Congratulations, and welcome to USC! Please read the following instructions carefully to apply for your visa and arrive at USC in a timely manner.

**I-20s are used to apply for F-1 visas. DS-2019s are used for J-1 visas.**

- **F-1 Visa Process:** [travel.state.gov/content/travel/en/us-visas/study/student-visa.html](http://travel.state.gov/content/travel/en/us-visas/study/student-visa.html)
- **J-1 Visa Process:** [travel.state.gov/content/travel/en/us-visas/study/exchange.html](http://travel.state.gov/content/travel/en/us-visas/study/exchange.html)

**IMPORTANT:** Canadian citizens are not required to apply for an F-1 or J-1 visa or appear for a visa interview. However, they must pay the SEVIS fee and present the payment receipt along with their I-20 or DS-2019 at the Port of Entry.

**PRE-ARRIVAL**

### Check your information

Make sure the name and date of birth on your I-20 or DS-2019 match your passport information. The “Passport Name” and “Admission Number” are left blank and cannot be altered. Some important things to note about this document:

- **Degree Major:** SEVIS contains a fixed number of major codes that may not match the exact program name at USC. At the time your program was created, the university selected the major code that most closely matched the name and content of the program. Therefore, the code you see on your I-20 is the same for all I-20s issued for students in your major. U.S. consular and immigration officers are aware of this, so it will not be an issue.

- **English Proficiency Notes:** The notes regarding English proficiency on your I-20 are solely for the purpose of explaining USC’s English test policy to consular and immigration officials. They do not reflect your English proficiency status with the university. No other I-20 can be issued; however, the notes will not affect your ability to obtain a U.S. visa.

- **Scholarships:** Scholarships will be included on your I-20 if we receive a notice from your department or admission counselor before your I-20 is issued. The absence of your scholarship on your I-20 will not affect your ability to obtain a U.S. visa in any way. Your I-20 will not be amended if it is issued before your program provides our office with your scholarship notice.

- **Program Costs:** Per SEVIS requirements, program costs reflect only the first academic year (fall and spring semesters, approximately nine months). This amount is for immigration purposes only and cannot change.

### Print Your I-20

- The US Department of Homeland Security now allows digitally signed and e-mailed I-20s. However, you will need to print a hard copy of this I-20 and travel with it in-hand for entry to the U.S. Digital copies, photocopies, screenshots, or presenting your electronic I-20 on your phone, tablet, or laptop will not be acceptable for any official purpose.

- USC has included the official DHS guidance regarding electronic I-20s at the end of this document. Since electronic I-20s are a new option to students, we strongly recommend printing the DHS guidance and keeping it with your electronic I-20.

### Pay the SEVIS fee

Visit [www.fmjfee.com/ij901fee](http://www.fmjfee.com/ij901fee) to pay the I-901 SEVIS fee. Print your payment receipt and keep it in a safe place. You will need this document at your visa interview and to show U.S. Customs officials when entering the U.S. Students are responsible for all SEVIS and visa fees. F-2 dependents (children and spouses) do not need to pay separate fees.

(Continued on reverse)
Apply for a visa
Visit [www.usembassy.gov](http://www.usembassy.gov) for a complete list of U.S. embassies and consulates.

- Complete the visa application, known as a DS-160. For more information, visit [travel.state.gov/content/travel/en/us-visas/study/student-visa.html](http://travel.state.gov/content/travel/en/us-visas/study/student-visa.html) and click on the “FAQS: DS-160” button.
- Pay the visa application fee. Note: This is separate from the SEVIS fee.
- Print the confirmation page with barcode. This is required for your visa interview.

If you would like to apply for your visa in a different country than your country of nationality, you must contact your intended embassy or consulate and ask if they conduct interviews for third country nationals. Policies vary by embassy/consulate.

Schedule your visa interview
Go to your embassy or consulate’s website and follow the instructions for scheduling a visa interview.

- Bring the following documents to your visa interview:
  - Passport (must be valid for at least six months after your U.S. arrival date)
  - USC I-20 or DS-2019
  - SEVIS fee payment receipt
  - DS-160 application confirmation page
  - Financial documents submitted to USC
  - Proof of your relationship to any dependents you are bringing (birth certificates and/or marriage certificates)
  - Any additional documents that are indicated on your embassy or consulate webpage

Visit the USC Office of International Services website for interview tips: [ois.usc.edu/new-students/prearrival/visaprocess/interview-tips](http://ois.usc.edu/new-students/prearrival/visaprocess/interview-tips).

We are aware that the US Embassy and consulates in many countries have suspended visa services until further notice and USC is monitoring the evolving situation closely. Since you have received your I-20, you have the essential document to make a visa interview appointment should they become available. Please continue to track the appointment system and visa openings as they change.

ARRIVAL

Enter the United States
Students on F-1 or J-1 visas can enter the country as early as 30 days prior to the start date on their I-20 or DS-2019. Check Section 3 of your I-20 under “Earliest Admission Date” for the exact date you may arrive in the U.S. Note that you must arrive by the program start date, which may be earlier than the start of classes.

In order to make your way to Los Angeles and report to USC, you may enter through any U.S. Port of Entry (airport, seaport or land crossing).

- Bring the following items with you to the United States Port of Entry when you arrive:
  - Passport (must be valid for at least six months after your U.S. arrival date)
  - I-20 or DS-2019
  - SEVIS fee payment receipt
  - Valid U.S. visa

Do not pack any of these documents in checked luggage. You will need to present them to U.S. Customs officials when entering the U.S. If you do not have all the documents in hand when you enter U.S. Customs, you may be subject to secondary inspection.
Late arrival may result in long delays entering the U.S. through U.S. customs. If late arrival is unavoidable due to extenuating circumstances, you must request a late-arrival letter from your academic department — not from the Office of Admission or International Services.

Complete Passport Verification (PPV)
All new international students must complete Passport Verification (PPV) in person with the Office of International Services (OIS). This will release the registration hold on your student account and allow you to receive a USC ID card and register for classes.

Register for a PPV session at ois.usc.edu/new-students/firstweeks/passport-verification-ppv. Multiple sessions are offered starting in May (for the summer semester), July (for the fall semester), or January (for the spring semester). Instructions regarding which documents you should bring to complete PPV are provided on the OIS website.

Have questions about your I-20 information, visas or arrival in the U.S.? Please visit the Frequently Asked Questions page or contact us at ask.usc.edu.

Once you’ve arrived on campus, the Office of International Services can answer any questions you may have and help guide you through the transition to campus life. Visit ois.usc.edu for more information.
Broadcast Message: New Electronic Form I-20 Issuance Guidance on ICE.gov/COVID19

To: DSOs and PDSOs at SEVP-certified schools

Date: March 26, 2020

Number: 2003-03

On March 26, 2020, the Student and Exchange Visitor Program (SEVP) updated the coronavirus (COVID-19) FAQs on https://www.ice.gov/covid19 to provide the following guidance on electronic Form I-20 issuance:

Can DSOs electronically send signed Forms I-20 to students instead of physically mailing the forms?

Yes, due to COVID-19, DSOs may electronically send Forms I-20 to student email addresses listed in SEVIS. In the case of a minor students, the email address may belong to their parent or legal guardian. Schools do not need to request permission from SEVP or report their plans to electronically send Forms I-20 as part of their COVID-19 procedural changes.

What methods can DSOs use to sign and send Forms I-20?

SEVP has identified the following methods to sign and send the Form I-20:

- Email a scanned version of the physically signed Form I-20;
- Email a digitally signed Form I-20 using electronic signature software; or
- Email a digitally signed Form I-20 that contains a digitally reproduced copy of a physical signature.

Only approved principal designated school officials (PDSOs) and DSOs may physically sign or input their own digital signature to the Form I-20. Individuals who are not approved on the school’s Form I-17, “Petition for Approval of School for Attendance by Nonimmigrant Student,” may not input a DSO’s signature—either digital or physical—to the Form I-20. Improper issuance of the Form I-20 in this manner may constitute grounds for withdrawal of SEVP certification. By signing the Form I-20 or inputting their digital signature, PDSOs and DSOs attest that they are the approved individual issuing the Form I-20.

SEVP continues to actively monitor COVID-19 and will provide up-to-date information with all stakeholders. Due to the fluid nature of this situation, please continue to reference ICE.gov/COVID19 for the latest news and updates.

Comments
To comment on this Broadcast Message, please email SEVP@ice.dhs.gov with “Broadcast Message 2003-03 Comment” entered in the subject line.

**Disclaimer**

This Broadcast Message is not a substitute for applicable legal requirements, nor is it itself a rule or a final action by SEVP. It is not intended to, does not, and may not be relied upon to create any right or benefit, substantive or procedural, enforceable at law by any party in any administrative, civil or criminal matter.