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Human Resources: SEVIS Fee

What is the SEVIS Fee?

The Student and Exchange Visitor Information System, SEVIS, is the web-based tracking system to collect, maintain and manage information about foreign students and exchange visitors during their stay in the U.S.

The Department of Homeland Security (DHS) implemented a SEVIS fee on September 1, 2004 . The fee is to support the continued operation of the SEVIS system.

Who must pay the SEVIS fee?

- Students (visa categories F-1, F-3, M-1 or M-3) and exchange visitors (visa category J-1) issued a Form I-20 or Form DS-2019 on or after September 1, 2004 to begin a new program.
- A change of status to student or exchange visitor after September 1, 2004 .
- Students who file for reinstatement after being out of status for more than five (5) months.
- Students applying for a new visa or returning to the U.S. after an absence of five (5) months, if the absence did not involve authorized overseas study.
- Exchange visitors filing a reinstatement application after a substantive violation.
- Exchange visitors filing a reinstatement application after being out of status between 121 and 269 days.
- Exchange visitors applying for a change in exchange visitor category (unless the change is to a U.S. government sponsored program, G-1, G-2 or G-3, or from Professor to Research Scholar and vice-versa).
- A student or scholar reapplying for the same visa status more than twelve (12) months after a visa denial is issued.
- Students and scholars in a government sponsored program, (G-1, G-2, G-3, and G-7), who are transferring to non-government programs.
- J-2 dependents applying for a change of status to F-1 or J-1 status.

Who is exempt from paying the fee?

- Spouses and unmarried children, (under 21 years of age), of students and scholars who apply for J-2, F-2 or M-2 status.
- Federally sponsored exchange visitor programs that start with G1, G-2, G-3, or G-7 visa classification.
- Exchange visitors applying for a change of category from Professor to Research Scholar and vice-versa.
- Students and scholars whose form I-20 or DS-2019 was issued on or before August 31, 2004 .
- A student or scholar who has previously paid the fee is not required to pay the fee when applying for program extension in the same program.
- Students and scholars who have previously paid the fee are not required to pay the fee when applying for a transfer to another institution while maintaining status in the same category.

When must the SEVIS fee be paid?

- For initial attendance, the fee must be paid prior to applying at a U.S. Consulate/Embassy for the visa stamp. Applicants can schedule an appointment at the U.S. Consulate or Embassy prior to paying the fee, but the fee payment must be received by DHS at least three (3) business days before the scheduled interview.
- Aliens who are exempt from visa requirements, (i.e. citizens of Canada and Bermuda), must pay the fee before applying for admission to the U.S. at a port of entry. Fee payment must be received by DHS at least three (3) business days before applying at a port-of entry.
- Students and scholars applying for a change of status through a U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services service center must pay the SEVIS fee before the service center will approve their applications.

How is the SEVIS fee paid?

The Department of Homeland Security has created several means by which international students and scholars can pay the SEVIS fee:

- The fee may be paid by mail by submitting a form I-901 along with a check or money order drawn on a U.S. bank and payable in U.S. currency.
- The fee may be paid electronically by completing Form I-901 through the Internet and using a credit/debit card.

- The fee may also be paid, by mail or electronically, by a third party, such as a friend, school, or exchange visitor program sponsor.
- The SEVIS fee cannot be paid directly at the U.S. Consulate/Embassy, port-of-entry or U.S.C.I.S. Service Center.

Will students and scholars receive written acknowledgement when they pay the SEVIS fee?

- Students and scholars who pay the fee on the internet by credit card will be able to print out a receipt at the time the fee is paid and will be able to use that receipt for immediate verification of payment.
- Students and scholars who pay the fee by mail will receive printed receipts at the address provided on the Form I-901.
- Third parties, who pay the SEVIS fee on behalf of incoming students and scholars, by mail or electronically will receive printed receipts to send to students and scholars.

Initially, not every Consular or Embassy office will have the ability to verify fee payment electronically. Paper receipts will serve as a secondary means of fee payment verification until proof of payment can be verified electronically.

If the visa is denied at the U.S. Consulate will the student or scholar be given a refund?

Refunds are made on a case-by-case basis. You may submit a refund request, along with a detailed explanation for a determination on whether or not the fee will be refunded. If a student or exchange visitor visa is denied and they reapply for the same visa within a twelve month period, he/she will not have to pay the fee again. If the student or scholar is applying for a different visa, then they will have to pay the fee in conjunction with that application.

What will happen if I fail to pay the fee?

Failure to pay the fee is reason for denial of F, M or J nonimmigrant status or status-related benefits. For purposes of reinstatement, failure to pay the fee will be considered a “willful violation”, unless DHS determines that there are extenuating circumstances.

Last updated: January 15, 2016

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