



U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement

HOW TO PREPARE FOR A SITE VISIT

Updated: March 6, 2007

The Student and Exchange Visitor Program (SEVP) Office is providing the following guidance to educational institutions expecting a site visit in conjunction with the adjudication of Form I-17, *Petition for Approval of School Attendance by Non-Immigrant Students*, as required by regulation 8 CFR 214.3(h)(2).

What to Expect

An inspector, contracted by Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE), will contact the Primary Designated School Official (PDSO) to arrange for the visit. The inspector has some flexibility in scheduling; however, the site visit results must be received at the SEVP office within 10 days of the assignment. She/he will arrive on campus with a letter of introduction and a form of identification. The inspector will spend 2-3 hours touring the facility and speaking to designated school officials (P/DSO). The time spent during the site visit is directly related to the size of the school's facility, i.e. smaller institutions will take less time, larger institutions will take more time.

Campus Tour

The inspector will tour the facility and will observe different areas of the school. This does include observing a live lecture/class; housing arrangements; food facilities; library; administration offices; and the area where student files are stored. The site inspector will inquire about the school's maximum facility size, which will include the number of classrooms and the maximum students each classroom can hold. The school should be prepared to provide documented evidence from the state or Fire Marshall regarding the maximum capacity of the school, if requested by the site inspector.

Designated School Official DSO Interview

The inspector must interview at least one individual that is listed on the I-17 as a P/DSO. This person should be the person that will be responsible for updating SEVIS and maintaining compliance with all SEVP regulations. If the school has more than one campus location, the DSO being interviewed should be the person whose office is located on-site. The inspector, at a minimum, will ask about the school's processes and knowledge relating to the eligibility of students to attend, process to transfer students in or out, monitoring student status, student reinstatements, employment or practical training authorization, and other processes and regulations of the program. The DSO must present a broad knowledge of the regulations.

Documentation Requirements

The inspector will collect all required documentation from the P/DSO and mail them to the SEVP office for adjudication. Documentation requirements differ based on the type of school and accreditation. See Attachment A of this document for further information. **Prepare this information in a folder (no binders).**

All PDSOs and DSOs listed on the I-17 must provide proof of US citizenship or Legal Permanent Resident status (A copy of one of the civil-issued documents: US birth certificate, US passport-expired or current, naturalization certificate, proof of derived citizenship, or Greencard.) No other forms are acceptable. **If the name on the civil-issued document differs from the name included on the Form I-17, proof of legal name change must also be provided (i.e., marriage license).**

Schools Previously Denied or Withdrawn

Please have ready a copy of the official notification from immigration of reasons for denial or previous withdrawal. If official notification is not available, provide any correspondence with immigration or information as to why the school was denied or withdrawn.

Required Signatures

The inspector must take the original Form I-17 at the completion of the site visit. **Original** signatures are required on Form I-17, page 3 and Form I-17A, pages 1 & 2. The Owner, President, Board Chairperson, or Head of School must sign Form I-17, page 3 **and** Form I-17A, page 2. For **public high schools**, the signature must be the Superintendent. Form I-17A requires original signatures of all individuals listed as the Principal Designated School Official (PDSO) and Designated School Officials (DSOs). If the same person is a DSO for multiple campuses, each Form I-17A for each campus must be signed. Do not type or write any changes on this form. All changes must be completed electronically through SEVIS.

Request for Evidence (RFE)

In most instances, SEVP will have the need to request additional information or evidence, or seek clarifying information from the school. This process is known as an "RFE". All items outlined in the RFE must be addressed and all information submitted at one time. The RFE is sent through a SEVIS-generated email and is sent solely to the PDSO. Therefore, it is very important all email addresses are accurately maintained in SEVIS and your email system does not treat sysadmin.sevis@dhs.gov email as SPAM.

Regulations state a school has 12 weeks to respond to the RFE. If after 12 weeks SEVP receives no response, the school's petition will be denied for lack of prosecution (abandonment). Petitions denied for abandonment, have no appeal rights.

Adjudication Process

After the site visit has been conducted, allow at least 16 weeks for adjudication. If SEVP must send an RFE to the school, this will increase the adjudication timeframe. It is critical all required documentation is given to the site inspector. All individuals with a temporary UserID and password will be notified via email (through SEVIS) if the school was approved or denied. Do not respond to the adjudication email. If the school was denied, the school will receive an official letter for the reasons of denial.

State Licensure/Registration/Proof of Exemption

If the State in which the school is located does not require registration or license, the school must obtain Proof of Exemption from the State's Department of Education. However, if the school is approved by the state for veterans study, this is acceptable in lieu of state license/registration. Private school affidavits meet the requirements of state licensure.

Copy of Site Visit Results

A copy of the site visit results will not be provided to the school.

FERPA

Nonimmigrant students are not covered by FERPA with respect to information collecting and releasing information to federal agencies with respect to SEVP/SEVIS. The Illegal Immigration Reform and Immigration Responsibility Act (IIRIRA) of 1996, states:

"The Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act of 1974 [20 U.S.C. 1232g] shall not apply to aliens described in subsection (a) of this section to the extent that the Attorney General determines necessary to carry out the program under subsection (a) of this section."

Contact Information

We request the school to wait at least 16 weeks after the site visit before inquiring about status of the petition.

School Certification Branch
425 I Street, NW
Suite 6034
Washington, DC 20536
Phone: 202-305-2346, prompt 1
Fax: 202-353-3723
Email: schoolcert.sevis@dhs.gov

ATTACHMENT A

Type of School	Documentation Required – Recognized Accreditation
<p>Private/Public Degree-granting Institutions or Seminaries</p> <p>(F schools)</p> <p>Note: Degree-granting institutions may issue certificates. Most certificate programs are classified as M programs.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Original signed Form I-17 by Owner, President, Head of School • Original signed Form I-17A with all PDSO and DSO signatures and Owner, President, Head of School on page 2 of I-17A, • Copy of Accreditation certification and printout from accrediting body’s website with current date • Copy of State license, registration, or proof of exemption • School catalog (information should outline grading policy, admission requirements, expulsion requirements, attendance policy, course requirements) • For certificate programs, provide hours/week of instruction, hours/week of lab instruction, total hours per week, total hours to complete the program.
<p>Intensive English Programs</p> <p>(F schools)</p> <p>Note: If your school also offers non-ESL programs of study, see requirements in next section.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Original signed Form I-17 by Owner, President, Head of School • Original signed Form I-17A with all PDSO and DSO signatures and Owner, President, Head of School on page 2 of I-17A, • Copy of Accreditation certification • Copy of State license, registration, or proof of exemption • School catalog, brochures (information should outline grading policy, admission requirements, expulsion requirements, attendance policy, and list of courses) • List of all programs of study seeking approval, ESL levels, hours/week of instruction, hours/week of lab instruction, total hours per week, total hours to complete the program.
<p>All other Post-Secondary Schools</p> <p>(M Schools)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Original signed Form I-17 by Owner, President, Head of School • Original signed Form I-17A with all PDSO and DSO signatures and Owner, President, Head of School on page 2 of I-17A, • Copy of Accreditation certification and printout from accrediting body’s website with current date • Copy of State license, registration, or proof of exemption • School catalog (information should outline grading policy, admission requirements, expulsion requirements, attendance policy, course requirements) • List of all programs of study seeking approval, hours/week of instruction, hours/week of lab instruction, total hours per week, total hours to complete the program, and number of weeks to complete the program (to time of graduation).
<p>Private K-12</p> <p>(F schools)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Original signed Form I-17 by Owner, President, Head of School • Original signed Form I-17A with all PDSO and DSO signatures and Owner, President, Head of School on page 2 of I-17A, • Copy of Accreditation certification and printout from accrediting body’s website with current date • Copy of State license, registration, or proof of exemption, or proof they fall under the State’s DOE standards. If the school is exempt from having to be licensed, evidence the school meets the compulsory attendance laws. • School catalog, brochures (information should outline grading policy, admission requirements, expulsion requirements, attendance policy) • School applying together as a system (i.e., diocesan schools) will be required to submit a list of schools within the system.
<p>Public High Schools/Charter</p> <p>(F schools)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Original signed Form I-17 by Superintendent • Original signed Form I-17A with all PDSO and DSO signatures and Superintendent on page 2 of I-17A, • Provide evidence school is public high school and/or charter school • List of all high schools within district/charter

Type of School	Documentation Required: Non-Accredited or Accreditation not Recognized by the US Department of Education
<p>Private/Public Degree-granting Institutions or Seminaries</p> <p>(F schools)</p> <p>Note: Degree-granting institutions may issue certificates. Most certificate programs are classified as M programs.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Original signed Form I-17 by Owner, President, Head of School • Original signed Form I-17A with all PDSO and DSO signatures and Owner, President, Head of School on page 2 of I-17A, • Copy of State license, registration, or proof of exemption • Evidence that its credits have been and are accepted unconditionally by at least three (3) nationally recognized accredited institutions or public institutions of higher learning. See document at <u>http://www.ice.gov/doclib/sevis/pdf/In_lieu_of_accreditation_fs.pdf</u>. • Institutions with articulation agreements must follow the same regulations listed for institutions providing letters. See document at <u>http://www.ice.gov/doclib/sevis/pdf/In_lieu_of_accreditation_fs.pdf</u> • School catalog (information should outline grading policy, admission requirements, expulsion requirements, attendance policy, course requirements) • A certified copy of an accountant's last statement of the school's net worth, income, and expenses. Certified means signed by the preparer. • A written statement containing information on educational, vocational, or professional qualifications of teaching staff (by name), salaries of teachers, attendance and scholastic grading policy, amount and character of supervisory and consultative services available to students and trainees. • Evidence of maximum capacity of facilities (i.e., state licensure, Fire Marshall, etc.)
<p>Intensive English Programs</p> <p>(F schools)</p> <p>Note: If your school also offers non-ESL programs of study, see requirements in next section.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Original signed Form I-17 by Owner, President, Head of School • Original signed Form I-17A with all PDSO and DSO signatures and Owner, President, Head of School on page 2 of I-17A. • Copy of State license, registration, or proof of exemption • Evidence its programs 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 nature. See document at <u>http://www.ice.gov/doclib/sevis/pdf/In_lieu_of_accreditation_fs.pdf</u> • School catalog, brochures (information should outline grading policy, admission requirements, expulsion requirements, attendance policy, and list of courses) • A certified copy of an accountant's last statement of the school's net worth, income, and expenses. Certified means signed by the preparer. • A written statement containing information on educational, vocational, or professional qualifications of teaching staff (by name), salaries of teachers, attendance and scholastic grading policy, amount and character of supervisory and consultative services available to students and trainees. • Evidence of maximum capacity of facilities (i.e., state licensure, Fire Marshall, etc.)

Type of School	Documentation Required: Non-Accredited or Accreditation not Recognized by the US Department of Education
Post-Secondary Schools or Seminaries (M Schools)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Original signed Form I-17 by Owner, President, Head of School • Original signed Form I-17A with all PDSO and DSO signatures and Owner, President, Head of School on page 2 of I-17A, • Copy of State license, registration, or proof of exemption • Evidence its programs of study are accepted as fulfilling the requirements for the attainment of an educational, profession, or vocational objective and are not avocational or recreational in nature. See document at <u>http://www.ice.gov/doclib/sevis/pdf/In_lieu_of_accreditation_fs.pdf</u> • School catalog (information should outline grading policy, admission requirements, expulsion requirements, attendance policy, course requirements) • A certified copy of an accountant's last statement of the school's net worth, income, and expenses. Certified means signed by the preparer. • A written statement containing information on educational, vocational, or professional qualifications of teaching staff (by name), salaries of teachers, attendance and scholastic grading policy, amount and character of supervisory and consultative services available to students and trainees. • Evidence of maximum capacity of facilities (i.e., state licensure, Fire Marshall, etc.)
Private K-12 (F schools)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Original signed Form I-17 by Owner, President, Head of School • Original signed Form I-17A with all PDSO and DSO signatures and Owner, President, Head of School on page 2 of I-17A, • Copy of State license, registration, or proof of exemption • Evidence the school satisfies compulsory attendance for the state in which it is located AND the petitioning school qualifies its graduates for acceptance by schools of a higher educational level. See document at <u>http://www.ice.gov/doclib/sevis/pdf/In_lieu_of_accreditation_fs.pdf</u> • School catalog, brochures (information should outline grading policy, admission requirements, expulsion requirements, attendance policy) • A certified copy of an accountant's last statement of the school's net worth, income, and expenses. Certified means signed by the preparer. • A written statement containing information on educational, vocational, or professional qualifications of teaching staff, salaries of teachers, attendance and scholastic grading policy, amount and character of supervisory and consultative services available to students and trainees. • Evidence of maximum capacity of facilities (i.e., state licensure, Fire Marshall, etc.) <p>Note: Schools may submit letters from public school systems that have accepted transfer students from the petitioner. The letter must indicate the last grade completed at the private school and the grade accepted into at the public school.</p>
Flight Training (M Schools)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Original signed Form I-17 by Owner, President, Head of School • Original signed Form I-17A with all PDSO and DSO signatures and Owner, President, Head of School on page 2 of I-17A, • Copy of FAA Part 141/142 Approval and Accompanying Letter • Copy of State license, registration, or proof of exemption • School catalog, brochures, course hours for all approval ratings • A certified copy of an accountant's last statement of the school's net worth, income, and expenses. Certified means signed by the preparer.

Please note: Schools recognized by a state-approving agency as appropriate for study for veterans, can submit a statement of such recognition in lieu of state licensure/registration.