
The process of Getting F-1 (Student Visa) to study in the USA

By



Dr. Prasad Thotakura
Past President, TANA

(817) 300-4747 (M)

prasadthotakura@gmail.com

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1. Selecting a University in USA:

- ❖ You need to make sure that your selected program and university are accredited. In some instances, the university may be accredited but some courses in that particular university may not be accredited.
- ❖ There are two types of accreditations - one is by the **'Federal Government'** and the other is by the **'Council for Higher Education Accreditation' (CHEA)**.

2. List of accreditation agencies recognized by US Secretary of Education: Your intended university should be accredited by one of these agencies.

Accreditation Agency	Scope of Recognition
Accrediting Commission of Career Schools and Colleges	US Nationwide
Accrediting Council for Continuing Education and Training	US Nationwide
Accrediting Council for Independent Colleges and Schools	US Nationwide
Council on Occupational Education	US Nationwide
Distance Education Accrediting Commission	US Nationwide
Middle States Commission on Higher Education	Institutions of higher education in Delaware, the District of Columbia, Maryland, New Jersey, New York, Pennsylvania, Puerto Rico and the U.S. Virgin Islands.
Middle States Commission on Secondary Schools	Institutions in Delaware, Maryland, New Jersey, New York, Pennsylvania, the Commonwealth of Puerto Rico, the District of Columbia and the U.S. Virgin Islands.
New England Association of Schools and Colleges, Commission on Institutions of Higher Education	Institutions of higher education in Connecticut, Maine, Massachusetts, New Hampshire, Rhode Island and Vermont.
New York State Board of Regents and the Commissioner of Education	Institutions of higher education in New York.
North Central Association of Colleges and Schools, The Higher Learning Commission	Institutions of higher education in Arizona, Arkansas, Colorado, Illinois, Indiana, Iowa, Kansas, Michigan, Minnesota, Missouri, Nebraska, New Mexico, North Dakota, Ohio, Oklahoma, South Dakota, West Virginia, Wisconsin and Wyoming.
Northwest Commission on Colleges and Universities	In Alaska, Idaho, Montana, Nevada, Oregon, Utah and Washington.

Southern Association of Colleges and Schools, Commission on Colleges	In Alabama, Florida, Georgia, Kentucky, Louisiana, Mississippi, North Carolina, South Carolina, Tennessee, Texas and Virginia.
Transnational Association of Christian Colleges and Schools, Accreditation Commission	Christian postsecondary institutions in the United States.
Western Association of Schools and Colleges, Accrediting Commission for Community and Junior Colleges	In California, Hawaii, the United States territories of Guam and American Samoa, the Republic of Palau, the Federated States of Micronesia, the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands and the Republic of the Marshall Islands.
Western Association of Schools and Colleges, Senior Colleges and University Commission	In California, Hawaii, the United States territories of Guam and American Samoa, the Republic of Palau, the Federated States of Micronesia, the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands and the Republic of the Marshall Islands.

3. Information on Accredited Universities:

- ❖ A detailed list of recognized universities and their programs is released by the US Department of Education quite often. For an updated compiled list of US Universities and their programs, please visit

<http://www.prasadthotakura.com/services/accrediteduniversitiesprograms.pdf>

- ❖ Or, you can search by clicking the below link for accredited US Universities/Programs.

<http://www.chea.org/search/search.asp>

4. Admission Requirements:

- ❖ Once you select the university, it is better to have a thorough understanding about the admission process since the process differs from university to university.
- ❖ Besides your academic degree, you must be ready with your TOEFL, GRE / GMAT scores.

5. Application:

- ❖ You need to contact the university, get the application form and fill it out with all appropriate information.
- ❖ You need to get your academic degree evaluated by one of the following Educational Credential Evaluation Agencies.

6. List of Educational Credential Evaluation Agencies:

Name	Contact Information
AACRAO Foreign Credential Evaluation Service, Washington DC	Tel: 1-202-296-3559 Email: oes@aacrao.org
ACREVS Inc. (Academic & Credential Records, Evaluation & Verification Service), CA	Tel: 1-408-719-0015 Tel: 1-866-583-4834 (toll free) Email: info@acrevs.com
Astar Education Institute, VA	Tel: 703-368-6838 Tel: 202-628-8226 Email: admissions@astarinstitute.org
Center for Applied Research Evaluation & Education, Inc., CA	Tel: 1-562-430-1105 Email: evalcaree@earthblink.net
E-Valuate, VA	Email: demand@e-valuate.com
Educational Credential Evaluators, Inc. (ECE), WI	Tel: 1-414-289-3400 Email: eval@ece.org
Education Evaluators International, Inc., RI	Tel: 1-401-521-5340 Email: eval@educEI.com
Education International, Inc. , MA	Tel: 1-781-235-7425 Email: edint@gis.net
Educational Records Evaluation Services (ERES), CA	Tel: 1-916-921-0790 Email: edu@eres.com
Evaluation Service, Inc. (ESI), IL	Tel: 1-847-477-8569 Email: info@evaluationservice.net
The Foreign Academic Credentials Service, Inc., IL	Tel: 1-618-288-1661 Email: FACS@aol.com
Foreign Credentials Service of America, TX	Email: FCSA@jump.net
The Foreign Educational Document Service, CA	Tel: 1-209-948-6589
Foundation for International Services, Inc., WA	Tel: 1-425-248-2255 Email: info@fis-web.com
Global Credential Evaluators, Inc. (GCE), TX	Tel: 1-512-528-0908 Tel: 1-804-639-3660 Email: gce@gcevaluators.com
International Consultants of Delaware, Inc., DE	Tel: 1-302-737-8715 Email: icd@icdel.com
International Education Research Foundation Inc., Credentials Evaluation Service (IERF-CES), CA	Tel: 1-310-258-9451 Email: info@ierf.org
Josef Silny & Associates, International Education Consultants, FL	Tel: 1-305-273-1616 Email: info@jsilny.com
Knowledge Company, VA	Tel: 1-703-359-3520 Email: tkco@knowledgecompany.com
Spantran Educational Services, Inc., TX	Tel: 1-713-266-8805 Tel: 1-646-475-2570
Word Communication International, AZ	Tel: 1-602-265-0678 Email: evaluations@earthblink.com
World Education Services (WES), NY	Tel: 1-800-WES-3895 Email: info@wes.org

7. Financial Aid:

- ❖ It is important to budget and plan for your expenses throughout your study in the USA.
- ❖ **Funding from Private Resources:** Some private foundations and nonprofit organizations in USA will provide financial funding to students. Grants are also available from charitable and religious organizations. More information on available funding from private resources can be obtained from the following website.....

<http://grantspace.org/tools/knowledge-base/Individual-Grantseekers/Students/funding-for-international-students>

- ❖ **Funding from the Universities:** Some universities may have their own resources for assisting international students. You can check with the international admissions office of your interested University to find out any institutional, community, state or federal assistance available.

8. Budgeting Expenses:

- ❖ Next step is to estimate the total cost that will be incurred by you during your period of education in the USA. Some of the common expenses to be considered include:
 - Application and Test Fees
 - Tuition Fees
 - Books
 - Airfare to USA
 - Accommodation and Food
 - Expenses when school is closed
 - Clothing
 - Personal expenses
 - Health insurance
 - Auto insurance (if applicable)
 - Summer study / Local travel

9. Student Visa:

❖ **Types of Student Visas:**

- **F-1 Student Visa:** Visa to enter the United States of America to attend University or College.
 - **J-1 Visa:** Visa to participate in exchange visitor programs in the United States.
 - **M-1 Visa:** Visa for vocational or other recognized nonacademic institutional programs, other than a language training program.
- ❖ Once the university reviews your application form and approves your admission, then they will issue you Form I-20.
 - ❖ Check your Form I-20 against your passport information to make sure that your name and date of birth are correctly listed and spelled.
 - ❖ You need to pay the I-901 fee before applying for a visa. The I-901 form can be filled online and paid at

<https://fmjfee.com/i901fee/desktop/students/formSelection.htm>

- ❖ After paying the I-901 fee and getting a receipt, you can apply for a visa at any US Embassy or US Consulate to get F-1 Student Visa.

Note: Accredited US Universities inform US Homeland Security by submitting the Form I-17 that they are admitting international students in their universities. You make sure that your intended University has submitted that Form I-17. You can verify that by accessing

www.prasadthotakura.com/FormI-17approveduniversities.pdf

10. Required Documentation before Visa Interview:

- ❖ **Passport** -- Your passport must be valid for at least six months beyond your period of stay in the United States.
- ❖ **Nonimmigrant Visa Application Form DS-160** confirmation page. The DS-160 form can be filled online at
<https://ceac.state.gov/genniv/>
- ❖ **Application fee payment receipt (s)** - You are required to pay before your interview.
- ❖ **Photo** – You will upload your photo while completing the online Form DS-160.
- ❖ **Certificate of Eligibility for (F-1) Student Visa** - Form I-20 that you received from your university.
- ❖ **Transcripts, Degrees, or Certificates** from educational institutions you attended.
- ❖ **Standardized test scores** required by your US University. For ex: TOEFL, GRE / GMAT.
- ❖ Your **intent to leave** the United States upon completion of the course of study.
- ❖ **Source to support** to pay all your educational, living and travel expenses.

11. Attend Your Visa Interview:

- ❖ At your visa interview, a consular officer after verifying all submitted documents will determine whether you are eligible to receive Student (F-1) Visa.

12. Preparation for your trip to US:

- ❖ You must verify that your
 - ❖ Passport and Student (F-1) visa are valid to enter into the United States. The passport should be valid for at least six months beyond the date of your expected stay.
 - ❖ Visa accurately reflects correct visa classification.
 - ❖ University name for accuracy if printed on visa.
- ❖ Students (F-1 Visa) entering the United States for the first time may only be admitted up to 30-days prior to the program start date.
- ❖ When you receive your Student (F-1 Visa) at the Embassy or Consulate in your country, the consular officer will hand over you a sealed envelope. You should not open this envelope but submit the same to immigration officials at the airport on entering the USA.

13. Documents to carry in person:

- ❖ Passport (including the sealed envelope) with Student (F-1 Visa).
- ❖ Form I-20 / DS-2019.
- ❖ Form I-797 - Receipt Notice verifying Fee payment.
- ❖ Evidence of financial resources while study in USA.
- ❖ Tuition receipts (if applicable).
- ❖ Educational transcripts.
- ❖ Name and contact information for Designated School Official (DSO) or Responsible Officer (RO) at your intended University.

14. Living in the USA:

- ❖ Once you land in USA, you can apply and obtain a Social Security Number.
- ❖ You can apply for a Driver's license and receive it after meeting the requirements. (Some States in USA may approve and recognize your International Driver's License if you have one)
- ❖ Guidelines to stay safe in America can be found at

<http://prasadthotakura.com/SafetyGuidelines.pdf>

15. Employment while you are a student:

- ❖ While you are on Student (F-1 Visa), you should not accept off-campus jobs.
- ❖ An on-campus job (at the university) must be limited to 20 hours a week.
- ❖ F-1 students may stay in the USA for the full length of their academic program plus 60 days.
- ❖ They can also be on Optional Practical Training (OPT) for initial 12 months followed by 17 month extension period if they are in Science, Engineering, and Technology & Management.
- ❖ Students (F-1 Visa) must complete their studies by the expiration date listed on the I-20 form.

16. Interview at Port of Entry (Airport) in USA

- ❖ Upon landing in USA at the airport, immigration officials may interview you about your academic plans and financial support. You must answer confidently and accurately to match with the documents that you already submitted.
- ❖ You must have clear understanding about your intended University and should not say that you support yourself financially by working part-time off-campus jobs while studying.

About the Author:

Dr. Prasad Thotakura of Dallas, TX, is a Past-President of TANA and is an active leader in the Indian-American Community. He had been residing in USA for over 30 years.

Disclaimer: The above provided information is extracted from multiple authentic resources. The rules and regulations of US Education Process may vary from time to time. Please verify for accuracy.