

**School Supporting Documents For Approval of
Form - I-17:**

Clarification of Supporting Documentation
Accepted by the Service for SEVIS School
Certification and School Approval to Admit
Nonimmigrant F and M Students.

The Immigration and Naturalization Service (Service) interim rule, *Requiring Certification of all Service Approved Schools for Enrollment in the Student and Exchange Visitor Information System (SEVIS)*, defines the process by which all schools wishing to admit foreign students will be reviewed for full certification to enroll in SEVIS. This certification process requires an on-site review of all currently approved schools prior to May 14, 2004. As specified in the rule, at the time of on-site review, a school will be able to present supporting documentation evidencing its eligibility for Service approval. The supporting documentation requirements for school approval are defined at 8 CFR 214.3(b) and (c), and have not changed with the SEVIS Certification rule. However, the following provides a clarification of the existing regulations, and lists, by school type, a summary and specific examples of

the kinds of evidentiary documentation accepted by the INS. The Service has requires that petitioning institutions submit certain supporting documents as follows:

A petitioning school or school system owned and operated as a public educational institution or system by the United States or a state or political subdivision thereof shall submit certification to that effect signed by the appropriate public official who shall certify that he or she is authorized to do so. Evidence of such certification is usually in the form of a state license or approval. The school may also show evidence of accreditation, but this accreditation is not sufficient replacement for state licensure or approval.

A petitioning private or parochial elementary or secondary school system shall submit a certification signed by the appropriate public official who shall certify that he or she is authorized to do so to the effect that it meets the requirements of the state or local public educational system. Such certification is typically a state license or approval. A private or parochial elementary or secondary school may be accredited, but this accreditation cannot be substituted for state licensure or approval.

A flight school must be licensed or approved by the state and approved by the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA). The approval by the FAA will be the "air agency certificate" and must include a list of authorized courses, instruction ratings, flight hours, and an attachment certifying approval pursuant to 14 CFR part 141.

Any other petitioning school shall submit a certification by the appropriate licensing, approving, or accrediting official who shall certify that he or she is authorized to do so to the effect that it is licensed, approved or accredited. In lieu of such certification a school which offers courses recognized by a state-approving agency as appropriate for study by veterans under the provisions of 38 U.S.C. 3675 and 3676 may submit a statement of recognition signed by the appropriate official of the state-approving agency who shall certify that he or she is authorized to do so. A charter shall not be considered a license, approval, or accreditation.

School catalogue.

A school catalogue, if one is issued, shall also be submitted with each petition, unless the petitioning institution is exempt as indicated below. If not included in the catalogue, or if a catalogue is not issued, the

school shall furnish a written statement containing information concerning the size of its physical plant, nature of its facilities for study and training, professional qualifications of the teaching staff, salaries of the teachers, attendance and scholastic grading policy, amount and character of supervisory and consultative services available to students and trainees, and finances (including a certified copy of an accountant's last statement of the school's net worth, income, and expenses). **Neither a catalogue nor a written statement need be included with a petition submitted by:**

(1) A school or school system owned and operated as a public educational institution or system by the United States or a State or a political subdivision thereof;

(2) A school accredited by a nationally recognized accrediting body; or

(3) A secondary school operated by or as part of a school so accredited.

Other evidence required for certain institutions:

The Service has also consulted with the Department of Education regarding the following types of institutions and determined that they must submit additional evidence.

A vocational, business, or language school, or an American institution of research recognized by the Attorney General, must submit evidence that its courses of study are accepted as fulfilling the requirements for the attainment of an educational, professional, or vocational objective, and are not avocational or recreational in character. The Service will accept evidence of accreditation as meeting this requirement. Unaccredited schools must submit documentation as follows:

Schools seeking F-1 approval and vocational schools awarding recognized associate degrees must submit letters from three accredited institutions attesting that graduates of the petitioning school subsequently have been and are accepted unconditionally into the accredited institutions. Such letters must include the names of the graduates, dates of enrollment, and the program into which the graduates were accepted.

Vocational schools not covered by the paragraphs above must submit letters from three employers attesting that recent graduates of the petitioning school are fully qualified in the field of training. Such letters must state the names and positions of the graduates and the dates of employment with the company.

An institution of higher education not described in the paragraphs above must submit evidence that it confers upon its graduates recognized bachelor, master, doctor, professional, or divinity degrees, or if it does not confer such degrees that its credits have been and are accepted unconditionally by at least three such institutions of higher learning. The Service will accept the following documents to meet this requirement:

(1) Letters from at least three accredited institutions attesting that the accredited institution unconditionally accepts credits from the petitioning school. These letters must state the name of the petitioning institution, names of graduates of the petitioning institution who have been accepted at the accredited institution, and enrollment dates and programs for which the graduates have been accepted, or

(2) Absent such letters, a school may submit evidence that the institution or program has established satisfactory assurance of future accreditation from the appropriate accrediting body.

An elementary or secondary school not described in paragraphs above must submit evidence that attendance at the petitioning institution satisfies the compulsory attendance requirements of the State in which it is located

and that the petitioning school qualifies graduates for acceptance by recognized schools of a higher educational level. The following documents satisfy this requirement:

(i) A certificate of accreditation or approval from a local educational agency, if such agency is required by the state to approve private schools through an on-site team visit; or

(ii) A certification of accreditation or successful evaluation by an organization holding membership in the Council for American Private Education, as well as letters from at least three public institutions of a higher educational level attesting that graduates from the petitioning school have been and are unconditionally accepted into their programs.