HOW TO APPLY FOR A J-1 EXCHANGE VISA

Step 1: Make an appointment at a U.S. Consulate to apply for a J-1 Student entry visa.

You will require the DS-2019 Form from Barnard College at the time of your appointment. DO NOT MAKE AN APPOINTMENT UNTIL you have received the DS-2019 or are sure that you will have the DS-2019 in time for the appointment. While the U.S. Consulate will not issue the student entry visa until 120 days before the reporting date on the DS-2019 or the start date of your DS-2019 program period, you should apply for your visa as soon as possible. Check the following websites for more information on visa appointments.

- For information about current wait times for the appointment and for visa issuance. Note that the processing wait times DO NOT include any extra time that may be required for security clearances.
- Potential Delays in Visa Issuance and at Ports of Entry for more information regarding security clearances.

Find the U.S. Consulate at which you will apply at usembassy.state.gov and carefully read its instructions for applying for a visa (including links to required forms). Application procedures and requirements vary so be sure to pay attention the specifics for the Consulate at which you apply. Make a list of documentation required for the interview and make all fee payments as instructed on the Consulate's web site.

Step 2: Check your form DS-2019 for completeness and correctness!

Your DS-2019 indicates that we have created a record for you in SEVIS (Student and Exchange Visitor Information System), a national database for international students and scholars. Your unique assigned SEVIS ID number is in the upper right corner of page 1. Check to see that all information is correct and that your expected completion date is in the future.

Step 3: Make sure your passport is valid.

When you apply for a visa or enter the U.S., your passport must be valid for at least 6 months into the future. Some countries are exempt from this requirement and have their passports automatically extended for 6 months which means that you can use your passport up until the written expiration date. This rule applies to subsequent entries to the U.S. while traveling as a student. Click here for a list of countries exempt from this rule.

Step 4: Pay the SEVIS fee and print the receipt.

Go to the I-901 payment site at www.fmjfee.com and follow the instructions. You will need the DS-2019 available because the SEVIS ID number is required. Print copies of the receipt -you will need one with you for the visa interview and you should keep one for your own records.
You can only access the receipt at the time of payment so be sure your printer is working before paying the fee. You will not be able to get a receipt later.

If you have been a student in the U.S. and are transferring schools or beginning a program at a new level of study, it is possible you may not have to pay the SEVIS fee. Refer to information posted at SEVIS website.

Step 5: Complete the required Department of State application form DS-160.

Everyone applying for a non-immigrant visa must complete this form. Be sure to print and keep the DS-160 barcode page.

Step 6: Refer to step one and follow instructions for paying any visa fees required in advance of your appointment.

Procedures may vary from country to country, and even post to post within the same country. Note that application and issuance fees are based on reciprocity and generally reflect your country's policies in granting visa privileges to visiting U.S. students.

Step 7: Bring a passport-size photo less than six months old.

Check Nonimmigrant Visa Photograph Requirements for details.

Step 8: READ! Prepare for your interview appointment by learning what to expect.

You will be applying for a J-1 student visa, a non-immigrant classification. According to U.S. immigration law, "Every alien shall be presumed to be an immigrant until he establishes to the satisfaction of the consular officer, at the time of application for admission, that he is entitled to a non-immigrant status." This means you need to establish that you have no intention of staying in the U.S. permanently, but are coming here for a temporary purpose, i.e. to pursue your educational objective. While the consular officers are aware that it may be difficult for students to demonstrate strong professional and economic ties to their home countries, you should still bear this in mind as you prepare for your interview.
In advance of your interview, please read the following:

- Applying for a Student or Exchange Visitor Visa Published by Education USA, a division of the U.S. Department of State
- See You in the USA: An eJournal published by DOS. Note article "On the Other Side of the Visa Window", by U.S. visa officer in Cairo
- Ten Points to Remember When Applying for a Nonimmigrant Visa, published by NAFSA: Association of International Educators, in consultation with the U.S. State Department. Although published in 1997, these general points provide good guidance and still are relevant today.

Step 9: Checklist of what to take with you to your visa interview

- A passport valid for at least 6 months
- Form DS-2019 (sign the form at the bottom of the page)
- Barnard admission letter
- Completed DS-160 visa application bar code page
- A photograph in the prescribed format (see Step 7)
- A receipt for the visa application fee
- A receipt for the SEVIS fee payment
- Financial evidence that shows you have sufficient funds to cover your tuition and living expenses during the period you intend to study.
- Any information that demonstrates your intention to return to your home country after finishing your studies in the U.S. This may include proof of property, family, or other ties to your community.

Step 10: After the visa is processed, make sure you got what you requested!

Check your passport to be sure you obtained a J-1 visa. Also, be certain that the DS-2019 was returned to you, as you must have the original with you when you arrive in the United States. Sometimes, the document is returned to you in a sealed envelope, which must be presented to the immigration inspector when you arrive.
SOME ADVICE

1. **FAILURE TO CONVINCE THE CONSUL OF ONE’S INTENTION TO RETURN HOME PERMANENTLY IS THE NUMBER ONE REASON FOR VISA DENIAL!**
   The person who decides whether or not to give you a visa to come to the U.S. is a “consul”. Student visas are only given to persons who can *convince* the consul that they intend to return permanently to their home country after they graduate.

2. **You must have a good academic objective for coming to the U.S.**
   You need to have a good reason to attend Barnard College, be qualified for the program of study, and be able to prove you can finance the education you will pursue here. Based on the financial documents you sent us, we are confident that you can pay for your education. Be sure to bring in all original copies of the same documentation to the consul for review.

3. **Consuls are impersonal when administering laws.**
   The consul is going to decide your case based on his or her understanding of the rules. **DO NOT TRY TO NEGOTIATE OR DISCUSS PERSONAL MATTERS WITH THE CONSUL.**

4. **U.S. government officials like documents.**
   Try to have papers for the consul’s review that prove why you are qualified for an exchange student visa. Along with your DS-2019, bring your original Barnard visiting students admission letter, a current passport, original financial documents, and any other documents showing that you have a residence abroad which you have no intention of abandoning (see tip #2 in the next section) and that you intend to depart the United States after completing the program.

BE PREPARED

1. **Be ready to clearly explain why you want to come to the U.S. to study at Barnard.**
   Why do you want to study in the U.S.?
   Why are you going to pursue this program of study?
   Why did you choose Barnard College?
   For what career will your studies prepare you when you return home?

2. **Be ready to convince the consul that you will return home permanently after you complete your studies.**
   Present papers that can prove you have “ties” to your country which are so strong, they will *force* you to return.
   - If your family owns a business, take a letter from the bank describing it. If they own property, take the deeds.
   - If you have a brother or sister who studied in the U.S. and then returned home, take a copy of his or her degree and a statement from his or her employer.

Office of International & Intercultural Student Programs
3009 Broadway • New York, NY 10027-6598 • phone: 212.854.1777 • fax: 212.854.6947
• If you have traveled to the U.S. before as a visitor, emphasize that you returned home after your stay here!
• If your program of study is in great demand in your country, obtain a letter from a possible employer indicating that he or she is interested in hiring people with the degree like the one you will receive.

3. **Present the original financial documents you gave us instead of copies.**
   Your documents must match what appears on your Form DS-2019. Consuls may also want to see the original admission letter announcing your acceptance, an official TOEFL and/or SAT report, your current passport, and any original documents you possess that demonstrate ties to your country.

4. **Do NOT emphasize any ties you have to the U.S. or to family members in the U.S.**

5. **Practice your English.**
   You are expected to be able to speak English proficiently to the consul.

6. **Do not talk about working in the U.S. unless you have been awarded a teaching assistantship or fellowship on campus.**
   You are required to prove that you can support the costs of studying and living in the U.S. Employment is strictly controlled by the Immigration Service and is not guaranteed. If the consular official asks you whether you intend to work in the US, you should say that you will work only as authorized by your J-1 visa status.

**WHAT IF YOUR VISA IS DENIED?**

Write to us with complete details of what was said and what documents you presented at your interview. Tell us the name of the consular officer and send a copy of any written answer you may have been given. Representatives of Barnard College will assist in any way that we can.