

Columbia University in the City of New York

International Affairs Office

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New York, NY 10032

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APPLICATION FOR VISA CERTIFICATE

If you plan to enroll at Columbia University as a full-time international student you need a student visa. Upon satisfactory completion and submission of the **Application for Visa Certificate, AVC** (and supporting documentation), the IAO will prepare and mail the Form I-20 to you. You will need the Form I-20 to apply at a U.S. Consulate for the F-1 student visa. You may fax your application and supporting documents, or send the application by courier (please use the courier-only address below). Your accompanying spouse and children may apply for F-2 entry visas, as dependents of the F-1 visa holder, if funding to meet additional expenses is documented. **If you are requesting a J-1 student visa please contact the IAO for additional information.** J-1 student visas require funding from the student's home country government, the U.S. government, or an international organization.

If you are currently in the U.S. and you need to apply for a transfer or a change of status please contact the IAO. Please call, or email the IAO for specific time limitations and instructions related to transfer, or change of status applications. If you are transferring to CU, your current visa sponsor (university) must complete a transfer form before you submit the AVC. Please contact the IAO to obtain the transfer form.

The AVC begins with an introduction of terms relevant to the student visa and focuses on matters of particular concern to incoming students such as: requirements and procedures necessary to qualify for the Form I-20, obtaining an F-1 entry visa, restrictions on foreign exchange transactions, guidance on what to expect when you apply for an entry visa, and information particular to Canadian Nationals. Please read the entire application before completing the form. Attention to detail is important.

Visa Certificate Processing - Students may not enter the U.S. more than 30 days before their report date to the University. In general the IAO will not produce an I-20 more than 150 days before the student's report date. Processing of a new and COMPLETE application for the Form I-20 takes approximately 2-3 weeks. If First Class mail service to your location takes an additional 15 to 23 days, you may expect to receive your Form I-20 within 4-6 weeks from the day we receive your request. Few locations worldwide consistently receive First Class mail from New York City in less than 10 days. First Class mail to the People's Republic of China (PRC) commonly takes considerably longer. If you request and prepay courier service for your Form I-20, please note that the IAO's processing time still remains 2-3 weeks. The speed of courier delivery ranges from 2 to 6 days.

Introduction - *Entry visa* and *immigration status* are two immigration-related terms which you will see frequently. The first term, entry visa, refers to the entry visa affixed or stamped in one's passport that permits entry into the U.S. This stamp is obtained at a U.S. Consulate. The entry visa is used *only* for entries to the U.S. and may expire during one's stay in the U.S. with no repercussions. The second term, *immigration status*, reflects the most recent notation on one's *I-94 Arrival/Departure Record*, commonly known as the I-94 Card. One's immigration status is generally the same as one's entry visa classification, e.g. F-1, J-1, etc. The I-94 Card one receives upon entering the U.S. is proof of immigration status (nonimmigrant classification) in the U.S. and specifies the length of time one is permitted to stay. Upon arrival in the U.S., the customs or immigration official retains the *Arrival* portion of the I-94, notes the immigration status (nonimmigrant classification) on the *Departure* portion, and staples the I-94 (*Departure*) Card into the passport, usually to the page that holds the corresponding entry visa. More detailed information is available on line in the handbook entitled *Coming to Columbia* at www.columbia.edu/cu/isso/incoming/.

F-1 Student Classification - Those who hold F-1 student visas are normally admitted to the U.S. for "Duration of Status (D/S)" by the United States Customs and Border Protection (CBP), the U.S. government agency responsible for administering regulations related to the entry of non-U.S. citizens. Under the terms of a student visa, one is required to pursue a full-time course of study during the academic year, September through May. Columbia University commonly defines full-time study as registration for 12 or more credits or one Residence Unit each semester.

Students in F-1 status may work on campus part-time (up to 20 hours per week) with the permission of the IAO. A student may apply for permission to work off campus only after having been in F-1 status for at least 9 months. Work permission requires the prior written approval of the IAO and the Department of Homeland Security, DHS. Employment during either the academic year or the summer, should not be considered a major means of support while at Columbia, unless the University offers employment in the form of a teaching or research assistantship. **Dependents holding F-2 status may not work under any circumstances.** Academic and financial benefits for many students in F-1 status include eligibility for various forms of employment. Details are available from the IAO and the International Students and Scholars Office (Morningside Campus) website at www.columbia.edu/cu/isso/visa/F-1/index.html.

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SEVIS - The Student and Exchange Visitor Information System (SEVIS), is an internet-based application for electronically tracking and reporting on foreign students and Exchange Visitors in the U.S. Under SEVIS we are required to report events relevant to your status as F-1 students to the U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE).

Reportable Events Currently Include - Academic admission, deferral of admission, personal and financial information, academic program information, registration for each term, program extension, drop below full course of study and resumption of a full course of study, employment, both on and off campus, premature termination of study, completion of program, and initial, continuing, travel and departure information on F-1 students and accompanying dependents.

SEVIS Fee - If your I-20 is issued for "initial attendance" or for "change of status" you will need to present proof of payment of the SEVIS fee of \$200.00. This fee can be paid online by completing the Form I-901 available at <http://www.ice.gov/sevis/i901/>.

Canadian Nationals - Canadians do not need entry visas to enter the U.S. Nationals however, entering the United States to study, must pay the SEVIS fee, request F-1 status at the border, and must show the Form I-20 to the INS inspector who will then issue an I-94 Card. Canadian students must have an I-94 Card to confirm F-1 student status and to be eligible for F-1 student benefits. **Canadian Nationals must have a valid passport to enter the U.S. from the Western Hemisphere.**

Visa Waiver - There are a number of countries whose citizens are not required to obtain a visa to enter the U.S. as a *Visitor for Tourism* or *for Business*. Individuals admitted to the U.S. under this program have the code *WT* or *WB* noted on the I-94 Card. **Visitors in this status are never allowed to:** study in the U.S., change status in the U.S., extend their stay in the U.S. beyond the date on the I-94 Card, work, or receive an assistantship or fellowship. **You should not enter the U.S. under the Visa Waiver Program if you intend to be a student. If you enter on WT or WB, you will have to exit the U.S. and re-enter in F-1 student status to begin classes.**

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HOW TO OBTAIN A VISA CERTIFICATE

In addition to a complete *Application for Visa Certificate*, you will need to submit the following documents with official English translations:

- ◆ if you will enter the United States with a passport, a copy of your passport information page with expiration date;
- ◆ a copy of your letter of admission from the admissions office of your school;
- ◆ a letter from you describing how you will finance your course of study; and
- ◆ financial documentation, which covers all expenses for one year, and describes reasonable means of support for the entire length of the program. Various documents are required depending on the source of financial support. If you have more than one source of funding, please provide the required documentation listed below corresponding to each source. Please do not send original documents as we cannot return them to you. The required documents and English translations for each source of support are as follows:

Personal Funds

- ◆ A copy of a bank letter in your own name prepared within the past three months showing available balances sufficient to meet your expenses, the dollar amount per year being provided, and the number of years for which the funding is guaranteed (see page 6).
-

Parents or family

- ◆ A copy of a letter from your parent or other relative which guarantees your support and includes - your relative's name, address, and relationship to you, the program of study or degree for which financial support is being provided, the length of program, the dollar amount per year being provided and the number of years for which it is guaranteed.
 - ◆ A copy of your relative's bank letter prepared within the past three months showing available balances sufficient to meet your expenses.
-

An international organization, government agency, foundation, or another university

- ◆ A copy of the official sponsorship letter stating the conditions of the award. The letter should specify the name and address of the sponsor, the total amount of money in U.S. dollars available to you for the school in which you will be enrolling, the major field, and the degree, for which you will be studying, and the period for which funding is guaranteed, or a statement that funding is renewable annually for a specified number of years.
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Columbia University

- ◆ A copy of your Columbia award letter (where applicable).
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Private sponsor

- ◆ Requirements as under **Parents or family**, and a letter from your sponsor explaining the sponsor's relationship to you, the student, and why he or she is committed to providing for your support. Please note that the U.S. Consular officials subject private sponsor guarantees to careful review and that you should be prepared to submit additional documentation for your entry visa.
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Loans

- ◆ A copy of an approval letter from each lender. For MD and DDS students only: loans will be verified by the Student Financial Planning Office (financial aid).
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Nationals From Countries Requiring Currency Exchange Permits - The Form I-20 is a U.S. government form that the University may issue solely for use by the U.S. Departments of State and Homeland Security in support of eligibility for F-1 student classification; it cannot be issued to you for the purpose of obtaining a foreign exchange permit. Moreover, if your country sets a maximum figure on foreign exchange that is below the minimum requirement for I-20 eligibility, you must document the availability of supplemental funds from sources not affected by exchange control. The University reserves the right to require advance deposit of funds sufficient to cover part or all of your tuition and living expenses.

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Application for Entry Visa - To obtain an entry visa, you must apply to a U.S. Consulate with your passport, the Form I-20 for yourself and each dependent, financial documents (plus passports and financial documents for each dependent), evidence that you have paid the SEVIS fee (a receipt), and you must demonstrate evidence of nonimmigrant intent. To demonstrate nonimmigrant intent you must prove to the Consular Officer that you are a bona fide non-immigrant by showing that you have ties to your home country, i.e. job, family, and that you plan to return to your home country. You will also need two passport-size (37 mm x 37 mm) photographs of each visa applicant over 16 years of age. If your family name is different from your dependents, be prepared to show documents that prove your relationship. You will be required to complete Form DS-156 (*Nonimmigrant Visa Application Form*) together with Form DS-158. Both forms must be completed and signed. Some applicants will also be required to complete and sign Form DS-157 (primarily males between the ages of 16 and 45). These forms can be downloaded from the Department of State website at: http://travel.state.gov/visa/questions_embassy.html. On occasion, a Consular Visa Officer may require evidence (in addition your Form I-20) of English proficiency sufficient to pursue your proposed program of studies.

In most cases all visa applicants are required to undergo an interview at a U.S. Consulate. The length of visa validity, number of entries permitted, and application fee are based on reciprocity and generally reflect your country's policies in granting visa privileges to visiting U.S. students. The Consular Visa Officer has the final word on your application; his or her judgment is not subject to review. The U.S. Consulate will require original documents with your application for an F-1 student visa. Consular standards for visa eligibility may be considerably more rigorous than the standards you must meet to qualify for the Form I-20. You should contact the consulate in which you plan to apply for the entry visa and inquire about specific documentation necessary to obtain an F-1 entry visa and to be advised on the length of time the consulate will need to process your entry visa. Processing times vary widely from consulate to consulate.

Facsimile Documents - The IAO will generally accept faxes of your documents, although the University does reserve the right to request original documents. **The U.S. State Department does not accept faxed I-20 forms for purposes of visa issuance.**

CHECK LIST FOR A COMPLETE APPLICATION FOR VISA CERTIFICATE (AVC):

Please submit a complete application to the IAO. Normal processing times for a complete application is approximately 2-3 weeks. An incomplete application will take considerably longer. If your application is being delayed because of a loan application please contact the staff at the IAO.

- If you are transferring to CU from another College or University inside the U.S., or if you plan to apply for a change of status to F-1 **please contact the IAO before completing the AVC** (please see page 1)
- Complete page 5-6 of AVC (please be sure to include permanent foreign address, it's required for all F-1 students)
- Copy of Admission Letter (for Postgraduate Dental students this will include 2nd page with lengths and type of program such as three-year certificate program, or three year Master's program, etc.)
- Personal letter of explanation on how you will fund your first year of study at C.U., and reasonable means of support for the entire length of the program
- Letter from sponsor regarding funding (please see page 3)
- Supporting financial documentation, e.g. bank statement
- If you are in the U.S. a copy of all previous I-20s and a copy of your passport identification page

Please note that we do not accept credit cards for payment of Federal Express charges; we only accept money orders and U.S. bank checks.

Mail or fax application to the International Affairs Office

Please print clearly

Mr. Ms. e-mail address _____
(enter only if checked frequently)

Name _____ Date of birth _____
family first middle month day year

Place of birth _____ Note: If you were born in the U.S., generally you are a citizen by birth
city or town country unless you have formally renounced U.S. citizenship.

Country of citizenship _____ Note: If dual citizen, indicate citizenship reflecting passport you will use
during your studies at Columbia. U.S. citizens may not apply for U.S. visas.

Country of Permanent Residence _____

Present mailing address _____
house number and street, apt. number city

state or province _____ country _____ postal code (if any) _____ Use address until: _____
month/day/year

Telephone: _____ Fax: _____
country code city code number country code city code number

Permanent address (only if different from mailing address) _____
house number and street, apt. number city

state or province _____ country _____ postal code (if any) _____

Telephone: _____ Fax: _____
country code city code number country code city code number

To which division (school) of Columbia University have you been admitted? _____

Which subject will you study? _____ For which degree are you a candidate? _____

Are you in the United States? No Yes If Yes, please answer the following questions:

1) What kind of immigration classification do you hold?
 B-1 Business F-1 Student J-1 Exchange Visitor, Student Category
 B-2 Tourist H-1 Temporary Worker J-1 Exchange Visitor, Non-Student Category Other Specify _____

2) When does your permission to stay expire? _____ Check here if I-94 card Indicates D/S What is your I-94 card number? _____
(see your I-94 Card): month day year

3) After you receive the Form I-20, will you travel abroad prior to beginning your program at Columbia University? No Yes

If you currently hold F-1 or J-1 status, and are applying for continuation in that status, you must enclose a photocopy of both sides of your current Form I-20, or DS-2019, your I-94 card, and the identification page of your passport. If you plan to complete the transfer process, or change of status process in the U.S. you will be subject to time restrictions for these processes. Please contact the IAO if you have any questions.

For each dependent (spouse and unmarried children under 21) requesting a dependent visa who will accompany you to the U.S., please list the following information (use additional paper, as necessary). Please enclose a copy of the passport identification page for each dependent. Each dependent needs a separate I-20 to enter the U.S.

a) Name (as on passport)	b) Relationship	c) Date of birth	d) Place of birth	e) Country of citizenship	f) Passport expiration date
1. _____					
2. _____					
3. _____					
4. _____					

Please retain pages 1-4 for your information. You may submit this form by fax, or by mail.

Please submit only a complete application, which includes a copy of your acceptance letter, financial documentation, and passport information.

ESTIMATED EXPENSES FOR 2012-13

Cost in U.S. \$	*College of Dental Medicine, DDS	*College of Dental Medicine International AEGD Program	College of Physicians & Surgeons, MD	College of Physicians & Surgeons, Human Nutrition	School of Nursing, BS/MS**	School of Nursing, MS	School of Nursing, Doctor	College of Physicians & Surgeons, Occupational Therapy	College of Physicians & Surgeons, Physical Therapy
Tuition and Fees	66,493	89,945	55,145	42,912	59,075	42,434	35,646	41,166	41,262
Educational Expenses	1,550	450	2,248	700	2,048	2,068	4,449	1,675	1,935
Academic Yr. Living Expenses	19,632	18,910	19,633	18,910	18,000	18,000	18,000	18,910	23,112
Academic Yr. Sub-Total	87,675	109,305	77,026	62,522	79,123	62,502	58,095	61,751	66,309
Summer Tuition and Fees	--	--	--	3,901	22,985	7,768	--	680	--
Summer Living Expenses	4,202	6,301	4,202	6,301	6,000	6,000	--	6,301	2,101
Total Expenses	91,877	115,606	81,228	72,724	108,108	76,270	58,095	68,732	68,410

*Please contact the IAO for estimated fees for all other Postgraduate Programs in the College of Dental Medicine.

**BS/MS program in Nursing, is a 12-month, 3 term program, including summer tuition and fees.

Please complete the columns below indicating expenses applicable to your program, and the funds available to you for the 9-12 month, academic year, 2012-13. Available funds must equal or exceed your expenses for the year. Students who will be in the U.S. during summer months need to document summer living expenses and available funds (most students remain in the U.S. for the summer, and must show funds). If you are married and plan to bring your spouse or children, additional funds are required for your dependents; the amounts for the 2012-13, Academic Year are U.S. \$1,000 monthly for your spouse and U.S. \$350 monthly for each child.

Consult the chart of estimated expenses and enter the amount required by your school for the 2012-13 Academic Year for:

Please indicate in the first column the amount of money from the following source(s) available to meet expected costs. Indicate in the last column whether the same funding from that source is available (renewable) for all subsequent years of study.

		Renewable?	Yes/No
Academic Year Tuition and Fees	US\$ _____	Personal/Family Funds	US\$ _____
Academic Year Living Expenses <small>(including Educational Expenses)</small>	US\$ _____	Loans	US\$ _____
Total Academic Year Costs	US\$ _____	Private Sponsor	US\$ _____
Summer Tuition and Fees** <small>(for Nursing BS/MS program only)</small>	US\$ _____	Home Government University, or Agency	US\$ _____
Summer Living Expenses	US\$ _____	Columbia University	US\$ _____
Dependent Expenses	US\$ _____	US Government or Agency	US\$ _____
Total Expected Cost	US\$ _____	Total Funds Available	US\$ _____

Statement Of Understanding Of Financial Responsibility

I, _____, certify that the above-mentioned financial resources are available to me for the duration of the studies identified in this *Application for Visa Certificate*. I have read this entire document and understand my responsibilities in providing the documentation described in *How to Obtain a Visa Certificate*. I understand that falsification of any financial documentation is grounds for cancellation of my admission and subsequent enrollment.

Signature _____

Date _____

Special Service Request Your Form I-20 will be sent by first-class airmail unless you specify Federal Express (FedEx) courier delivery and enclose correct payment. FedEx does not deliver to "Post Office Box" addresses. **Make payment by U.S. bank check, or U. S. money order payable to Columbia University.** We are unable to accept Credit Cards for payment of Federal Express. *In a select few cases we will allow applicants to reimburse the IAO for Federal Express charges if they are unable to provide a U.S. bank check, or money order. We prefer to allow a reimbursement of payment for FedEx only in cases when a delay in delivery will cause an applicant to miss an appointment at the consulate or will delay their entry into the U.S. Please make every effort to pay in advance.

Federal Express Fees	Eastern Europe, Africa, former Soviet Republics, Iceland <input type="checkbox"/> \$80	Latin America, South Central Asia <input type="checkbox"/> \$65	Australia, Mideast, East Asia, S.E. Asia <input type="checkbox"/> \$55	Caribbean, Western Europe, North America <input type="checkbox"/> \$35 U.S.A. <input type="checkbox"/> \$25
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