1 students only)
 - Academic Training Authorization Letter (J-1 students only)
 - Job offer letter or proof of employment

VISA INTERVIEW

Based on information received from various consular officers, the following are recommendations to prepare for your visa interview.

- 1) Listen carefully to what the consular officer asks you and then answer the question directly.
- 2) Be prepared to show strong ties to your home country with official documentation. Ties to your country are ties that compel you to leave the USA after you finish your program of study.
 - If your family owns a property, take the deeds of papers showing your ownership.
 - If you and your family have had numerous past visits to the USA, take along passports, even old ones – to show that you have many visas and many visits, but after every visit to USA you still returned to your home country.
 - If you have membership in a professional organization in your home country, bring proof of this membership.
 - If you have the prospect of a job offer, get a letter from the company saying that you will be considered for the job upon your return, or that people with the kind of education you are seeking are needed.

Some factors that might work against you in the mind of the consular officer are: someone in the USA is promising to support you, lack of family ties, poor job prospect upon return, poor English language ability, and poor academic record suggesting that you are not a serious student.

- 3) Answer every question truthfully.

VISA DELAY OR DENIAL

If you are denied a visa, you will be informed of the reason for the denial and be given the opportunity to reappear if you can provide additional evidence to support your case.

- 1) NOTE: Nationals of certain countries, and all internationals whose area of study has been deemed sensitive by the US Department of Homeland Security, will have their names submitted for a special security clearance procedure that may take up to 4-6 weeks before a visa is issued. Disciplines such as nuclear technology, chemical and biotechnology engineering, and advanced computer or microelectronic technology, as well as a broad range of engineering and physical sciences are on the "Technology Alert List". Students in these fields should expect delays in obtaining visas at consulates abroad.
- 2) Before reapplying, be sure you understand the grounds for your denial so that you can appeal effectively. Please contact the UCSD International Center at istudents@ucsd.edu if you need additional assistance.

Applying for a US Visa in a Country Other Than Your Own

International students are strongly encouraged to apply for a visa in their home country because they may have difficulty getting a visa from a US embassy or consulate in a country other than their own. In general, the following individuals are eligible to apply for a visa renewal as Third Country Nationals (TCN):

- Applicants seeking to renew their C, D, F, H, I, J, L, M, O, P and R visas, provided the initial visa was issued in the applicant's home country or at one of the border posts in the past few years.
- Applicants for visas that reflect a change of status (e.g., F1 to H1B or F1 to J), provided the applicant originally entered the US in other than B status and possesses an original change of status notice (I-797) from the US Department of Homeland Security.
- Applicants possessing B visas issued in their home country with annotations showing intent to change visa status, such as "Prospective Student."

The following individuals are strongly discouraged from applying for a visa renewal as Third Country Nationals because there may be a high risk of denial:

- Applicants who entered the USA with a B visa issued in their home country that changed status to another visa category, e.g., F, J, H1B, but the visa did not have an annotation indicating intent to change status.
- Applicants who have been out of status in the USA having violated the terms of their visas or having overstayed the validity indicated on their I-94s.
- A, B, E, G and Q visa applications, including renewals are not accepted from Third Country Nationals that are not residents in the appropriate consular district.
- Citizens of Iran, Sudan, Libya, Iraq, North Korea, Cuba and Syria.

Visa Renewals in Canada or Mexico

International students who are not citizens of Canada or Mexico, but who wish to apply for visas in Canada or Mexico should meet their International Student Advisor to discuss their plans. Students subject to special security clearances are not eligible for reentry into the USA until this process is complete. Please consider the delays that security checks may cause and plan accordingly.

CANADA

The U.S. consular posts in Canada recently announced new appointment procedures, which took effect as of September 1, 2010, for applicants applying for nonimmigrant visas. An applicant will need the following prior to scheduling a visa appointment:

- The passport number of each applicant.
- Proof that the visa application fee (MRV) has been paid for each applicant.

- A completed Nonimmigrant Visa (NIV) Electronic Application, DS-160 including confirmation (barcode) number for each applicant.
- Additional information may be required based on the type of visa for which the applicant is applying. For example, if you are applying for an F-1 or J-1 visa, you may be asked for your SEVIS ID number from your I-20 or DS-2019.

Another significant change at most of the U.S. consular posts in Canada is that passports with visas will be returned to the applicant via courier. The courier service is provided through DHL, at no additional cost to the applicant.

For more information, please visit http://www.usvisa-info.com/en-CA/selfservice/ss_country_welcome

MEXICO

All U.S. consulates in Mexico do not accept TCN applications for changes of status, only for renewals for expired visas in the same status you entered the U.S. in. For example, if your F-1 visa stamp has expired and you would like to apply for a new F-1 visa stamp, you may be eligible to apply in Mexico. However, if you entered the U.S. in J-1 status then changed to F-1 status, you may not apply for an F-1 visa in Mexico.

For more information, please visit <http://www.usembassy-mexico.gov/eng/evisas.html>

Applying For a Visa to Other Countries

When traveling to a third country (other than your home country or the USA), remember that a new set of laws will be in effect. You are likely to need a visa to enter that country. To learn more about visa requirements, contact the country's closest consulate in the USA. For a list of non-US embassies and consulates in the USA, please visit <http://www.state.gov/s/cpr/rls/fco/>