

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. Both six-month and one-year visas are available, depending upon the length of studies in France indicated in the letter of enrollment. Semester-only students should apply for a *visa de long séjour temporaire* and full-year students should apply for *visa de long séjour*. Students studying in France for less than 90 days do not need to apply through Campus France.

What do I need to apply for a visa?

Step 1: Submit your CampusFrance Application

Before submitting your visa application to the French Consulate, you are required to enroll in the French Foreign Ministry's website CampusFrance. The CampusFrance website allows you to begin the visa application procedure. When finished with our CampusFrance application, you will receive a pin code that will allow to make your visa appointment at the French Consulate. **No visa will be granted by French Consulates without prior enrollment on the CampusFrance website.** To enroll on the CampusFrance website, go to www.usa.campusfrance.org and look for the link "REGISTRATION" or "CREER VOTRE DOSSIER" to begin the application. The CampusFrance application is quite extensive. It will take a couple of hours to complete all of the necessary steps required to submit your information for a visa. When the CampusFrance application is complete, please follow the instruction provided for the next steps required to obtain a student visa.

CampusFrance Tips:

- When sending in your documents to CampusFrance, be sure to write your CampusFrance ID on it. No matter the form of payment, be sure to make a photocopy for your records. This way, you have proof of payment.
- You should send all materials to CampusFrance 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 CampusFrance application for study abroad 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.

- Save your CampusFrance password and log-in ID. If you lose it, contact: washington@campusfrance.org.

If you don't receive a response immediately after your submission, wait 2 weeks from the time of your application submission to contact CampusFrance.

It's best to submit your CampusFrance materials early to avoid delays, which often occur just before the start of each semester.

Step 2: Send your acceptance letter and registration fee

Once you have enrolled with CampusFrance, you must send your acceptance letter from your host institution in France and the processing fee.

You will need the following documents

- **Official letter of admission** from your French host university, showing that you have been accepted.
- **Processing of \$60** that needs to be in the form of a money order; personal checks are not accepted.

Now you must wait 2 weeks from the post-mark date on the documents sent to the CampusFrance office; after 2 weeks you will get a confirmation email through the CampusFrance system, then you are ready to apply for your visa.

Step 3: Applying for your visa

Once you have completed steps 1 and 2, make an appointment for your visa interview at the Consulate General of France in the US that has jurisdiction over your state of residence.

You will need the following documents to apply for your visa

► **Attention:** This list may not be all-inclusive! Verify this information with the Consulate, as the application process can change or may even vary by consulate.

- **A valid passport;** valid for at least 90 days beyond the last day of your proposed stay in France (plus one photocopy)
 - ◆ Please see page 1 in the Study Abroad Handbook for information on how to apply for a passport.
 - ◆ Apply early for your passport! It may take 6-8 weeks to process your application.
- **2 Passport size photographs** (color or black and white, 35x45mm, clear background), one glued to each application form.
- **2 visa application forms** completely filled out, dated and signed in black ink. The application can usually be downloaded from your respective French consulate's website.
- **Letter of admission** from your host university in France (original plus one photocopy).
- For non US citizens, Proof of legal residence in the U.S. (visa, permanent resident card)
- **Guarantee of financial support;** either a notarized statement (from the parents) certifying that the applicant will receive a monthly allowance of 800 US dollars for the duration of her/his stay in France and their last 3 bank statements, or a proof of (student's) personal income and their last 3 bank statements and a letter from the University stating that room, board and tuition are fully prepaid (+ **1 photocopy**) ISEP students : include "certification letter" from ISEP indicating that tuition, room and board are fully prepaid; sent to you in your ISEP acceptance package (original plus one photocopy)
- **Proof of health insurance.** All students need to show proof of medical insurance (Original plus one photocopy). Students under 28 years old must enroll in French Social Security (la Sécu) for the length of their studies. This is required by the Préfecture (local government office handling local administrative functions) in order to release the student's residency card. See separate sheet about insurance requirements in France.
- **ID Number from Campus France;** provide a printout of your CampusFrance ID.
- **A copy of your last Degree, Diploma, student ID, or transcript** (+ 1 photocopy).
- **Copy of your travel documents.** Round trip ticket if you are studying 6 months or less (+ 1 photocopy) or a one way ticket only if you are studying in France more than 6 months (+ 1 photocopy).
- **Visa fee of US\$132.** Pay by credit card, debit card, or money order; personal checks are not accepted.

- **A Residence form**, which will be processed and returned with the passport and visa. You must bring this form to France and submit it to the local French authorities during the on-site immigration registration process.
 - **Postage paid FedEx/US Overnight Mail envelope** *addressed to yourself* for the Consulate to return your passport in case your visa cannot be issued the same day as your in-person appointment.
- ▶ **Attention:** This list may not be all-inclusive! Verify this information with the consulate, as the application process can change or may even vary by consulate.

How do I obtain a visa?

A. In person

- Most French consulates now require students to apply in person at the consulate that has jurisdiction over their state of residence or their school residence. Take the above documents to the appropriate French consulate. Keep a copy of all of the documents for your own records.
- **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 visitors visa applications.

B. Via mail

If you will apply by mail rather than in person, you should:

- Send all documents, including your passport, in a FedEx, US Overnight Mail, or other express mail service that provides a tracking number for your parcel, to the consulate. **Keep a photocopy of all documents, including your passport, for yourself.**
- If there is a fee for your visa, send a money order-- consulates will not accept personal checks.
- Be sure all documents are in order. Missing documents may cause delays in the processing of your application.
- Enclose a *postage paid FedEx/US Overnight Mail envelope addressed to yourself*. The consulate will only return your visa and documents if you provide a return envelope.
- Consult the consulate about the time it will take to process your application. Apply early, as any errors may delay the processing of your visa for weeks.
- Do not leave the country until you have received your passport and visa.

Once you have arrived in France:

- Submit the “residence form”, if required as part of their local French consulate visa procedures.
- Undergo a medical exam in France that is organized by OFII
- Pay a 55 euro tax.
- Provide a certified copy of your birth certificate with an official French translation.
- Note: Additional documents may be required. Students should consult their French consulate’s visa information page.

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!

French Consulates in the US:

If the appropriate consulate is not listed below, visit the French Embassy's map of Consulates at <http://ambafrance-us.org/spip.php?rubrique2> for a listing of other French Consulates.

Consulate General of France in San Francisco

States Served: Idaho, Montana, Oregon, Washington, Northern Nevada, Northern California, Alaska, Hawaii, Wyoming, and Utah.

Address: 540 Bush Street, San Francisco, CA 94108, USA

Phone: (415) 397-4330 **Fax:** (415) 433-8357

Website: <http://www.consulfrance-sanfrancisco.org/>

French Embassy in the U.S.

Address: 4101 Reservoir Road, NW, Washington, DC 20007, USA

Phone: (202) 944-6000 **Fax:** (202) 944-6166

Website: <http://ambafrance-us.org/spip.php?rubrique2>