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F1 Applicant Manual Contents

- I. Applying To SAGU
- II. I-20 Issuance Requirements
- III. Transfer Students
- IV. Entrance Exams
- V. Transcript Evaluations
- VI. Financial Responsibilities
- VII. Embassy Appointments
- VIII. What To Expect At The Border
- IX. When You Arrive On-Campus
- X. Maintaining Your Status
- XI. Employment Requirements
- XII. Travel and Re-entry
- XIII. Other Visa Statuses
- XIV. Final Note
- XV. International Student Application Checklist
- XVI. Common Abbreviations and Definitions

Applying To SAGU

International applicants 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. applicants, acceptance to SAGU requires that international applicants meet certain entrance requirements. This includes proof that an applicant:

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 applicants 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 demonstrates that, 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 applicant does indeed meet all the requirements. These requirements include the following:

1. The applicant has met all eligibility requirements and has been accepted to the school. (See F1 Student Application Checklist)
2. The applicant demonstrates that they have the financial means to attend SAGU. (See Financial Responsibilities)
3. The applicant has no bar from entering the U.S.
4. The applicant 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 to an international destination later than 4 weeks prior to the beginning of the semester.

Transfer Students

International applicants wishing to transfer to SAGU from another US school will be subject to the same application and eligibility requirements as international applicants entering the US for the first time. SAGU will submit a transfer clearance form to the institution the applicant is currently attending after all admission's requirements have been met. This clearance form ensures that the applicant 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 they can meet the financial obligations, the DSO 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 may 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 information. Applicants who meet certain college transfer credit conditions may be exempted from this requirement. Please contact the Admission's Counselor about the exemption.

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, international applicants are required to complete the Test of English as a Foreign Language (TOEFL). Applicants from certain countries or transferring more than 30 hours from a regionally accredited U.S. institution may be exempt from this requirement. 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

Applicants 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://gceus.com/>)

World Evaluation Services www.wes.org

Applicants may click the company names above for evaluation information and applications. Applicants desiring to use another evaluation company should contact their Admission's Counselor prior to using the company.

Financial Responsibilities

All F1 applicants must demonstrate that they have the financial means to complete a program at their specified institution. International applicants 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 by the student while at SAGU. 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 applicants 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 Living On-Campus - \$33,732
- Undergraduate Living Off-Campus - \$39,316
- Graduate (Off-Campus) - \$31,066

These amounts are only estimates. Students may pay more or less depending on their dorm and meal plan selection and other school expenses. Students bringing immediate family members with them must also account for their expenses as well. The amounts stated above do not include fees required by the United States Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) such as the I-901/SEVIS fee. SAGU does not currently have scholarships for solely for international applicants/students. However, applicants may apply for any institutional grants or scholarships where they meet eligibility requirements. For more information, please contact the Financial Aid Office at financialaid@sagu.edu.

All F1 applicants are required to pay the first semester in full prior to receiving an I-20. Also, applicants must not have an outstanding balance from the previous semester and be able to make a payment towards their current semester before finishing registration. Applicants must meet this requirement to be permitted to enroll for courses.

It is especially important that F1 applicants 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

Applicants need to make their embassy appointments early enough to allow for potential follow-ups and unexpected delays. You may find more information about applying for a visa at [EducationUSA](http://EducationUSA.gov).

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 and passport. They will check the documents and, if everything is in order, stamp your visa. 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. You will also need to obtain your I-94 entry document after you have entered the U.S. You can find this document at <https://i94.cbp.dhs.gov/I94/#/home>. You will need to keep this document with your visa, passport and I-20.

For more information on entry to the U.S., please go to [Study in the States](http://StudyintheStates.gov).

When You Arrive On-Campus

When you arrive on campus you need to report to the International Student Advisor in the Registrar's Office located in the Davis Building. 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 your I-94, your visa and your passport. He/She will also ask you if you have any questions or concerns. You should report to 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 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 Regulation and Restrictions)
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. Student may visit the [Study in the States](#) website for information regarding the maintenance of their status.

Employment Regulations and Restrictions

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 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 and who have emergent circumstances can apply for an Employment Authorization Document under an Economic Hardship category. Students should see the International Student Advisor for details about this type of Employment Authorization. **F-1 visa holders are not permitted to work off-campus without DHS approval. Failure to adhere to this regulation will result in termination of your status.**

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. CPT requests must be filed and approved by the International Student Advisor prior to the student beginning their internship.

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
2. Unexpired Visa
3. Updated I-20
4. 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 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 an 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.

- Application (link to the different portions of the application)
- Application fee of \$35 for undergraduate studies (This can be paid through a check sent in the mail or online.) \$50 for Graduate
- References
 - ◇ Ministers Reference
 - ◇ Faculty Reference_(Graduate Applicants Only)
- Essay
 - ◇ (Undergraduate) Student Profile/Essay
 - ◇ (Graduate) Student Profile_ Essay
- Health History Form
- FERPA Release Form
- Residence Hall request form with Dorm reservation fee (\$150) (If you are planning to live on campus, you will need to pay the fee. If you are 23 and not planning to live on campus, we will need to know what you plan to do for your living arrangements.)
- Names and personal information of any immediate family members who will be coming to the United States with you. We will need the following information:
 - ◇ First Name
 - ◇ Middle Name
 - ◇ Last Name
 - ◇ Maiden Name
 - ◇ Country of Birth
 - ◇ Country of Citizenship
 - ◇ Birth date
 - ◇ Relationship to you
- Transcripts
 - ◇ High School Transcript (Undergraduate Applicants) (If the transcripts are from outside the US, they need to be evaluated by an approved third party evaluator. One copy will need to be sent to the evaluator and one copy needs to be sent to SAGU. Both need to be official transcripts that come directly from your high school and not from you, a friend, or a family member.) Students who meet certain college transfer credit hour conditions may have this requirement waived.
 - ◇ College Transcripts (If they are from outside the US, they need to be evaluated by a third party evaluator. One copy will need to be sent to the evaluator and one copy needs to be sent to SAGU. Both need to official transcripts that come directly from your college

and not from you, a friend, or a family member.)

- TOEFL scores (Required minimum scores- Internet based- 71, Computer based- 197, Paper based 525)
- ACT exam (Undergraduate Applicants)
 - ◇ For the ACT, anything below a 21 for math or 17 for English and reading will require you to be in a developmental course. An ACT composite score (or equivalent) of less than 19 will require your application to be put before the Admission's Committee.
- GRE Score (Graduate Applicants)
- Affidavit of support
 - ◇ Sponsor's bank statements from the last 6 months (needs to be sent directly from the bank to SAGU, not printed from your computer)
 - ◇ Personal bank statements from the last 6 months (need to be sent directly from the bank to SAGU, not printed from your computer)
 - ◇ First semester's payment (We require all F-1 students, upon acceptance, to submit the first semester payment before we release an I-20. This payment is refundable if you are not able to attend the semester you intended to come.)
- We will need the following after you come into the United States. (You do not need to provide this to be accepted, but you will need to provide this before you start classes.)
 - ◇ Copy of Visa (You may not have this right now. You will not receive this until after your meeting at the embassy. We would like it as soon as possible but we do not require it until you are actually on campus)
 - ◇ Copy of Passport (You may not have this right now. If you do not have this as of yet, you will want to apply for it as soon as possible. We would like it as soon as possible, but we do not require it until you are actually on campus)
 - ◇ Copy of I-94 (You will only have this if you are transferring from another university that you are presently enrolled in. If you are not currently enrolled in a university in the US, you will need to obtain your I-94 at <https://i94.cbp.dhs.gov/I94/#/home> after you cross the U.S. border. You will then need to bring your I-94 to us when you come on campus.)
- Make an appointment with the U.S. Consulate or Embassy to obtain a visa.
 - ◇ SEVIS Number
 - ◇ I-901 Fee

All SAGU students on an F1 visa are required to have U.S. Health Insurance coverage. You may obtain health insurance through this link: https://purchase.imglobal.com/Quote/patriot_Plus/pre-quote?imgac=119488. Please see the International Student Advisor for more information.

Common Abbreviations and Definitions

ACT – American College Testing

CBP—U.S. Customs and Border Patrol

CFR – Code of Federal Regulations

COS – Change of Status

CPT – Curricular Practical Training

DHS – Department of Homeland Security

EAD – Employment Authorization Document

GRE – Graduate Record Exam

ICE – Immigration and Customs Enforcement

OPT – Optional Practical Training

SAGU -- Southwestern Assemblies of God University

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

TOEFL – Test of English as a Foreign Language

SSN/SSA – Social Security Number/Social Security Administration

TOEFL – Test of English as a Foreign Language

USCIS – United States Citizenship and Immigration Services

I-539 – Government form used to request reinstatement, extend status, or a change of status.

I-765 – Government form used to request employment authorization, CPT and OPT.

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

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

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