

F1 APPLICANT MANUAL

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Applying To SAGU

International students desiring to enroll at SAGU should start the application process no later than six (6) months prior to their intended start date. This will help minimize the confusion that often comes with last minute delays and decisions.

Like U.S. students, acceptance to SAGU requires that international applicants meet certain entrance requirements. This includes proof that a student:

1. has graduated or completed a secondary (high school) program equivalent to a U.S. college preparatory program (graduate applicants must complete a bachelor's program equivalent to a regionally or professionally accredited U.S. program),
2. has acceptable scores on the required entrance exams,
3. has completed all parts of the application,
4. has submitted all transcripts,
5. and has paid the application fee.

In addition to these requirements, international students are also required to meet English language requirements and submit proof of financial ability to pay for college.

You will find a checklist of all application requirements at the end of this document and on the SAGU International Admissions webpage.

I-20 Issuance Requirements

It is important to understand the purpose of an I-20 – what it is and what it is not. The I-20 is a United States (U.S.) government document stipulating that a Department of Homeland Security (DHS) approved school has verified your eligibility to attend their institution.

Simply put, an I-20 is an invitation from the U.S. institution you are applying to. It is not a visa and it does not guarantee entry into the U.S. It means, at the time of application, you met the university and DHS-instituted requirements to become a student at a specific U.S. institution.

In order to issue an I-20, the school must verify that the student does indeed meet all the requirements. These requirements include the following:

1. The student has met all eligibility requirements and has been accepted to the school. (See “Applying To SAGU”)
2. The student demonstrates that they have the financial means to attend SAGU. (See Financial Responsibilities)

3. The student has no bar from entering the U.S.
4. The student meets the English language requirements. (See TOEFL)

For security purposes, I-20's cannot be emailed or faxed. The original signed document must be sent via an international carrier to the address indicated by the applicant. If the applicant would like the I-20 to be hand-delivered to them by a visiting friend or relative, they must provide a signed letter consenting release of the I-20 to a specific individual. Due to postage delivery times and costs, SAGU will not send I-20's later than 4 weeks prior to the beginning of the semester.

Transfer Students

International students wishing to transfer to SAGU from another US school will be subject to the same application and eligibility requirements as international students entering the US for the first time. SAGU will submit a transfer clearance form to the institution the student is currently attending. This clearance form ensures that the student is in good standing and eligible to enroll at their current institution.

Once the applicant has been cleared by the institution and SAGU has established that the student can meet the financial obligations, they will issue an initial I-20 for attendance. Transfer applicants who are not eligible to enroll at their previous institution or have a visa status that is cancelled or terminated will not be permitted to enroll at SAGU.

Entrance Exams

ACT

All international undergraduate applicants must take and successfully complete the American College Test (ACT) before being formally admitted into the university. The ACT is given in various countries all over the world. For more information on a testing location close to you, please go to www.act.org. If there are no testing locations in your country, you may request an arranged testing. Click here to obtain an Arranged Testing application.

GRE

International graduate applicants may be required to take and pass the Graduate Record Exam (GRE) before being admitted to the graduate program. Applicants should consult acceptance requirements for their intended program. Students may go to www.gre.org to find testing centers their area.

Test of English as a Foreign Language (TOEFL)

As a part of the admission's process, all international students whose native countries' official language is not English are required to take and pass the Test of English as a Foreign Language. There are multiple TOEFL testing centers all over the world. If you have access to the internet, you will find more information about the TOEFL at www.toefl.org. Currently, minimum score requirements for acceptance to SAGU are: iBT 71, cBT 197, pBT 525

Transcript Evaluations

Students who completed secondary education and/or took post-secondary courses in schools outside the U.S. may be required to have a third party evaluation of their transcripts. Third party evaluations are used to verify that foreign programs meet the specified academic requirements of U.S. programs. SAGU currently uses the following two companies for evaluations:

Global Credential Evaluators

<http://www.gcevaluators.com/index.asp>

Foreign Credential Service of America

<http://www.fcsa.biz/>

Students may click the company names above for evaluation information and applications.

Financial Responsibilities

All F1 applicants must demonstrate that they have the financial means to complete a program at their specified institution. International students who are not financially able to support their studies must arrange for their own financial sponsors.

Financial sponsors are expected to assume all expenses incurred while at Southwestern. An I-134 Affidavit of Support Form or notarized letter must be completed to verify sponsorship. I-134 forms can be downloaded online at www.uscis.gov. Current, official bank statements indicating at least six (6) months of activity must accompany all Affidavits of Support. A financial sponsor letter is located under the Useful Links and Resources area of the International Student webpage. This letter is intended to help potential sponsors understand the responsibilities and implications involved in providing financial support to F1 students.

If students intend to support themselves during their stay in the US, they must provide proof of financial capability to pay all expenses associated with studying at SAGU. Currently, SAGU uses the following yearly cost projections to evaluate a student's financial ability to attend:

- Undergraduate On-Campus - \$24,500
- Undergraduate Off-Campus - \$32,020
- Graduate (Off-Campus) - \$27,610

Students must not have an outstanding balance from the previous semester and be able to make a payment towards their current semester before finishing registration. Students who cannot meet this requirement will not be permitted to enroll for courses.

It is especially important that F1 students are aware of this policy. F1 students who cannot enroll for courses must return home or risk violating their status. The student may return the next semester provided that their financial obligations are met. Any F1 student who is out of the country longer than 5 months will need to apply for a new visa at the American Embassy.

Embassy Appointments

Students need to make their embassy appointments early enough to allow for potential follow-ups and unexpected delays. A Frequently Answered Questions (FAQs) page from the U.S. Department of State regarding visas is located at this website <http://educationusa.state.gov/faq.htm>.

What To Expect At The Border

When you arrive in the United States you will be asked by an Immigration and Customs official for your I-20, passport, and I-94. They will check the documents and, if everything is in order, stamp your visa and I-94. They will staple the I-94 in your passport that stipulates where and when you entered the U.S. and when your visa will expire. For F1 visas, they typically mark D/S meaning your visa is valid for the duration of your program as long as there are no status violations. F1 students are not permitted to enter the country more than 30 days prior to the start date listed on their I-20.

For more information on entry to the U.S., please go to the USCIS Fact Sheet at http://www.ice.gov/sevis/factsheet/100104ent_stdnt_fs.htm.

When You Arrive On-Campus

When you arrive on campus you need to report to the International Student Advisor in the Registrar's Office. It is the International Student Advisor's

responsibility to report to SEVIS whether or not you are attending school. Failure to contact the advisor could result in a cancelled or terminated status.

The advisor will make a copy of the I-94 you received from the immigration official and your passport. They will also ask you if you have any questions or concerns. You should report the International Student Advisor at the beginning of every semester until you complete your program.

If for some reason you arrive on campus after orientation and new student check-in, you will need to report to the Admission's Office in addition to the Registrar's Office. The Admission's Office is responsible for checking you in as a student, making sure your student file is complete, and enabling you to enroll for classes. The Admissions Office is located on the second floor of the Sheaffer Full Life Center.

Maintaining Your Status

Students on an F1 visa have several guidelines they must follow to remain in status. It is important that F1 students understand what constitutes a status violation so that they may avoid them. The following are common status violations:

1. Un-authorized Employment (See Employment Requirements)
2. Failure to enroll at institution specified on I-20.
3. Enrolling as less than full time without authorization
4. Academic Suspension
5. Unauthorized Concurrent Enrollment

Please note – These are only the most common status violations SAGU encounters. This is not a comprehensive list. F1 students are responsible for knowing the policies and procedures necessary to maintain their status.

Employment Requirements

On Campus Employment

F1 students are authorized to work on campus for no more than 20 hours per week while school is in session. During school observed holidays and breaks, students may work on campus for 40 hours per week. Students who obtain on campus employment must consult the Human Resources office to fill out an I-9 and an On Campus Employment Contract.

Off Campus Employment

F1 students who cannot find employment on campus or who have emergent circumstances can apply for an Employment Authorization

Document. Student should see the International Student Advisor for details about Employment Authorization. F-1 visa holders are not permitted to work off-campus without DHS approval.

OPT and CPT Requests

Students wishing to engage in Optional Practical Training (OPT) or Curricular Practical Training (CPT) need to consult the International Student Advisor. OPT requests generally must be filed with USCIS at least a month before the student's intended graduation for it to be approved.

Travel and Re-Entry

F1 students may travel during breaks and for school related trips. However, they need to check with the International Student Advisor well in advance to insure that all their paperwork is in order. Typically, F1 students traveling outside the U.S. need to take the following:

1. Valid Passport with I-94 attached.
2. Updated I-20
3. Proof that they are registered for classes at the institution.

F1 students who are outside the U.S. for more than five months may need to apply for a new visa to resume their studies.

Other Visa Statuses

F2 -- According to the Code of Federal Regulations, F2 non-immigrants may not engage in studies at the post-secondary level. F2 non-immigrants wishing to enroll at a post-secondary institution must apply for and be granted a change of status to F1 before they enroll.

B1 and B2 – According to the Code of Federal Regulations, B1 and B2 non-immigrants may not engage in studies at the post-secondary level. They must apply for and be granted a change of status to an F1 before beginning studies.

Final Note

It is important to remember that the International Student Advisors are available to help you through the various challenges you will face. Please do not hesitate to contact them if you have a question about your status or program. Any concerns that could result in a status termination or cancellation need to be brought to the International Student Advisor as soon as possible.

International Student Application Checklist

To minimize confusion, students should start this process no later than six months prior to their intended start date. All listed items should be submitted unless the school stipulates in writing otherwise. For a more thorough explanation of the following requirements, please see the F-1 Applicant Manual on the [SAGU International Admissions](#) page.

- Make formal application to the school.
 - Application
 - All Reference Forms
 - Application Fee
 - Formal Essay (Undergraduate Applicants Only)
 - All Transcripts (Official)

- Submit transcripts to a [third party evaluator](#).

- Take required entrance exams.
 - Undergraduate ([ACT](#), SAT, or Accuplacer)
 - Graduate ([GRE](#))

- Take and pass [TOEFL](#) exam if English is not native/official language.

- Submit proof of financial ability to attend SAGU.
 - Current Personal Bank Statement (6 months of activity)
 - Notarized Affidavit of Support w/ Bank Statement from sponsor

- Make an appointment with the U.S. Consulate to obtain a visa.
 - SEVIS Number
 - I-901 Fee

Common Abbreviations and Definitions

[ACT](http://www.act.org) – American College Testing (www.act.org)

CFR – Code of Federal Regulations

COS – Change of Status

CPT – Curricular Practical Training

DHS – Department of Homeland Security

EAD – Employment Authorization Document

[GRE](http://www.gre.org) – Graduate Record Exam (www.gre.org)

[ICE](http://www.ice.gov) – Immigration and Customs Enforcement (www.ice.gov)

OPT – Optional Practical Training

SAGU -- Southwestern Assemblies of God University

[SAT](http://www.collegeboard.com) – Scholastic Aptitude Test (www.collegeboard.com)

SEVP/SEVIS – Student and Exchange Visitor Program/ Student and Exchange Visitor Information System

[SSN/SSA](http://www.ssa.gov) – Social Security Number/Social Security Administration (www.ssa.gov)

[TOEFL](http://www.ets.org/toefl) – Test of English as a Foreign Language (www.ets.org/toefl)

[USCIS](http://www.uscis.gov) – United States Citizenship and Immigration Services (www.uscis.gov)

I-539 – Government form used to request reinstatement, extend status, or a change of status. See [USCIS Immigration Forms](#) page.

I-765 – Government form used to request employment authorization, CPT and OPT. See [USCIS Immigration Forms](#) page.

I-9 – Government form used to verify employment eligibility.

I-94 – Government form used to record an immigrants arrival and departure locations and dates.

I-901 Fee – Fee paid to the U.S. government by new international students.