

Gnomon School of Visual Effects

Student Visa/International Students

Frequently Asked Questions

What is a Student Visa?

A student visa is a permit issued by the U.S. government to non-immigrant students who want to study in the United States.

Applying for an M-1 student visa can be complicated and frustrating. There is no guarantee that the visa officer at the U.S. Embassy or the Consulate will issue you a visa. You will need to convince the U.S. Embassy or Consulate that you are a serious student who will study full-time and earn good grades. You must also show sufficient financial support and demonstrate evidence that you will return to your home country after you have completed your studies.

How long is the visa?

Your M-1 visa is for the period of your program of study. You are required by law to participate in studies a minimum number of hours per week in order to keep your legal status. Upon completing your academic program, you have up to 30 days to leave the country.

Meeting with the Consular Officer

*The Consular officer will speak to you in English

*When answering questions, be concise and to the point. You must make a good impression in a very short period of time.

*To help make a good impression, dress well. You should approach this interview as if it was a job interview.

*Speak for yourself. Do not rely on another person to speak for you.

When to Apply

Apply for a visa in your home country as soon as you receive your acceptance to Gnomon.

Applying for a Visa

1. Apply for a visa in your country

2. Complete the following forms:

*Certificate of Eligibility

*I-20 from PCC

* Visa Application Forms:

*DS-156 Nonimmigrant Visa Application

*DS-157 Supplemental Nonimmigrant Visa Application (if needed)

*DS-158 Contact Information and Work History for Nonimmigrant Visa Application

4. Apply and Receive a Valid Passport

Your passport must be valid for at least 6 months. You must maintain a valid passport throughout your stay in the U.S.

5. Have **TWO** recent passport -size photos

6. Provide financial evidence detailing source and amount of funding

7. Proof of maintaining close ties and intent to return to your home country (such as family, career, or property)

Examples:

A statement verifying:

--Your entire family resides in your home country

--That you or your family own a home or other property in your home country

--That you have a job waiting for you upon your return

Any documents, such as tax returns.

8. Keep your receipt of the visa processing fee.

How long can I stay in the United States?

You are allowed to stay in the United States for one year or for as long as you are enrolled as a full-time student in a vocational program (plus thirty days to prepare to leave the country), whichever is shorter. You should be allowed to stay in the United States 30 days beyond the departure date on your Form I-94 (Arrival-Departure Record) and USCIS Form I-20 ID (Certificate of Eligibility for Nonimmigrant (M-1) Student Status - For Vocational Students), as long as your stay does not exceed one year.

You may also apply to stay in the country after the completion of your studies to pursue practical training. If approved, you will be allowed to have one month of practical training for every four months of study you completed. You will be limited to six months total practical training time. Your designated school official (DSO) is able to assist you in the application process.

How can I extend my stay as a student in the United States?

You should apply to extend your stay in the United States if your studies will take longer than the date listed on your I-20 ID or your vocational program lasts longer than a year. You should complete [USCIS Form I-539 \(Application to Extend/Change Nonimmigrant Status\)](http://uscis.gov/graphics/formsfee/forms/i-539.htm) and send it to USCIS at least 15 (but not more than 60) days before your authorized stay in the country expires. You should also submit your USCIS Form I-20 ID to the USCIS at the same time. For more information, please see [How Do I Extend My Stay in the United States?](http://uscis.gov/graphics/howdoi/extendstay.htm) <http://uscis.gov/graphics/howdoi/extendstay.htm>

Can I change from an M-1 visa to an F-1 visa?

No. You must leave the country to cancel your M-1 visa and reapply for a new visa status in your home country.

Can I change from an M-1 visa to an H-1 visa?

No. You must leave the country to cancel your M-1 visa and reapply for a new visa status in your home country.

Can I travel to my home country on vacation on an M-1 visa?

Yes. If your M-1 visa was approved at a US Embassy and originally stamped outside of the US, you can travel to your home country.

No, if your M-1 visa was a change of status applied for in the US, you must await approval from immigration.

Do I need a TOEFL score?

No, but Gnomon requires that you are proficient in the English.

Can I Bring My Spouse and Children with Me to the United States?

Your spouse and unmarried children under 21 years of age may come with you to the United States in M-2 nonimmigrant status. They should go with you to the U.S. embassy or consulate when you apply for your student (M-1) visa. They should be prepared to prove their relationship to you. If your spouse or children are following to join you at a later date, they should provide the U.S. embassy staff with a copy of your USCIS Form I-20 ID and proof of their relationship to you. The M-2 status of your family will be dependent upon your status as the M-1 vocational student. This means that if you change your status, your family must change their status as well. If you lose your status, your family will also lose their status. (For more information on changing status, please see

[How Do I Get Permission to Change to a New Nonimmigrant Status?](http://uscis.gov/graphics/howdoi/nonimmstat.htm)

<http://uscis.gov/graphics/howdoi/nonimmstat.htm>

Can I work in the USA ?

Immigration law restricts students from working on an M-1 visa. You are not legally allowed to be employed while studying in the US. So, you, your spouse and children may not accept employment.

Can I do practical training in the USA ?

However, you may apply for practical training after you complete your studies. If approved, you will be allowed to have one month of practical training for every four months of study you have completed. You will be limited to six months total practical training time.

You should submit USCIS Form 538 (Certification By Designated School Official) to the USCIS. Your school official should certify on USCIS Form I-538 that 1) the proposed employment is for the purpose of practical training; 2) the training will be related to your studies; and 3) you cannot

receive the same type of training in your country of residence. You must also submit [USCIS Form I-765 \(Application for Employment Authorization\) http://uscis.gov/graphics/formsfee/forms/i-765.htm](http://uscis.gov/graphics/formsfee/forms/i-765.htm), and your I-20 ID, signed by the designated school official (DSO). You should send your application to USCIS *no more than 60 days before your student status expires and no later than 30 days after your studies are completed*. For more information, please see the rules about practical training at 8 CFR § 214.2(m). You may also wish to discuss practical training with the appropriate officials at your school.

ADMISSIONS

1. Do you provide tours of the school?

For an on-site tour, please contact the office of Administration 323-466-6663 to make an appointment.

2. Is there housing on campus? Do you have a host family program?

Gnomon does not offer on-campus housing or host family housing. There are apartments in the area. Websites for finding both roommates and apartments can be found on our website.

Can you assist me with accommodation?

Gnomon only gives housing referrals, we do not assist with finding housing for students. You may arrive less than 30 days prior to the start date printed on your I-20 and locate housing in San Francisco yourself. Refer to the housing link for lists and websites. You may wish to stay your first month in a homestay or in a residence inn and then locate an apartment.

3. Will my credits at Gnomon transfer to other schools?

As Gnomon is not a degree-granting institution, our credit hours are not transferable to other schools and institutions.

6. Can I work while I am going to school?

The work load as a full time Certificate or Maya Fast Track Student does not allow for work. Also, as stated above, you are not legally allowed to be employed while studying in the US. So, you, your spouse and children may not accept employment.

6. Can I get financial assistance/scholarships to help pay my bills?

International students are not eligible for financial aid.

7. Do I have to go to school full-time?

Yes. The American government requires all international students to complete 12 units each Fall and Spring semester. Winter and Summer sessions are optional to the government.

9. What will happen after I get accepted to Gnomon?

You will receive an admission packet that includes your acceptance letter, I-20,. Once you arrive in Los Angeles, call our office and let us know you are here. We will look forward to meeting you at Orientation.

10. Will I be able to transfer credits from the schools in my country?

As Gnomon is not a degree-granting institution, credits from other schools are not transferable to Gnomon.

Helpful Websites

International Students

Visa Issues and Information

- Vocational Student Information – Nonimmigrant
<http://www.ice.gov/graphics/sevis/students/vocation.htm> - six
- Types of Visas – Nonimmigrant <http://www.unitedstatesvisas.gov/whatis/typesofvisas.html>
- **Student Visas:**
 - <http://www.unitedstatesvisas.gov>
 - http://www.travel.state.gov/foreign_student_visas_handout.html
- Bureau of Citizenship and Immigration Services (BCIS) Website:
http://travel.state.gov/visa/frvi_forms.html
 - DS-156: Nonimmigrant Visa Application
 - DS-157: Supplemental Nonimmigrant Visa Application
 - DS-158: Contact Information and Work History for Nonimmigrant Visa Applicant
- **Visa wait times-** http://www.travel.state.gov/visa/temp/wait/tempvisitors_wait.php
- **U.S. Embassies Abroad –**
http://www.travel.state.gov/travel/tips/embassies/embassies_1214.html
- **Visa Photo Requirements** <http://www.travel.state.gov/passport/pptphotos/index.html>
- **Visa Denials** http://www.travel.state.gov/visa/frvi/denials/denials_1361.html
- **Tips for US Visas:** <http://www.travel.state.gov/visa/foreignstudent>

Travel/Arrival

- **Airport Security – Web videos in different languages :**
http://www.dhs.gov/dhspublic/interapp/editorial/editorial_0435.xml
- **What to expect upon arrival at a U.S. port of entry**
http://www.ice.gov/graphics/news/factsheets/poefactsheetupdate_063004.htm

Housing/Accommodations

- **Rentals and roommates -** www.craigslist.com
- www.roommatefinders.com