

F-1 Visa Renewal Instructions

Do I need to renew my visa?

An F-1 visa is used to enter the United States. In most cases you are permitted to remain in the U.S. even if your visa expires, as long as you continue to maintain F-1 status (called "Duration of Status"). An individual can stay in the U.S. past the expiration date of their visa as long as: their passport and I-20 have not expired, the electronic I-94 record reflects the proper status, and the student is enrolled full-time or participating in OPT. If you leave the U.S. on an expired visa, you must apply for a new visa before you can return. Always be aware of the date when your F-1 visa will expire.

How Do I Renew My Visa?

1. **Complete the [DS-160 online visa application](#):** [Learn more](#) about completing the [DS-160](#).
2. **Schedule an Interview:** After you have completed the DS-160 form, you will be directed to either schedule an interview appointment or submit your application and documents to the Embassy or Consulate under the interview waiver program.
3. **Pay Visa Fee, if required:** Review the instructions available on the website of the [U.S. Embassy or Consulate](#) where you will apply to learn more about fee payment.
4. **Gather Required Documentation:** Review the instructions of the [U.S. Embassy or Consulate](#) where you are applying for the most updated list of required documents for your visa renewal.
 - **Unexpired Passport:** Your passport must be valid for at least six months beyond your period of stay in the United States.
 - **[Form DS-160](#) confirmation page.**
 - **Visa application fee payment receipt**, if you are required to pay before your interview.
 - **Photo:** You will upload your photo while completing the online Form DS-160. If the [photo upload fails](#), you must bring one printed photo in the format explained in the [Photograph Requirements](#).
 - **Form I-20:** Your I-20 should be up to date and have a current travel signature. Please email international@northpark.edu to request an updated I-20 and/or travel signature, if needed.
5. **Travel to your home country to complete the interview/application process.** You cannot mail your application from within the U.S. You must be physically present in the same country as the U.S. Embassy or Consulate to submit your visa application. Check the [estimated visa processing time](#).

Note: OIA recommends applying for your visa renewal in your home country. If this is not possible, please contact OIA to discuss third country application. Applying for a visa in a country which is not your home country or the U.S., called a "third" country, can be more difficult and refusal is more likely.

Additional Documentation

A consular officer may request additional documents, such as evidence of:

- **I-901 SEVIS Fee Receipt:** You must present receipt of payment of the [I-901 SEVIS fee](#) if you already paid the SEVIS fee before for the same SEVIS ID number.
- **Updated Proof of Finances:** you may need to provide current bank statements, loan documentation, etc.
- **Verification of Enrollment at North Park:** You can obtain verification of enrollment from the Registrar. Please contact registrar@northpark.edu to request an Enrollment Verification letter.
- **Official Transcript:** you can request a copy of your official transcript [here](#).
- **Class Schedule:** Print a copy of your academic schedule from [Self Service](#) for the upcoming semester to show you will return to the U.S. to continue your studies. Ensure that you are registered full time.
- **EAD Card:** If you are currently on OPT.
- **OIA Letter:** If there are unusual circumstances surrounding your visa renewal application or educational program, you may also request a letter of explanation from the Office of International Affairs.

Important Information about Visa Renewal

Knowing the Risks

Issuance of an F-1 visa is never guaranteed, even in cases of visa renewal.

- You must show that you intend to participate in only activities that are allowed in F-1 visa status.
- Every time you apply for an F-1 visa, you are assumed to have “nonimmigrant intent.” In order to be issued a visa, you must convince the consular official that you intend to return to your home country at the end of your studies (and any period of approved practical training).

Preparing for the Visa Interview

Prepare to answer the following questions at your interview:

- Why did you decide to attend North Park University?
- What are you studying at North Park, and what do you plan to do with your degree once you finish your studies?
- How will your studies at North Park prepare you for life in your home country?
- What ties do you have to your home country? Do you have family at home? Do you or your family own property, or will you inherit property in the future? Do you have a job lined up at home for when you return?

For more information and tips, please see [NAFSA's Ten Points to Remember](#).

Visa Denial

If your application for an F-1 visa (first time or renewal) is denied, it is very important that you get information from the consular official regarding your denial. She or he should put in writing the cause of your denial. The following denials are the most common:

Type of Denial	What It Means	What You Can Do
214b	Did not establish eligibility for the visa category being applied for or overcome the presumption of being an intending immigrant	You are welcome to apply again, as soon as you believe your circumstances have changed, or when you think you can explain your situation in a different way to express nonimmigrant intent. Be sure that you explain clearly why you are studying at North Park, why you chose your field of study, how your program at North Park will prepare you to return to your home country, why you will return to your home country (job, family, property, etc.).
221g	Did not fully complete the visa application and/or provide all required supporting documentation	Your visa hasn't actually been denied, but the consular official can't make a decision on approving or denying your application until more information is presented. Make sure you pay very close attention to anything the consular official asks you to do. You may have to submit additional documents, or you may have to wait for your application to be assessed by another office.

Note: The consular officers at the U.S. Embassy abroad are the only people who can make decisions on your eligibility for an F-1 visa. Even if North Park University has said that you are eligible to study here, North Park officials cannot override a consular official's decision on your visa application. In most cases (especially 214b denials) we will not contact the consulate on your behalf, as consular officials are required to protect your privacy and cannot disclose information about your visa interview or application to a third party.