

Miami-Dade County Public Schools

Student Visa Department

Frequently Asked Questions Support for F-1 and J-1 Visa Students

F-1 Student Visa

When Do I Need to Apply for My USA Student Visa?

Students are encouraged to apply for their visa early to provide ample time for visa processing. Students should note that U.S. [Embassies and Consulates](#) are able to issue your USA student visa 120 days or less, in advance of the course of study registration date. Students are advised of the [Department of Homeland Security \(DHS\), U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement Student and Exchange Visitor Program \(SEVP\)](#) regulation which require that all initial or beginning students enter the U.S. 30 days or less in advance of the course of study start/report date as shown on the [Form I-20](#). Please consider this date carefully when making travel plans to the U.S.

What is F-1 Visa Status?

The [F-1 Visa](#) is the most basic and widely used U.S. student visa category. [F-1](#) status is monitored by the US government through an electronic database called [SEVIS](#). Since students in [F-1](#) status are strictly monitored, both the students and Miami-Dade County Public Schools have reporting obligations to the government due to federal law.

When do I Report Changes?

When changes occur, your [SEVIS](#) record and/or [Form I-20](#) or the [DS-2019](#) needs to be updated. Changes include, address change/host family change and academic information, such as withdrawal from your program, and/or transfer to another school.

What is SEVIS?

[SEVIS](#) is the acronym for Student and Exchange Visitor Information System which is run by the [Student and Exchange Visitor Program Office \(SEVP\)](#) of the U.S. Department of Homeland Security (DHS). Each [F-1](#), [J-1](#) and [M-1](#) student has an individual [SEVIS](#) record, and a unique [SEVIS](#) number. You will keep the same [SEVIS](#) record and [SEVIS](#) number throughout your time here as an [F-1](#) student, and this record can even be transferred to other schools.

Your [SEVIS](#) record becomes “Active” after you first enter the U.S., and report to The Student Visa Department, and enroll in a full course of study. Each semester, we must continue to maintain this record, and keep it “Active” by reporting on proper full-time enrollment and any changes in your personal or academic record. We report information

What is the I-94?

The [I-94](#) is Arrival/Departure record. It is proof of the student's legal entry and/or exit from the US. Each time you enter the U.S. you will be issued a new [I-94](#) number, often referred to as your "Admission Number." Please note: You will not receive a paper copy of your [I-94](#), but you can print a free copy by visiting: [Retrieve your I-94](#).

U.S. Customs and Border Protection
Securing America's Borders

Get I-94 Number | I-94 FAQ

Admission (I-94) Number Retrieval

Admission (I-94) Record Number: 34534534534

Admit Until Date (MM/DD/YYYY): D/S

Details provided on Admission(I-94) form:

Family Name:	Seminole
First (Given) Name:	Florida State
Birth Date (MM/DD/YYYY):	01/01/1990
Passport Number:	3453455
Passport Country of Issuance:	Happyville
Date of Entry (MM/DD/YYYY):	04/11/2012
Class of Admission:	F1

▶ If an employer, local, state or federal agency requests admission information, present your admission documents requested by that employer or agency.
▶ Note: For security reasons, we recommend that you close your browser after you have finished.

What is the Form I-20?

This is the 3-page document provided to you by The Student Visa Department for students seeking the [F-1](#) or [M-1](#) Student Visa. It contains personal/biographical information, as well as information about the student's academic program and funding. The [Form I-20](#) informs the [U.S. Embassy or Consulate](#) office in the student's home country that the applicant is eligible to enroll in the designated school/district. The designated school officials in the Student Visa Department are the only authorized personnel to issue and sign the [Form I-20](#) on behalf of M-DCPS. The [Form I-20](#) also contains your [SEVIS](#) Number, which is found at the top left corner of the [Form I-20](#) beginning with N000--. Please note the ending date of your [Form I-20](#) can be found on page 1, section Program of Study. Remember, if asking for an extension, it must be requested before the [Form I-20](#) expires!

What is an F-1 student's 60-day grace period?

[F-1](#) students have a 60 day grace period to remain in the U.S. following the program completion date. You must exit the U.S. before the end of your 60-day grace period.

What options exist for F-1 students following their program completion date?

Students may use their 60-day grace period to choose any of the options listed below:

- Apply for an extension, if the [Form I-20](#) issued was only for one semester
- Transfer to another school in the U.S.
- Exit the United States

If you do not apply for an extension or transfer to another school, your **F-1** record will automatically complete 60 days after your Program Completion Date or on the date you exit the U.S. (whichever comes first). Once you exit the U.S. after program completion, you are no longer in **F-1** status and cannot re-enter as an **F-1** student.

What are the travel rules for students on an F-1 Visa?

Always be sure that you have the proper documents prepared. Do not ever re-enter the U.S. using a status other than **F-1**. Always check your passport to make sure it is stamped and marked “F-1 D/S” You’ll need to think about the following things before traveling abroad:

- Get a travel signature from one of the designated school officials in The Student Visa Department. You must call The Student Visa Department and request an appointment from one of the designated school officials first, before going to the office, walk-ins are not accepted. Please do so at least 2 weeks in advance of your departure date.
- If your **F-1** visa is expired, you must make plans to apply for a new **F-1** visa while you are abroad. Remember you cannot renew the **F-1** visa inside the U.S.
- If you are traveling to a country other than your home country, find out if you will need a visa to enter that country. Remember your **F-1** status is only valid in the U.S. Other countries have their own immigration rules.
- Report any problems to one of the designated school officials in The Student Visa Department, if you had difficulties at the Port of Entry returning from your travels.

What do I need to do to Transfer to another U.S. School?

You may transfer to another U.S. school, while still maintaining the same **SEVIS** record and **F-1** status. M-DCPS must release your **SEVIS** record and transfer it electronically to the school of your choice. Your **SEVIS** record can only be transferred to one school; therefore, you must decide which school you will attend before requesting a transfer. You must arrange for the release of your **SEVIS** record to your new school before the end of your grace period. In order to request a transfer of your **SEVIS** record, you must complete the M-DCPS Transfer Out Form and provide proof of your admission to your new school. Be sure that you inform your new school that you are currently in **F-1** status with M-DCPS, and check if your new school will require that of one of the designated school officials in The Student Visa Department complete any information about your immigration record. It is common for schools to require a transfer-in form for them. You must exit the U.S. before the end of your 60-day grace period.

How can I get my Form I-20 transferred to M-DCPS?

If you are transferring into M-DCPS, you must submit your paperwork and tuition/fees to obtain a new **Form I-20** from M-DCPS. Additionally, your previous school needs to complete the M-DCPS Transfer-In Form and transfer your **SEVIS** record to M-DCPS.

J-1 Exchange Student Visa

What is J-1 Visa Status Information?

It is the only immigration status administered by the [U.S. Department of State](#) (DoS), the diplomatic branch of the U.S. government. Therefore, the rules, benefits, and penalties differ substantially from the majority of international students in the U.S., who normally hold [F-1](#) status. [J-1](#) status is monitored by the US government through an electronic database called [SEVIS](#). Since students in [J-1](#) status are strictly monitored, both the students and their sponsors have reporting obligations to the government due to federal law.

What is a J-1 student?

A student holding [J-1](#) status is a non-immigrant allowed to remain in the United States for as long as he or she is a full-time student making satisfactory progress at the school he or she is approved to attend.

What is a J-1 Visa?

The Exchange Visitor ([J-1](#)) non-immigrant visa category is for individuals approved to participate in work-and study-based exchange visitor programs. Participants are integral to the success of the program.

This is the sticker in your passport, used only for entry purposes. You can only re-enter the U.S. after travel abroad using a valid [J-1](#) visa. So, if your [J-1](#) visa is expired and you leave the U.S., you must apply for a new [J-1](#) visa before you can return.



What is the Form DS-2019?

This is the 2-page document issued by your immigration sponsor noted in box 2 of your [Form DS-2019](#). The [Form DS-2019](#) contains biographical information, as well as information about your academic program and funding. The [Form DS-2019](#) also contains your [SEVIS](#) Number, which is found at the top right corner of the [Form DS-2019](#) beginning with N000--. Please note the ending date of your [Form DS-2019](#) can be found on page 1, section 3. Page 1 of the [Form DS-2019](#) contains space for travel signatures (bottom right). The [Form DS-2019](#) is always signed in blue ink by your immigration sponsor (noted in box 2 of the [Form DS-2019](#)).

General

Who can I speak with about enrolling as a foreign student in MDCPS?

You can contact the Student Visa Department at 305-884-2044 and request to speak with Dr. Maria Elena Paradelo (mparadela@dadeschools.net), or Ms. Ana Leon(aleon@dadeschools.net)

Where is the Student Visa Department located?

We are located at:
489 East Drive
Miami Springs, Florida 33166

Where can I get more information on studying the M-DCPS?

Information is available on our website Student Visa Department.

Admission Information for F-1 or J-1 Visa Students

Does M-DCPS accept students on an F-1 or J-1 Visa?

M-DCPS accepts eligible students under both **F-1** and **J-1** visa status at the high school level only, grades 9th through 12th only.

Are there any admission restrictions?

F-1 and **J-1** students must be in grades 9 through 12 and must not have graduated from a high school program or the equivalent. He/she must be under the age of 18 on the first day of attendance. The student must study full time and cannot attend a publicly funded adult education program.

How long can a student study in M-DCPS?

F-1 students can study in M-DCPS (or any public secondary/high school in the U.S.) for one year or two semesters only. ([Section 625 of Public Law 104-208, Section 214 \(m\) of the Immigration and Nationality Act](#))

Which M-DCPS high schools accept foreign students?

All comprehensive high schools within M-DCPS accept eligible foreign students. Official acceptance to M-DCPS can only be issued by the Student Visa Department designated school officials.

Application Process

What is the process for submitting an application?

The application process is posted on our website and is updated on an annual basis. Formal acceptance into M-DCPS must be issued by the Student Visa Department. Individual schools cannot issue the [Form I-20](#) document needed for the [F-1](#) visa.

Is there an application deadline?

We only issue the [Form I-20](#) between April and June for applicants wishing to attend our full school year (August to June) or our first semester (August to January) and between October and November for those applicants wishing to attend our second semester (January to June).

How long does it take for an application to get approved?

All documents must be submitted prior to final approval. Incomplete applications will delay the review process. Once your paperwork is complete and tuition/fees have been paid, our office will issue the [Form I-20](#). The process itself may take two weeks depending on how quickly documents are submitted and reviewed.

How will I be notified if my application is approved?

Upon approval of your application, the Student Visa Department will contact you by phone or via email to notify you of your acceptance to M-DCPS. The student, host guardian or agency representative will be provided with the following documents:

- [F-1](#) Students: Original [Form I-20](#) and Receipt for Tuition/Fee Payment
- [J-1](#) Students: Completed Agency High School Enrollment Form (Provided to the sponsoring agency)

What do I do if I lose my original [Form I-20](#)?

If you misplace or lose your [Form I-20](#), contact our office. We can generate a new copy.

Do I need my [Form I-20](#) to travel?

You do not need your [Form I-20](#) if you travel within the U.S. If you plan to leave the U.S., a valid [Form I-20](#) is needed in order for you to re-enter the country.

What is the [SEVIS I-901 Fee Form](#)?

After receiving the [Form I-20](#), a student must pay the [SEVIS I-901 Fee](#). This payment can be made on-line at www.fmjfee.com. Payment of this fee is very important since you will need to provide your receipt at your visa interview. Information on your [Form I-20](#) information should match that on your [SEVIS I-901 Fee Form](#). This fee is separate from the tuition/fee payment received by M-DCPS for the issuance of the [Form I-20](#).

When can I enter the country prior to the start of my program?

A student is permitted to enter the U.S. no earlier than 30 days before the start of their program date as stipulated on their [Form I-20](#).

What happens when my semester or year ends?

An [F-1](#) visa student has two options: he/she may return to his/her home country or transfer to a private school. If the student has only completed one semester in a public school, he/she may request to extend his/her stay for another semester. If you do not apply for an extension or transfer to another school, your [F-1](#) record will automatically complete 60 days after your Program Completion Date or on the date you exit the U.S. (whichever comes first). Once you exit the U.S. after program completion, you are no longer in [F-1](#) status and cannot re-enter as an [F-1](#) student.

Can I earn a diploma or graduate?

In order to earn a diploma or graduate from M-DCPS, foreign students must meet the graduation requirements expected of all M-DCPS students.

Do I need to speak fluent English?

No. [F-1](#) students do not need to be fluent in English since M-DCPS offers English as a Second Language Programs. Upon enrollment, students will be tested for English proficiency levels.

Travel

What do I need to do if I want to travel outside the U.S.?

If you are studying with an [F-1](#) student visa and plan to travel outside of the U.S. and are still enrolled in M-DCPS, you must contact our office prior to leaving the U.S. We will sign the second page of your [Form I-20](#) which allows for travel and re-entry to the U.S.

What documents should I bring when I enter or travel outside the U.S.?

When you travel, you should bring:

- Valid passport (a passport valid for at least the next six months)
- Valid [Form I-20](#) from the school that you plan to attend

Tuition

Why do foreign students need to pay tuition?

Under [Code of Federal Regulations, 8 CFR § 214.2](#), F-1 students are required to pay the full, unsubsidized cost of an education. This reimbursement requirement is mandatory and cannot be waived by school districts. In addition, the parents or legal guardian of the student must show that they have sufficient funds to cover the student's living expenses while in the U.S. The student cannot access public funds.

What is the cost of tuition and fees for M-DCPS?

Tuition is calculated yearly based upon state/federal regulations and represents the unsubsidized cost of a high school education in M-DCPS.

Is tuition refundable?

If a student's visa application is denied, the student will receive a full tuition refund. If a student begins school and then terminates/transfers prior to the end of a semester or school year, tuition will not be refunded. The visa denial letter from the [U.S. Embassy or Consulate](#) office must be provided.

How long does it take to get a refund?

Tuition refunds may take 6-8 weeks to process. The refund check will be mailed to the individual or agency that remitted the payment.