



## **Information for New F-1 Students of Canadian Citizenship**

This information sheet is intended for new international students who will be entering the United States in F-1 student status and who (1) are citizens of Canada and (2) have *not* been enrolled at a U.S. high school, college or university. If you are a Canadian citizen who *has* just completed a period of enrollment at a U.S. school in F-1 status, you must read this material and *also* consult “Information for F-1 Students from Another U.S. School,” (available at [www.swcc.edu](http://www.swcc.edu)) and read the subsection entitled “Transfer of SEVIS Record and I-20 AB Sponsorship.” If you are *not* a Canadian citizen, you must consult a different information sheet, “Information for New F-1 Students” (also available at the above website.)

This document contains important information regarding your non-immigrant status as an F-1 student, including your legal entry to the United States. **It is imperative that you read this information completely and carefully.** If you have any questions concerning the information contained in this document, please contact [International Student Advisor](mailto:International Student Advisor), via e-mail at [International Student Advisor](mailto:International Student Advisor), phone at (972) 524-3341, or fax at (972) 563-7133.

### **U.S. Governmental Agencies**

The U.S. Department of State (USDOS) is the agency of the United States government that oversees the activities of U.S. embassies and consulates abroad, including the issuance of U.S. student visas. The U.S. Department of Homeland Security (USDHS) is the agency that oversees issues related to non-U.S. citizens within the United States. The DHS has taken over the activities of the now defunct “U.S. Immigration and Naturalization Service”. Although there are still lingering references to the old “INS” or “Immigration Service,” the activities of the former INS have been distributed among three new divisions within the new DHS:

- USCBP (U.S. Customs and Border Protection): This division is responsible for overseeing the admission of non-immigrants at U.S. ports of entry (airports and other land border crossings).
- USICE (U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement): This division is responsible for investigations, detention, deportation, and oversight of SEVIS (more about that below).
- USCIS (U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services): This division is responsible for the adjudication of applications for various kinds of benefits available to non-immigrants in the U.S.

### **SEVIS - Student and Exchange Visitor Information System**

U.S. colleges and universities have always been required to record certain information about F-1 visa students and to report that information to the appropriate U.S. government agency, either routinely or upon government request. Under new federal regulations implemented after the September 11 attacks, the former paper-based system of recording and reporting information has been replaced by a computer-based system, referred to as “SEVIS.” Under SEVIS, the College is required to create an electronic file for each of our F-1 students on a secure U.S. government website and to enter into that file biographical / identifying information, passport information, foreign and U.S. address, academic program information, and financial support information. The information in your SEVIS record will be available to agencies of the U.S. government (see above section), which will also independently enter information about dates of entry to and exit from the U.S. directly into your electronic SEVIS record.

### **F-1 Student Status and the I-20 AB Form**

F-1 student status, which is intended for use by students who are requesting temporary admission to the United States for the purpose of engaging in a full-time course of study at an approved college or university, is the appropriate classification for your entry to the United States. The F-1 student classification is a nonimmigrant status, which is assigned only to individuals who can establish to the satisfaction of the USCBP officer at the port of entry that they have a permanent residence in a foreign country to which they intend to return after completion of the educational objective in the United States and that they have sufficient financial resources to cover the expenses of the proposed educational program without resorting to unauthorized employment.

Amherst College provides each new international student with a Form I-20AB, “Certificate of Eligibility for Nonimmigrant Student Status,” one of the documents needed for entry to the U.S. in the F-1 student classification. The I-20AB form is provided only after an incoming student has completed all required steps for I-20 issuance, as described in the “Introductory Letter to New International Students” located at <http://www.amherst.edu/~dos/orientation/interstuds.html>. [If you are a Canadian citizen who has previously attended a U.S. school in F-1 status, you must also consult an additional information sheet, “Information for F-1 Students

from Another U.S. School,” (available at the same website) and read the subsection entitled “Transfer of SEVIS Record and I-20AB Sponsorship.”] I-20AB forms are ordinarily sent out by late May or early June.

When you receive your I-20AB form, you should read carefully all information contained on it. Should you find any errors on this form, please report them immediately to F k0qh'Cf o kulkpu, so that a corrected document may be issued to you. Pay particular attention to the “Instructions to Students” on page two, which briefly describe the essential regulations that govern individuals admitted to the United States in F-1 student status. Once you have read and are certain that you understand the stated terms and conditions concerning your admission and stay in the United States as a nonimmigrant student, you should read the “Student Certification” in item #11 at the bottom of page one. You should then print your name, sign your name, and date the form in the space provided in item #11. Ultimate responsibility for understanding and complying with the F-1 regulations rests with the student. There will, however, be ample opportunity for you to consult with vj g'RF UQ during the school year regarding the details of the regulations governing your F-1 student status.

### **SEVIS I-901 Fee**

Once your I-20AB form has been issued, the next step in preparing for your entry into the U.S. in F-1 status is the payment of the \$100 “SEVIS I-901 Fee” to the U.S. Department of Homeland Security (DHS). This one-time fee must be paid by all new F-1 students entering the U.S. with an “initial attendance” I-20AB form. [Therefore, if you have just completed a period of enrollment at another U.S. school and will be reentering the U.S. as a continuing F-1 student with a “transfer pending” I-20 form, you do *not* have to pay the SEVIS I-901 Fee.] If you are subject to the SEVIS I-901 Fee, it must be paid must be paid and fully processed by DHS before you will be permitted to enter the U.S. in F-1 student status.

To complete the SEVIS I-901 Fee process, a student must submit a completed Form I-901 and appropriate payment of the \$100 to DHS. The SEVIS fee process may be completed in one of three ways: (1) paying electronically through the internet with a valid credit card or debit card; (2) mailing a check, money order or bank draft drawn in U.S. dollars; (3) making a payment at a participating Western Union office.

Official information about the SEVIS I-901 Fee may be found at the following DHS website: <http://www.ice.gov/sevis/i901/index.htm>, where you will find links to “I-901 Fee Frequently Asked Questions.” You should carefully read the FAQs section, which provides important background information and will link you to information on the three methods of paying the SEVIS I-901 fee. In particular, students who wish to pay the SEVIS fee on-line, should go to: <http://www.fmjfee.com/index.jhtml>; students who wish to pay the SEVIS fee by mail, should go to <http://www.fmjfee.com/index.jhtml>, complete the I-901 on-line, indicate payment by check or money order, print the payment coupon, and mail the payment coupon and check/money order for \$100 U.S. dollars to the appropriate address on the payment coupon; students who wish to pay the SEVIS fee at a participating Western Union office should go to: [http://www.ice.gov/sevis/i901/wu\\_instr.htm](http://www.ice.gov/sevis/i901/wu_instr.htm).

Whatever method of payment you use, you must provide the Form I-901 information. Be certain to enter accurately: your name exactly as it appears on your I-20AB form; your SEVIS ID number (a multi-digit number starting with “N” and located over the bar code in the upper right hand corner of your I-20AB form); and the school code for Uqwj y gungtp'Ej tkwcp'Eqmgi g.

It is strongly recommended that you pay the fee on-line with a credit card or debit card whenever possible, as this will allow you to print out an immediate receipt for use at a U.S. port of entry. Payment by mail or through Western Union will not generate an immediate receipt; instead, a paper receipt will be mailed to you, which may cause delays. Although officials at the ports of entry should be able to verify independently through the SEVIS database that a student has paid the SEVIS fee, having a receipt will greatly facilitate the entry process.

### **Entry to the United States**

As a citizen of Canada, you are exempt from U.S. visa requirements, i.e., you are not required to visit a U.S. embassy or consulate to obtain an actual F-1 visa stamp in your passport. Instead, Canadian citizens apply directly at the U.S. port of entry for admission as an F-1 student. You should enter the U.S. using the newly issued I-20AB form from Uy EE. **If you are a new F-1 student** (that is, if you have not been enrolled in a U.S. school during this past spring semester and will be entering with an I-20 form marked for “initial attendance” in item #3), **then you are eligible to enter the U.S. up to thirty days before the “reporting**

**date” in item #5 on the I-20 form** (which is August 26, 2007, the first day of the new student orientation program), but not earlier. **If you are continuing in F-1 status** (that is, if you have previously been enrolled in a U.S. school during the r t g x l q w u semester and will be entering with an I-20 form marked “transfer pending”), **then you are not subject to the thirty-day restriction** and may enter the U.S. in F-1 status anytime during the summer.

Possession of an I-20AB form does not guarantee entry to the U.S. The decision as to whether you will be admitted is made at your U.S. port of entry by an “inspection officer” of the USCBP. The inspection officer will examine your I-20AB form, your unexpired passport (which must have at least six months of validity remaining); your proof of SEVIS I-901 fee payment (f required); and, possibly, your evidence of financial support.

With respect to evidence of financial support, you should be prepared to present documentary proof that you have sufficient financial resources to cover any “family funds” or “personal funds” components of your financial support statement (appearing in item #8 on page 1 of the I-20AB form). Acceptable documentary evidence may include bank statements, certified letters of account balances or credit lines, or other proof of your family’s annual income and/or total assets. If you have funding from any other outside sponsor – whether an individual or an agency – you should be prepared to present proof of that funding to the officer, as well. In practice, USCBP officers at U.S. ports of entry sometimes do not request this financial documentation; at other times, however, it can be examined quite closely, so you should be prepared for that possibility in order to avoid delay or other problems at the U.S. port of entry. Requests for such evidence may be made each time you reenter the U.S. [You should also be aware that Uy EE will consider your use of the Uy EE I-20AB form for entry to the United States as further attestation that you have sufficient financial resources to cover any financial components listed in items #8a or #8c of the I-20AB form.]

Another important factor influencing your admission to the U.S. is “non-immigrant intent.” The inspection officer at the port of entry must be convinced that you intend to remain in the U.S. temporarily and only for the period of time needed to complete your education. You should give some thought to this issue in advance and be prepared to establish that you have close ties to your home country (professional, family, financial, etc.) and that you intend to return to your home country after you complete your studies.

The inspection officer is free to require whatever additional information he or she may deem necessary and has complete discretionary authority in determining your financial sufficiency, your nonimmigrant intent, and your overall eligibility for F-1 status. The burden of proof is always on the student, so you should be prepared to respond to questions about your ability to finance your education and your intentions to return to your home country upon completion of your education. The vast majority of our international students enter the U.S. with ease. In the event that you encounter difficulty, you should contact v j g C f o k u k q p u F k t g e v q t immediately.

Students are strongly advised to have the appropriate documentation available for presentation to the USCBP inspector at the port of entry. Occasionally in the past, a student seeking entry to the United States, but lacking one of the requested documents, would be issued a “Form I-515,” whereby temporary admission to the United States is granted for a period of thirty days, within which time the individual must submit the necessary documentation for inspection. However, due to heightened security concerns subsequent to the attacks of September 11, officers at U.S. ports of entry are less likely to issue such a reprieve to students who present themselves for entry to the U.S. without the proper documents. Furthermore, because “failure to possess required documents” is, technically, one of the grounds for a “summary determination of inadmissibility,” an inspector at the port of entry has absolute discretion to deny your entry to the U.S. if your documents are not in order. Individuals denied entry on such a basis can be subject to a five-year ban before another entry attempt can be made. So, to avoid the possibility of this onerous consequence, you should be certain to have the appropriate documentation available for presentation to the inspector at the port of entry.

Finally, even though Canadians can (and are accustomed to) crossing into the U.S. as visitors / tourists, you should be certain always to enter the U.S. in F-1 student status during the years when you are a student at Amherst College. Entering the United States in a status other than the F-1 student status may prohibit your enrollment at Amherst College, render you ineligible for other benefits of F-1 status (such as possible off-campus employment authorization), and could subject you to serious penalty, including deportation and a ban to reentry for five years. At a minimum, you would be required to leave the U.S. and reenter in proper F-1 status.

If the officer at the port of entry determines that you are admissible to the United States in F-1 status, he or she will:  
(1) stamp the upper right corner of the I-20AB form to indicate the date, place and F-1 status of your entry and the duration of your permitted stay; (2) return the I-20AB to you; (3) issue you an I-94 Card, a small white card similarly stamped with the date, place and F-1 status of your entry and the duration of your permitted stay; and (4) electronically enter data about your arrival into your SEVIS record. Occasionally, in the hustle and bustle of a busy airport, inspection officers sometimes inadvertently fail to stamp the I-20 form or to issue the I-94 card. Lack of one or both of these documents (and, especially, the I-94 card) can later prove to be an

inconvenient problem for you, time-consuming and expensive to correct, so I suggest that you pay close attention to this at the time of your entry. If you get to the end of processing and have not yet received your copy of the I-20 form or the I-94 card – properly stamped and notated “F-1” -- a gentle and polite reminder to the inspection officer is recommended. **Both the I-20AB form and the I-94 card - properly stamped and notated “F-1” - are important documents that provide evidence of your having been legally admitted to the United States in F-1 status. You should safeguard these documents as you do your passport.** It is recommended that you staple your I-94 card to a page of your passport, so that it does not slip out and become lost.

You should also be aware that a new electronic I-94 card, whose appearance and processing are different from the traditional card described above is being introduced. The new I-94, which looks like an airline-boarding pass with a magnetic strip on the back, is issued by the airline at departure check-in and the student then presents it to the officer upon arrival at the U.S. port of entry. The usual information about entry date, visa status, etc., is printed on the card instead of handwritten. Since the new I-94 card is larger and doesn't fit into the passport, it will be handed to you or slipped into your airline ticket folder. The new I-94 is being issued on a selective basis only, in certain airports and with certain airlines, but you should be aware of the new-format card, so that you will not inadvertently discard it.

As a final step in your processing at the port of entry, you will undergo a new arrival / departure screening procedure, referred to as “US-VISIT,” requiring an inkless fingerprint of your index fingers and a digital photograph of your face.

**Follow-up Processing at Uy EE**

Shortly after your arrival at Uy EE, you will be required to present your passport, your stamped I-20AB form, and your stamped I-94 card to the Cf o kukqpu for photocopying in compliance with regulations. After confirming that you have registered for classes, Uy EE will change your SEVIS status from “initial” or “transfer pending” to “active”. Your failure to register for classes and to present your documents to the F tgevt "qh' Cf o kukqpu"RF UQ+ will result in your SEVIS file being automatically cancelled. This, in turn, would require that you apply for “reinstatement” (a costly, time-consuming, and uncertain procedure). Therefore, it is extremely important that you register for classes and submit your documents to the Cf o kukqpu Office in a timely manner.