

Immigration Handbook



**Keene State College
Keene, New Hampshire**

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Edited by Deidra K. Razzaque, August 2011

Dear International Student,

Welcome to Keene State College!

Being an international student, you will have many wonderful possibilities for educational, cultural and social experiences. But, as an international student, you will also have a number of responsibilities that United States citizens do not have.

This is all part of the process for an international student to be able to study in the United States. The following guide will assist you in navigating the sometimes challenging process of attending Keene State on an F or J visa.

Undoubtedly, you will have additional questions.

For questions regarding Keene State Admissions, contact:

Mr. Bert Poirier

Telephone: (603) 358-2271

Email: bpoirier@keene.edu

Web: <http://admissions.keene.edu>

For questions concerning immigration issues, contact the Global Education Office:

Telephone: (603) 358-2348

E-mail: geo@keene.edu

Fax: (603) 358-2469

Web: <http://www.keene.edu/geo/>

All of us at Keene State College look forward to getting to know you.

Global Education Office
Keene State College
229 Main St.
Keene, NH 03431-2612
USA



Immigration Basics

What is a Visa?

A visa is a grant of permission to enter the country. The U.S. entrance requirements are as follows:

- ❑ You must be healthy. No inoculations are required to enter the U.S., unless you were recently in a country with epidemics such as cholera and yellow fever. HIV-positive people are not allowed to enter the U.S.
- ❑ You must be law-abiding. Criminal behavior is grounds for deportation.
- ❑ You must be able to support yourself financially during your stay.
- ❑ You intend to leave the U.S. after you complete your studies.

VISA: Visas are applied for at U.S. Consulates or Consular Sections of U.S. Embassies. Passports or travel documents are required at the time of application. Depending on visa category (**see “visa categories” section below**), additional documentation may be required and/or financial resources scrutinized. An individual already present in the United States does not need to have a valid visa as it serves only as an entry permit.

VISA CATEGORIES: As indicated above, there are distinct categories of visas. The following is a brief description of some of the more common categories.

B-1 - Business visa

B-2 - Tourist visa

F-1 – Student Visa (dependents are issued the F-2 visa)

J-1 - Exchange Visitor visa (dependents are issued the J-2 visa)



Documents required to attain a Student Visa

***Specifics on which visa to apply for, and how to obtain a visa, can be found on page 5.**

1. Passport

Your passport must be valid for at least six months beyond the end of your intended stay in the U.S.

Before leaving for the U.S., make at least one photocopy of the page containing your photograph and passport number. If your passport is lost or stolen, this will make it easier to replace the passport. Keep the photocopy in a safe place, but do not carry it with your passport.

If your passport is lost or stolen, notify your embassy and the police immediately.

2. Form I-20

Prior to applying for your visa, you will receive Form I-20. This form, also known as a Certificate of Eligibility, is a document that you will present when applying for your F-1 (exchange visitor) or J-1 (visiting student or scholar) visa. It is prepared by an academic institution (Keene State College), signed by an authorized signatory (Designated School Official), and **certifies that you have been accepted for study at the specific institution (Keene State College)**. This document also outlines the field and length of study, the level of English language skill required, the amount of money needed for study, and the amount and source of money (as verified by the institution) available to you. It may also indicate the name of a spouse and/or dependent children.

Assuming that the student has been able to obtain the F-1 or J-1 visa, he/she presents the Form I-20 upon entry to the United States, which is then returned to the student to serve as a travel document. The student, assuming s/he will be traveling in and out of the United States, has the responsibility of obtaining a signature from the Designated School Official at GEO (at least twice a year) to verify that student status is continuing. Re-entry to the U.S. can be severely compromised without this signature. *STUDENTS ARE EXPECTED TO ATTEND THE INSTITUTION INDICATED ON THE I-20.*

3. Form DS-2019

Prior to applying for your visa, you will receive Form DS-2019. This form, also known as a Certificate of Eligibility, is a document that you will present when applying for your J-1 (exchange visitor) visa. It is prepared by an academic institution (Keene State College), signed by an authorized signatory (Responsible Officer) and **certifies that you have been accepted for study at the specific institution (Keene State College)**. This document also outlines the field and length of study, the level of English language skill required, the amount of money needed for study, and the amount and source of money (as verified by the institution) available to you. It may also indicate the name of a spouse and/or dependent children.

Assuming that the student has been able to obtain the J-1 visa, s/he presents the Form DS-2019 upon entry to the United States, which is then returned to the student to serve as a travel document. If the student will be traveling in and out of the United States, s/he has the responsibility of obtaining a signature from the Responsible Officer at the Global Education Office (GEO) of Keene State College to verify that student status is continuing. Re-entry to the U.S. can be severely compromised without this signature.

4. SEVIS I-901 Fee

The U.S. Department of Homeland Security (DHS) requires the collection of a one-time SEVIS fee for new F-1 and J-1 Exchange Visitor students and scholars. This fee is being collected to fund operation of the Student and Exchange Visitor Program Office, which has priority over SEVIS - the Student and Exchange Visitor Information System. A new F-1 student must remit the fee directly to DHS by completing Form I-901 electronically using the Internet or by mail. Transfer students already attending a U.S. institution do not have to pay the fee. To access the online SEVIS fee payment system, go to: **www.FMJfee.com**. Make sure to submit your SEVIS I-901 fee payment in time to allow DHS to process the payment at least 3 days prior to your visa interview.

5. Letter of Admission from Keene State College

You will also need to present your letter of admission from Keene State College when you attempt to attain your F-1 or J-1 student visa.

6. Sufficient Financial Resources

To get a F-1 visa approved, you will **need to demonstrate that you have enough money to pay for at least one year's costs to attend KSC.**

The U.S. consular officer will examine the information you provide very carefully. If you do not have the resources necessary for study in the U.S., you will not get a visa.

If a U.S. citizen (for example, a relative) will be sponsoring your education, the relative will need to fill out a Form I-134 (Affidavit of Support). This form requires them to pay your expenses if you cannot. A Form I-134 filed by someone who is not a relative does not count as much as a Form I-134 filed by a relative.

For J-1 visa approval the consular officer will review whether the applicant will have sufficient funds to cover expenses while at Keene State College.

7. Proving Non-Immigrant Intent

You may **need to establish that you intend to return to your home country after your exchange program is complete.** You may need to demonstrate economic, personal, social, and cultural ties to your home country. Some of the methods of doing this include:

- ❑ Providing a list of the names, addresses, ages, and occupations of close family members who remain in the home country.
- ❑ Providing documentation of financial ties to the home country, such as ownership of real estate.
- ❑ Providing evidence of job prospects in the home country, such as a letter from a potential employer.
- ❑ Providing an explanation of why equivalent educational training is not available in your home country or is not as suitable.

Likewise, if you have close relatives or financial interests in the United States, you may have difficulty getting a visa. If a consular officer believes that you intend to immigrate to the U.S., the officer must, as a matter of law, deny the visa.

You may be required by the U.S. Citizenship & Immigration Services (USCIS) to post a Departure Bond to guarantee your departure.

WHAT SHOULD I DO IF MY FORM I-20 or DS-2019 MISSING?

Call the Global Education Office ***immediately*** and we will begin the process of reissuing you a new Form I-20 or DS-2019. If you happen to find your document after you reported it lost, please also let us know so that we can update our files. The Global Education Office can be contacted at **(603) 358-2348** or via e-mail at geo@keene.edu.



Student Visas

To be able to study in the USA, you will have to obtain the proper visa. **Below are definitions of the types of visas you might obtain, along with step-by-step procedures for attaining a (Student) Visa:**

Immigrant vs. Non-immigrant Visas

There are essentially two types of visas: immigrant and non-immigrant.

Immigrant visas are given to individuals who have been granted permission to reside permanently in the U.S. These individuals, called Permanent Residents, have been issued an Alien Registration Card (commonly referred to as a "green card") and are permitted to live and work in the U.S. without restriction. There are other foreign nationals who, although not permanent residents, are also authorized to live and work in the U.S. without restriction. These individuals do not receive green cards, and proof of employment eligibility is shown by a government-issued Employment Authorization Document (EAD).

Non-immigrant visas are given to individuals who intend to be in the U.S. for a temporary period of time: as students, temporary workers, participants in international cultural programs, entertainers or athletes, exchange visitors, diplomats or government representatives, investors, religious workers, tourists, or as visitors for short-term business purposes.

Non-immigrant visas are issued to foreign nationals who intend to remain in the U.S. for a **temporary period of time**. There are more than 40 non-immigrant U.S. visas; each visa type is used to enter the U.S. for a different purpose. Some visas authorize a period of temporary employment in the U.S., others permit foreign students to study, provide opportunities for international, educational exchange and allow foreign diplomats to serve their country's interests. The majority of foreign nationals enter the U.S. as tourists or for short-term business needs, rather than to "immigrate".

At Keene State the most commonly seen non-immigrant visas are the F-1 Student Visa, the J-1 Exchange Visitor Visa.

F-1 Visa Definition

The F-1 visa is for full-time study in an academic program.

The F-1 permits students to be employed on campus or off campus under certain conditions. On-campus employment for F-1 students is limited to 20 hours per week while school is in session. During school breaks and vacation periods, F-1 students are permitted to work on-campus for up to 40 hours per week.

In order to participate in Practical Training programs F-1 students must obtain employment authorization from U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS). F-1 students may also be eligible for Curricular Practical Training with prior approval from the OISS.

F-1 Visa Procedure:

1. Receive your Form I-20 (Certification of Eligibility) from GEO at Keene State College. *Remember to read the restrictions and responsibilities on page two and then sign and date the form.*
2. Contact the nearest U.S. Consulate or Embassy to make an appointment and begin the F-1 visa application process.
3. Submit SEVIS I-901 fee payment in time to allow the Department of Homeland Services to process payment at least 3 days prior to your visa interview.
4. Print SEVIS fee payment receipt from the Internet. Submit the receipt with visa application.

5. You must present the following documents when you visit the US Consulate/Embassy for your visa appointment:
 - ❑ Passport
 - ❑ Form I-20
 - ❑ Receipt verifying I-901 SEVIS fee payment
 - ❑ Letter of Admission/Invitation from Keene State College
 - ❑ Financial Certificates (for example, scholarship awards or a bank letter)
 - ❑ Evidence of your intent to return to your home country
6. Receive F-1 visa stamp in passport from U.S. Embassy/Consulate. Please inform a GEO staff member when you have received this stamp.

J-1 Visa Definition

J-1 Exchange Visitors may be students, visiting professors or short-term visiting scholars.

J-1 students are permitted to hold on-campus jobs for no more than 20 hours per week while classes are in session and up to 40 hours per week during breaks and vacation periods. All students in J-1 visa status must obtain prior approval from the Global Education Office before accepting on-campus employment. J-1 students in undergraduate or master's degree programs may be eligible to participate in academic training programs of up to 18 months. Students on J-1 visas do not need to apply to the USCIS for work authorization, but must obtain written authorization from the GEO prior to accepting employment. Academic Training must be directly related to the field of study and must be recommended by the student's academic advisor.

Visiting professors or researchers in J-1 visa status may be employed at KSC in temporary positions for a maximum of three years. J-1 visa holders are not permitted to be tenured or hold tenure-track positions.

J-1 Visa Procedure

1. Receive your Form DS-2019 (Certification of Eligibility) from Keene State College. *Remember to read the restrictions and responsibilities on page two and then sign and date the form.*
2. Contact the nearest U.S. Consulate or Embassy to make an appointment and begin the J-1 visa application process.
3. Submit SEVIS I-901 fee payment in time to allow the Department of Homeland Security to process payment at least 3 days prior to your visa interview.

4. Print SEVIS fee payment receipt from the Internet or wait to receive a form I-797 receipt from DHS via mail and submit the receipt with visa application.
5. You must present the following documents when you visit the US Consulate/Embassy for your visa appointment:
 - ❑ Passport
 - ❑ Form DS-2019
 - ❑ Receipt verifying I-901 SEVIS fee payment
 - ❑ Letter of Admission/Invitation from Keene State College
 - ❑ Financial Certificates (for example, scholarship awards or bank letter)
 - ❑ Evidence of your intent to return to your home country
6. Receive F-1 visa stamp in passport from U.S. Embassy/Consulate. Please inform a GEO staff member when you have received this stamp.



Other Important Entry Considerations

1. **For F-1 Visa Holders:** Enter the U.S. up to 30 days PRIOR to the start date indicated on the I-20 and no later than 60 days AFTER the start date indicated on the I-20.
2. **For J-1 Visa Holders:** Enter the U.S. up to 30 days PRIOR to the start date indicated on the DS-2019 and no later than 30 days AFTER the start date indicated on the DS-2019.
3. **DO NOT** attempt to enter the USA on a tourist/visitor visa (B1/B2) or via the visa waiver program.

4. **Canadian students** are required to present the same documents as other international students upon entry into the U.S., including financial verification, and other supporting documents (such as letter of acceptance). Please be sure to show these documents upon arrival at the border to avoid entering with visitor status.
5. In most countries, first-time student-visa applicants are required to appear for an in-person interview. However, each embassy or consulate sets its own interview policies and procedures regarding student visas. You should consult the U.S. embassy in your country for more specific visa application instructions [www.usembassy.state.gov]. Keep in mind that June, July and August are the busiest months in most consular sections, and interview appointments are the most difficult to get during this period. To the extent possible, you should provide the documents suggested below, as well as any other documents that might help establish your ties to the local community.
6. In compliance with the U.S. Department of Homeland Security (DHS), you are required to have valid addresses recorded in SEVIS during your studies. DHS may terminate your immigration status automatically if you do not maintain your address information with KSC.
7. While you are holding a KSC sponsored F-1 visa, you are required to provide the GEO with the address that you are living at.



Before You Leave Checklist

- ✓ Inform the GEO office of your expected date of arrival.
- ✓ Confirm your housing arrangements with Residential Life
- ✓ Make arrangements to get from the airport to Keene State College. Call the GEO office for assistance, if necessary.
- ✓ Collect any prescriptions.
- ✓ Have necessary documents (copy of driving record or driver's license from home) to apply for a NH driver's license, if desired. To rent a car, you will need an international driver's license.
- ✓ Make sure that your immigration documents are in order, and that you have all documents that you will need with you.



Arrival Information

Entry Procedures: Immigration

1. Once you receive your Form I-20 or DS-2019 from Keene State College, you must apply for a visa at your local U.S. Consulate or Embassy. If you are applying for a visa *outside* your country of origin, you may be required to return to your home country to apply.
2. *At the U.S. port of entry*, you will be asked to show your **passport**, **visa**, and **I-20 or DS-2019**. You may also be asked to show your **financial documents** for inspection. Please be sure to *carry all of this information with you* and not in your baggage.
3. *Once you have been admitted to the United States*, you will be issued an **I-94 card** (a small white card.) This card documents your arrival date, port of entry, visa status, and the duration of your stay. Your I-20 or DS-2019 Form will also be returned to you. **These are very important documents. Please keep them in your passport at all times.**

This form, also called an Arrival/Departure Record, is issued to most foreign nationals who enter the U.S. as non-immigrants. It is meant to serve as a record of entry in immigration services databases; it is also the document that indicates the period of allowable stay. For those in the J category, the notation "D/S" is made instead of a date. When a specific date is used, this is referred to as a "date certain". In immigration records for J-1 visa holders, however, "D/S" is translated as the actual completion date shown on the Form DS-2019 plus 30 days. The number on the Form I-94 is an *ADMISSION NUMBER* and serves as the tracking number assigned to the individual in government records. The I-94 form is surrendered upon departure from the U.S. and the record of departure is reconciled with the record of entry. At present, these forms are simply collected by staff of

transportation carriers at the point of departure from the United States and then turned over to immigration services.

4. **Canadian students:** *Once you have been admitted to the United States, you will also be given an **I-94 card**.*

PLEASE MAKE COPIES OF THESE IMPORTANT DOCUMENTS:

Picture page of your Passport, I-94, I-20 or DS-2019, and Visa

KEEP THEM IN A SAFE PLACE



Entry Procedures: Customs

After you have gone through the immigration inspection at the U.S. port of entry, you must pass through customs. You will be asked to declare what you have bought into the country. In most cases, you will

1. **Fill out a declaration form on the plane.** Make sure to fill out your declaration form before you arrive so you can speed up your customs and immigration clearance.
2. After going through immigration at the airport, you will need to **make a verbal statement to the customs official**, who may or may not inspect your baggage. There may be dogs sniffing baggage for illegal drugs.

If you arrive to the U.S. with prescription medication, please have the prescription readily available for inspection. To prepare for this inspection, do the following:

- ❑ Have all drugs, medicines, and similar products properly identified.
- ❑ Carry only such quantity as would normally be used by an individual having the health problem requiring the drugs or medicines in your possession.
- ❑ Have either a prescription or written statement from your personal physician proclaiming that the medicine is being used under a doctor's direction, and that it is necessary for your physical well being while traveling. (It is best to have this translated in English for easier inspection).

You may bring anything for your personal use without paying duty, including clothing, jewelry, sports equipment, and other necessary items. Quantity limitations are placed on the following items: alcoholic beverages (one liter if you are twenty-one or older), one carton cigarettes, no more than fifty cigars, and up to four pounds of smoking tobacco. You **do not** need to itemize things you brought with you for personal use **if** they are within the exemptions allowed for arriving non-residents.

A total of \$100 worth of gifts may be brought in duty free every six months. Any value over \$100 will be assessed for a tax duty.

You must make an accurate determination of the amount you are carrying upon your arrival. If you are carrying over \$10,000 in any form of currency or other negotiable on your person, you must declare it when you fill out the customs declaration form on the plane; however, no duty will be assessed.

Insurance Requirement

All international and exchange students are required by the US government and KSC to prove that they have health insurance for the duration of your stay at Keene State College. GEO will ask for proof of health insurance (such as a copy of your policy) when you arrive. If you need a list of companies that provide health insurance policies please contact the GEO. Below are the insurance policy minimum requirements as stated by the US government.

(a) Sponsors shall require each exchange visitor to have insurance in effect which covers the exchange visitor for sickness or accident during the period of time that an exchange visitor participates in the sponsor's exchange visitor program. Minimum coverage shall provide:

- (1) medical benefits of at least \$50,000 per accident or illness;
- (2) repatriation of remains in the amount of \$7,500;
- (3) expenses associated with medical evacuation of the exchange visitor to his or her home country in the amount of \$10,000; and
- (4) a deductible not to exceed \$500 per accident or illness.

- (b) An insurance policy secured to fulfill the requirements of this section:
- (1) may require a waiting period for pre-existing conditions which is reasonable as determined by current industry standards;
 - (2) may include provision for co-insurance under the terms of which the exchange visitor may be required to pay up to 25 percent of the covered benefits per accident or illness; and
 - (3) shall not unreasonably exclude coverage for perils inherent to the activities of the exchange program in which the exchange visitor participates.
- (c) Any policy plan or contract secured to fulfill the above requirements must, at minimum, be:
- (1) Underwritten by an insurance corporation having an A.M. Best rating of "A-" or above, an Insurance Solvency International, Ltd. (ISI) rating of "A-" or above, a Standard and Poor's Claims-paying Ability rating of "A" or above, a Weiss Research, Inc. rating of B+ or above, or such other rating service as the Agency may from time to time specify; or
 - (2) Backed by the full faith and credit of the government of the exchange visitor's home country; or
 - (3) Part of a health benefits program offered on a group basis to employees or enrolled students by a designated sponsor; or
 - (4) Offered through or underwritten by a federally qualified Health Maintenance Organization (HMO) or eligible Competitive Medical Plan (CMP) as determined by the Health Care Financing Administration of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services.
- (d) Federal, state or local government agencies, state colleges and universities, and public community colleges may, if permitted by law, self-insure any or all of the above-required insurance coverage.
- (e) At the request of a non-governmental sponsor of an exchange visitor program, and upon a showing that such sponsor has funds readily available and under its control sufficient to meet the requirements of this section, the Agency may permit the sponsor to self-insure or to accept full financial responsibility for such requirements.
- (f) The Agency, in its sole discretion, may condition its approval of self-insurance or the acceptance of full financial responsibility by the non-governmental sponsor by requiring such sponsor to secure a payment bond in favor of the Agency guaranteeing the sponsor's obligations hereunder.
- (g) An accompanying spouse or dependent of an exchange visitor is required to be covered by insurance in the amounts set forth in paragraph (a) of this section. Sponsors shall inform exchange visitors of this requirement, in writing, in advance of the exchange visitor's arrival in the United States. Sponsors shall inform exchange visitors of this requirement, in writing, in advance of the exchange visitor's arrival in the United States.
- (h) An exchange visitor who willfully fails to maintain the insurance coverage set forth above while a participant in an exchange visitor program or who

makes a material misrepresentation to the sponsor concerning such coverage shall be deemed to be in violation of these regulations and shall be subject to termination as a participant.

(i) A sponsor shall terminate an exchange visitor's participation in its program if the sponsor determines that the exchange visitor or any accompanying spouse or dependent willfully fails to remain in compliance with insurance requirements.

Health Forms

If you have not done so before arriving at KSC, you will be required to hand to the Center for Health and Wellness the various medical forms that all Keene States students are required to submit before attending. These forms can be found at: <http://www.keene.edu/chw/forms.cfm>

If you have additional question do not hesitate to contact geo@keene.edu or by phone at 603 358-2348