Applying for Your Student Visa: France

What is a visa?
A visa is official authorization allowing you to enter a country and travel, work, live, or study there for a specific period of time. Generally, a visa is an elaborate stamp that is sealed onto one of the pages of your passport. Visas are issued to American citizens by a foreign country's Embassy or Consulate located in the United States. Every country has its own regulations governing the issuance of visas.

Do I need a visa to go to France?
A visa is required for persons other than temporary visitors in France. You should apply for your visa as soon as possible. A French visa can take up to eight weeks to process at the consulate or embassy, so you should begin the procedure at least three months prior to your departure. If you are studying in France for longer than 90 days, you will need to register with Campus France before submitting your visa application to the French Consulate. Students studying in France from 4-12 months will apply for a long stay visa (visa de long sejour). You do not need to register with Campus France if you are studying in France for 90 days or less.

What do I need to apply for a visa?
Before submitting your visa application to the French Consulate, you are required to enroll in the French Foreign Ministry’s website Campus France. The Campus France website allows you to begin the visa application procedure. When finished with the Campus France application, you will be assigned an ID number that will allow you to save and make changes to your application. No visas will be granted by French Consulates without prior enrollment on the Campus France website. The Campus France application is quite extensive and starting September 1st 2015 will include a $180 processing fee. It will take a couple of hours to complete all of the steps required to submit your information for a visa. Please follow the instruction provided for the next steps required to obtain a student visa.

1) **Complete the Campus France application procedures before starting the visa application procedures.** [See Campus France Handbook for additional tips.](#)

The Campus France procedure and the French consulates' visa procedure are two distinct steps, and you have to make sure to **complete the Campus France application (in the PASTEL system) before you start your visa application.** We encourage you to check the website of the French consulate to which you are assigned in order to find out which documents you will need to present when you apply for the visa. Please compile these documents in advance so that you are ready when you go to your appointment at your assigned consulate.

**Reminder:** Your Campus France application is not complete until you have (a) completed your online Campus France form in PASTEL and (b) mailed Campus France your physical file and the Campus France fee in the form of a money order. You must also include a photo copy of your money order.

Once Campus France has reviewed your online and physical application documents and found them to be complete, you will receive a confirmation email – which starts with “Your Campus France file has been processed” – in your Campus France inbox in the PASTEL system. You will NOT receive this message in your personal email such as Gmail, Hotmail, etc. Print out the (a) confirmation email, as well as (b) the proof of payment that you should have received earlier in the process (a PDF attached to the email entitled “Une Quittance est disponible”), as these are among the several documents required by the French consulate.

Visa authorities have access to your PASTEL online application and can therefore verify whether your PASTEL application is complete and has been validated by Campus France. **If your PASTEL**
application has not been validated – i.e., it has not been approved by a Campus France representative – the visa services will not be able to start processing your visa application. Please make sure to finish your Campus France / PASTEL application as early as possible. You will need the clearance from Campus France that your PASTEL application has been approved in order to start applying for a visa.

Campus France Tips:

- You can register with Campus France immediately, but you cannot submit your materials to Campus France until you receive the official acceptance letter from your host university. When your Campus France account is created, you will be automatically assigned to the French consulate closest to the mailing address that you entered into the PASTEL system. This should be your permanent address.
- When sending in your documents to Campus France, be sure to write your Campus France ID on it. Be sure to make a photocopy for your records. This way, you have proof of payment and a copy of any other important documents you send. You will also need to obtain proof of payment from Campus France.
- You should send all materials to Campus France with return receipt for proof of mailing and receipt.
- Do not worry about sections/questions dealing with DALF/DELF exams, internships, or your resume. The aim of the Campus France application for exchange students is to provide as much demographic and educational information as possible to obtain your pin code for a visa appointment.
- Education term: "Bac + number" is used to indicate the number of years after your completion of your secondary school (high school) education. For example, Bac+1 = first year after you complete secondary school, Bac + 2 = second year after you complete secondary school, Bac + 4 = fourth year after you complete secondary school.
- You are not a "boursier" (French government scholarship holder) even though you might receive financial aid at your home institution or from your home country.
- It is recommended that you set English or your native language as your default language to avoid any misunderstandings in working through the application. You can usually translate pages by right clicking and choosing “Translate,” such as in Google Chrome.
- Save your Campus France password and log-in ID. If you lose it, contact: washington@campusfrance.org.
- As an exchange student, you do not need to schedule an interview with Campus France. It will take two to three weeks for your file to be completed by Campus France. When your file is complete, you will receive a confirmation by email which you need to include in your visa application. It’s best to submit your Campus France materials early to avoid delays, which often occur just before the start of each semester.
- Your account will give you access to an internal Campus France message inbox in the PASTEL system. You will need to check this inbox regularly, as you will not be otherwise alerted to new messages that you receive there. You will NOT be contacted via other personal email addresses.

Apply for a visa continued…

2) Campus France assigns you to the French consulate closest to your permanent address.

Completing the Campus France online application process and the visa application process are the two distinct steps you need to take before departing for France. You should be sure to complete your Campus France application (through the online PASTEL system) as early as possible so that you have enough time to apply for and receive a visa.

After you have created your Campus France account in PASTEL and have filled out the personal information section, you will be automatically assigned to the French consulate closest to the mailing address that you entered into the PASTEL system. Note: This should be your permanent address, whether it is your parents’ residence or your current school address.

How do I obtain a visa?

3) Request a student visa at your assigned French consulate.

You must schedule an in-person appointment at your assigned consulate via its official website. Notify UM’s Office of International Programs two weeks before scheduling a visa appointment. The consulate website features an online calendar that shows available timeslots. Residents of Montana will need to travel to the French Consulate in San Francisco to apply for their visa. Call the consulate before you visit to verify hours of operation and location. Please note that there are specific days and hours for long stay visitor visa applications. Appointments for visa applications are available in the morning only. Please note: Your visa appointment at a French consulate must take place no more than 90 days before your departure to France.
Your assigned consulate’s website also provides the most up-to-date and comprehensive information about student visas as well as a list of documents that you are required to bring to your visa appointment. Upon the examination of your file, and at the discretion of the consular officer assigned to you, you may be required to provide documents in addition to those listed.

**Required Documents to bring to your Visa Appointment:**

a) One **application form** (English version) filled out completely and signed by the applicant.

b) **COPY:** A copy of the student’s **official acceptance letter or acknowledgment of enrollment**. This letter should:
   - be addressed to the student and mention his or her full name, and be printed on institutional letterhead;
   - specify the beginning and end dates (day, month, year) of the academic program;
   - Include full contact information for the individual issuing the offer or acknowledgment, as well as the full address of the educational institution, and be signed and stamped.
   - Students taking part in an exchange program between an American and a French institution. In this case, the acceptance or enrollment letter may be issued from either institution provided the formal exchange agreement is identified and the information specified above is provided. The letter should include an institutional address in France.

c) **COPY:** **An e-mail message from Campus France** (entitled “confirmation e-mail”) informing the student that he or she may begin preparations to apply to the consulate for the visa (make appointment, collect documents). **Attention!** This message should not be confused with the earlier message from Campus France notifying the student of the creation of his or her Campus France account, or with the message indicating that a receipt for payment was available for download.

d) **COPY:** **Receipt for payment issued by Campus France** (does not apply to exempted students).

e) **1 recent photograph** in U.S. passport photo format. Look at **ID pictures requirements**.

f) **ORIGINAL + 1 PHOTOCOPY:**
   - U.S. citizens: (i) **Passport** in good condition, with a date of expiration at least 3 months after the end of the student’s proposed stay in the Schengen area, issued within the past 10 years and containing at least 2 blank pages. (ii) Photocopy of the pages containing the passport holder’s personal data.

  - **Visa application and processing fee** (nonrefundable) in the U.S. dollar equivalent of €50 (check your local consulate’s Web site as the rate of exchange changes frequently). Preferably payment by Master or Visa card.

h) **ORIGINAL + 1 PHOTOCOPY:** **Proof of sufficient means of support**
   - Nonscholarship students must prove that they have access to at least $820 per month. Proof may be provided in the form of (i) a bank statement showing a balance of $820 multiplied by the number of months to be spent in France, or (ii) a notarized statement from a guarantor declaring that the guarantor will provide the student applicant with at least $820 per month, accompanied by the guarantor’s most recent bank statement.
   - Scholarship and financial aid students: Letter of scholarship award specifying amount and duration of award, issued by the financial aid office of the student applicant’s home institution. Visa services at the Consulate also need a specific breakdown of the available financial resources (remaining aid) of the student once the tuition fees have been paid for.

i) **AIRLINE TICKET OR RESERVATION:** **An airline reservation** showing date of departure or a handwritten and legible statement from the applicant indicating the intended date of departure, as well as a formal commitment not to depart before that date. It is not possible to modify the start date of a visa once the application is made.

j) **ORIGINAL + 1 PHOTOCOPY:** **Positive proof of residence** in the geographic area for which the consulate is responsible. Lease or rental agreement in the applicant’s name or a notarized statement from the owner or leaseholder plus a recent (utility) bill in the applicant’s name or the applicant’s driver’s license issued by a state falling within the consulate’s jurisdiction or a valid student ID card (or a statement issued within the past 2 months from the registrar of your university, which must be located in the consulate’s jurisdiction.

k) **The residence form** form should be filled out by the **following students:**
   - **ALL students who will be staying in France for more than six months (180 days);**
   - **Students who will be staying in France for a period of time between four and six months (for a total duration of 91-180 days) who wish to be allowed to work in France while studying;**
   - **Students who will be staying in France for a period of time between four and six months (for a total duration of 91-180 days) who wish to be able to extend their visa once they are in France.**
- A self-addressed prepaid EXPRESS MAIL envelope from the US POST OFFICE ONLY - NO FEDEX / UPS / AIRBORNE EXPRESS accepted.
- Please do NOT stick the mailing label on the envelope and fill out as follows:
  FROM:
  CONSULATE GENERAL OF FRANCE
  88 Kearny Street #600
  SAN FRANCISCO, CA 94108
  TO:
  Your full name
  Your address

1) The French immigration (OFII) form is available online on the Web sites of all French consulates. Students should bring the OFII form to their consulate appointment, and should make sure to print their e-mail address very carefully on the form to avoid any risk of confusion or error.

Please note: During periods of peak activity in the consulates, especially in the summer, available slots fill up very quickly, and sometimes it may be up to four weeks until the next appointment is available. Campus France cannot get an appointment for you. If you have trouble getting an appointment, we suggest that you frequently check the consulate’s online schedule in case a slot opens up due to a cancellation.

You must present yourself in person at your appointment at the French consulate. You cannot ask a friend or a relative to go to your visa appointment on your behalf.

Timing: Your appointment at the consulate should take place at least two weeks before your planned date of departure for France. To be on the safe side, we strongly encourage you to visit your consulate’s website to book your appointment at least six to eight weeks before your planned departure date.

Always err on the side of caution. The earlier you start preparing for your departure to France, the better. Neither Campus France nor the visa authorities at the French consulate can make special arrangements to accommodate your planned date of departure to France or the beginning date of your academic program. You cannot go to France and begin studying before your visa is granted.

4) Go to the consulate for a visa interview.

Applicants are required to appear in person at the consulate for a visa interview. You will have to pay a visa processing fee in dollars, which varies slightly depending on the current euro/dollar exchange rate. For details, please check the official website of your assigned consulate.

To make sure that your visa interview goes as smoothly as possible, verify beforehand that you bring with you:

- (a) the visa processing fee, in the correct amount and in the correct form of payment,
- (b) All the required official documents and (c) the appropriate photocopies.

The visa section of the consulate does not make any copies. If you forget to bring any of the required documents to your appointment at the consulate, your visa application will be postponed, and you will have to set up a new appointment and pay the full visa fee again.

If you plan to complete two consecutive programs (such as a program in French as a foreign language, followed by an academic program), obtain admission to both programs before applying for your visa. That will ensure that your visa will be valid for the full length of your period of study.

Please remember: Your visa appointment at the French consulate takes place on French diplomatic premises. We therefore strongly encourage you to dress in appropriate attire and to adhere to each consulate’s specific policies (i.e. no eating or drinking within the consulate, no use of cell phones, etc.) Be respectful of the administration, and if you have questions regarding your consulate’s specific set of regulations, please refer to their official website.

Visas are never granted on the spot. It takes at least five to seven business days for a visa to be granted – or
longer, depending on the situation. Once the visa has been approved, your passport will be stamped with a visa stamp and be returned to you using a secure form of delivery that you provide during your appointment. **The consulate assumes no responsibility in case of loss.**

5) **If relevant, register with the local immigration office once you’re in France.**

You have arrived in France – *bienvenue*!

You, as a long stay visa holder will have to **register to the French Office of Immigration and Integration (OFII)** within a few days after your arrival to validate your student visa.

You will need to submit to the OFII the immigration form that was provided to you at the consulate as well as your passport containing your visa stamp (the instructions are provided on the document). The OFII form has to be processed within the first three months of your arrival in France. If you intend to travel outside the **Schengen area** after three months have passed since your arrival in France, you must first get official approval from the OFII (in the form of an additional stamp affixed to your passport). Otherwise you may not re-enter France or the Schengen area after travelling beyond the Schengen borders (for example, this could happen if you spend a weekend in London, as the UK is part of the EU, but not part of Schengen).

**General tips for applying for a visa:**

Foreign embassies and consulates in the US receive hundreds of inquires every day, so contacting them can be a trying experience. Have patience. Some consulates only receive visitors or calls during certain hours of the day or on certain days of the week; visit their website to learn their hours or call back at different times of the day. You may find that you are placed on hold or that your call is never forwarded to the appropriate person. Don't be discouraged: be persistent, but polite. Remember that US consulates in foreign countries operate in a similar fashion!

**Biometric Visas**

The Consulate General of France in San Francisco **issue biometric visas** to comply with European Union regulation EC 390/2009 of April 23, 2009 and French law 2003-1119 of November 26, 2003. The biometric system requires the digital scanning of ten fingers and a picture. Accordingly, **all visa applicants, except children under 12 years old, regardless of the type of visa sought, are required to appear in person** at the visa section of the French Consulate. The procedure will also **speed up movement** between Schengen states and third countries for genuine visitors requiring visas.

**French Consulates in the US:**


**This information provides guidelines about the visa process. Visa regulations often change, and procedures can vary by Consulate and/or Embassy. Students should verify the current visa application procedures with the appropriate Consulate or Embassy before initiating the process. While every effort is made to ensure these guidelines are updated and as accurate as possible, OIP cannot guarantee that the visa information posted is the most current.**