

International Student Services

Definition of important terms

F-1 Visa: The F-1 Visa (academic student) allows one to enter the U.S. as a full-time student at an accredited college, university, seminary, conservatory, academic high school, elementary school, or other academic institution or in a language training program. The student must be enrolled in a program or course of study that culminates in a degree, diploma, or certificate and the school must be authorized by the U.S. government to accept international students.

I-20: The form I-20 (also known as the Certificate of Eligibility for Nonimmigrant [F-1] Student Status) is a [United States Department of Homeland Security](#), specifically Immigration and Customs Enforcement and the [Student and Exchange Visitor Program](#) (SEVP), document issued by SEVP-certified schools (colleges, universities, and vocational schools) that provides supporting information on a student's F-1 status.

Since the introduction of the [Student and Exchange Visitor Information System](#) (SEVIS) run by SEVP, the form also includes the student tracking number (SEVIS ID number) and Sofia's school code. Therefore, an initial student applying abroad will need to obtain an Initial I-20 from Sofia University to apply for the F-1 student visa at a Consulate or Embassy outside the U.S. The applicant will also need to present the I-20 form at the U.S. border along with the F-1 visa, and other supporting documents to legally enter the U.S. as an F-1 student.

DS-160 Online Nonimmigrant Visa Application Form: Form DS-160 is submitted electronically to the Department of State website via the Internet. Consular Officers use the information entered on the DS-160 to process the visa application and, combined with a personal interview, determine an applicant's eligibility for an F-1 nonimmigrant visa.

I-901 SEVIS Fee: The SEVIS I-901 fee is required once for each SEVIS record. Payment of this fee is required prior to the issuance of a visa stamp by a U.S. Consulate or Embassy. If the student is renewing a F-1 visa and has maintained the previous SEVIS number, then the student has already paid the SEVIS I-901 fee. Students transferring to Sofia University from another U.S. institution, will have the SEVIS record transferred and are not required to pay another fee.

For answers to frequently asked questions, students should visit: <https://www.ice.gov/sevis/i901/faq>

I-94 Record: When international students travel to the United States, they receive a Form I-94, "Arrival/Departure Record," at their port of entry. International students who enter the country at an air or seaport are issued an electronic form, while those who enter the country at a land port are issued a paper Form I-94. An electronic history of a student's I-94 can be retrieved online at <https://i94.cbp.dhs.gov/i94/#/home> by selecting "Get Most Recent I-94."

For each new entry into the U.S.: Students are reminded to download and print a new I-94 record each time they exit and return to the U.S. They must keep the most current printed I-94 record with their passport for their own records. State and federal government agencies will ask to see the I-94 record (for driver's license, social security number, etc.). The I-94 is important evidence that you, a student, has of being in the U.S. legally, so it is important to always keep a printout of the I-94 record with the passport. On certain occasions, students will be required to submit a copy of the I-94 record to the DSO at Sofia University.

International Student Support Services

Designated School Officials (DSOs) at the International Student Office are able to provide advice and guidance to F-1 students on matters relating to their F-1 status and SEVIS record.

Students can find information and helpful resources in the [International Student Handbook](#)

Housing: If students require assistance with locating off-campus housing or homestay options, please email dso@sofia.edu. While Sofia University cannot recommend or endorse a particular agency or website, we are able to provide students with information and resources to guide them in their search.

Scholarships: At Sofia University, we take pride in offering over a dozen international and external scholarship opportunities to our students. These scholarships are designed to recognize academic excellence, leadership potential, and diversity, and we are pleased to highlight that almost all of these opportunities are also open to international students, ensuring equal access to financial support and fostering a diverse and inclusive campus community. Additionally, Sofia University provides on-campus employment opportunities for eligible students, enabling them to gain practical experiences, earn income, and enhance their professional skills while studying at our university. Students can learn more about scholarship options at Sofia by visiting the following link to our [Scholarship Page](#).