

## **F-1 Visa Information**

### **What is an F-1 visa?**

An F-1 visa is a nonimmigrant visa that allows students to pursue a full course of study (18+ hours per week) in the United States. F-1 visas are only issued in U.S. embassies and consulates outside the United States. Prospective F1 students must obtain a Form I-20 from Hunter College-IELI in order to apply for an F1 visa.

### **How do I get an F-1 visa?**

An F-1 visa can be acquired outside the United States at a U.S. embassy or consulate. After receiving the I-20 form issued by the IELI at Hunter College, you must request an interview and apply for an F-1 visa in your country's local U.S. embassy or consulate. Be sure to submit the SEVIS payment fee at least three days prior to interview date. We strongly recommend that you check the latest information at the US embassy in your country at <http://usembassy.state.gov>

### **What is an I-20 form?**

The Form I-20 is an official U.S. government form that has been issued by an SEVP-certified school in order to become an F-1 student. This form is evidence of acceptance into a full-time program at the school that has issued the Form I-20. The school **does not** issue visas.

### **How do I get an I-20 form?**

When the International Student Office receives your completed application, tuition payment and financial sponsor documents, your application will be processed within five business days and an acceptance package will be sent to you. For a mailing fee of \$65, the IELI at Hunter College mails your I-20 via USPS express mail. Your I-20 documents will arrive within 7-10 business days of being mailed.

### **When must I send the school my application for admission and the I-20 form?**

The I-20 Application Form indicates the application deadlines for each semester of the academic year. Please directly contact the international student office if you have questions regarding the application deadlines.

### **What documents must I send the school to receive the I-20 form?**

The I-20 Application Form comes with complete instructions to follow (pages 2-3). Before you send us your application, be sure you and your sponsor include the following documents:

- [Online I-20 Application Form](#).
- **If you have a financial sponsor:** Sponsor's [Affidavit of Support form](#) (Proof of Income must be attached)
- Bank statement and/or letter.
- Tuition receipt.
- Payment for USPS express mail shipping of I-20 form (\$65)

### **Additional required documents for Transfer students**

- Copy of F-1 visa.
- I-94 (Arrival Record).
- [Transfer Verification form](#) (permission to transfer from current school).
- Copy of **all** previous I-20 forms (all schools previously attended).

### **How much money do I need to obtain my visa?**

A minimum balance of \$22,500 USD must be presented by the sponsor (or student if they are sponsoring themselves). A bank statement or letter from the financial sponsor must accompany the Affidavit of Support form (proof of income must be attached). The bank statement or letter **must include all of the following:**

- (1) a minimum balance of \$22,500 USD,
- (2) the name of sponsor and type of account presented,
- (3) letter/statement must be written in English

### **Are there deadlines?**

Yes, please directly contact the International Student Office ([ieliss@hunter.cuny.edu](mailto:ieliss@hunter.cuny.edu)) if you have questions regarding the application deadlines.

### **Can I send copies or fax my financial documents?**

The Affidavit of Support and Bank Statement must be submitted as **original** documents by mail or email in PDF form.

**My I-20 says I must report to school three weeks before the semester begins, why?**

Testing and registration at the IELI take place approximately 3 weeks before a semester begins. Students are strongly recommended to report to school 3 weeks before classes begin. When you arrive, you must come to the IELI International Student Office with your new I-20 and passport/visa so we can report your arrival to Immigration. You are also required to attend an orientation seminar for new students a week before classes begin.

**When can I enter the U.S. after obtaining my F-1 visa?**

You may enter the U.S. no sooner than 30 days prior to the start date on your I-20.

**What must I do if I cannot travel to the U.S. before my reporting date?**

If you cannot travel to the U.S. before the reporting date on your I-20, you must contact the school **immediately**. If there is still space available for testing and registration, the school will approve an extension of your reporting date. In general, reporting dates cannot be extended by more than one week.

**Can I change my semester starting date if I cannot travel to the U.S. before classes begin?**

You are permitted to change your school starting date a **maximum** of two (2) times if you cannot begin classes during the semester you have chosen. You must return the original I-20 form you received from the school and request a new semester starting date. We will issue you a new I-20 with the new starting date.

**My visa was denied, what do I do? Can I request a refund?**

If your student visa is denied, you have up to 1 year to apply for a refund of your tuition. During this time, you may also request a new I-20 to apply again for the student visa. To request a refund, you must return the I-20 form with a copy of your receipt of payment. All refund requests must be made in person or with written permission from the student.

**How long must I wait for my tuition refund?**

Refund requests may take between 6 to 8 weeks to be processed. Payments made by check will be refunded via check and mailed to the payer, or at the written request of payer or student, a new address. All checks are sent by regular airmail (3 to 4 weeks). If you paid your registration online with a credit card, your tuition refund will go directly to your credit card approximately two to four (2-4) weeks after it has been processed.

**Can I bring my spouse and/or dependent children with me?**

Yes, but an additional \$8,000 for spouse and \$8,000 per child must be included in your financial statement and the dependent application must be submitted. Please contact the International Student Office for the F-2 Dependent application form.

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**B-1/B-2 Visa- (FAQ) Frequently Asked Questions**

**Can I change my immigration status to F-1 in the U.S. if I currently have B-1/B-2 status?**

Students wishing to study English full-time at the IELI at Hunter College must obtain F-1 status. To apply for F-1 status in the U.S., you must request a Change of Status from USCIS (United States Citizenship and Immigration Services). However, there is **no guarantee** that it will be approved by USCIS/Immigration. Please visit the International Student Office with your valid passport and I-94 Arrival record to request more information about your eligibility to change your status within the United States.

**Is it necessary to use a lawyer when you apply for a change of status (COS) in the U.S.?**

It is necessary to use an immigration lawyer to change your status in the U.S. and he/she must write a letter to the school that says they will be representing you.

**Can your school help me prepare my request for a change of status?**

The IELI International Student Advisor can review your documents and issue a change of status requested I-20.

**How long must I wait to receive a decision from Immigration (USCIS) about my change of status?**

Generally, Immigration takes approximately 2-3 months to review and make a decision on all change of status (COS) applications. At times, however, the USCIS Vermont Service Center may see a higher volume of applications causing COS applications to take more than three (3) months for processing.

### **Can I begin classes at the IELI while I wait for Immigration to approve my request for the F-1?**

B-1/B-2 status holders **cannot** begin a course of study until they receive approval of their change of status.

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## **Other Visas**

### **Can I change my status to an F-1 in the U.S. if I have J-1, H-1, etc. status?**

As a J-1, H-1, etc., you can request permission from Immigration (USCIS) to change your status to an F-1 (student). To apply for F-1 status in the U.S., you must request a Change of Status from USCIS (United States Citizenship and Immigration Services). However, there is **no guarantee** that it will be approved by USCIS/Immigration. Please visit the International Student Office with your valid passport and I-94 Arrival record to request more information about your eligibility to change your status (COS) within the United States.

### **Can your school help me prepare my request for a change of status (COS)?**

The IELI International Student Advisor can review your documents and issue a change of status requested I-20.

### **How long must I wait to receive a decision from Immigration (USCIS) about my change of status?**

Generally, Immigration takes approximately 2-3 months to review and make a decision on all change of status (COS) applications. At times, however, the USCIS Vermont Service Center may see a higher volume of applications causing COS applications to take more than three (3) months for processing.

### **Can I begin classes at the IELI while I wait for Immigration to approve my request for the F-1?**

J-1, H-1, etc. status holders may begin a course of study while they wait for a decision on their change of status application from USCIS (Immigration).

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## **Other Information**

### **Will I have Internet access?**

Yes, all of our students have free access to the Internet. Once you have registered, please visit the Registration Office for Wi-Fi login and password.

### **Can I travel while I'm studying?**

Yes, students are able to travel and are encouraged to do so while they are studying! However if you are traveling outside of the United States, all students must receive previous approval from the ISO International Student Advisor (DSO).

### **Does Hunter IELI offer health insurance?**

No, Hunter College IELI does not offer International Student Insurance. Health insurance is **not mandatory** for IELI students. Most students purchase insurance before arriving in the United States.

### **Does Hunter College-IELI have dorms/housing?**

No, the IELI does not offer student housing. Students must find their own accommodations before arriving in the United States. If you need suggestions on where to begin your housing search, please contact the International Student Office at [ieliss@hunter.cuny.edu](mailto:ieliss@hunter.cuny.edu).

### **When can I take the placement test and register for classes?**

You can contact the Registration Office one month before the new semester begins to make an appointment for your placement exam. You will take your placement exam after you arrive in the United States.

### **What is Orientation? Do I need to attend?**

Yes! Orientation is a required part of your registration at the IELI. At Orientation you will receive very important information about your classes and your responsibilities as an F-1 student. You will also learn about the services that are available to all IELI students.