

THE SEVIS FEE

The Student Exchange Visitor Information System (SEVIS) is the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) database. ISSS produces immigration eligibility documents (I-20 and DS-2019) and maintains records with regard to F and J visa holders on SEVIS. Although full use of SEVIS was mandated by August 1, 2003, DHS began to collect the SEVIS fee on September 1, 2004. The fee is paid directly to DHS and is being assessed to cover their SEVIS operational costs.

WHO IS AFFECTED?

Each new student or scholar whose initial (original) I-20 or DS-2019 form is issued after September 1, 2004 will be required to pay the SEVIS fee (in addition to the other visa application fees). The SEVIS fee will *not* be charged to those students and scholars whose eligibility documents were issued prior to September 1, 2004 (exceptions noted in the paragraph below).

In certain circumstances, a current student or scholar (whose initial I-20 or DS-2019 form was issued prior to September 1, 2004) will be required to pay the fee. The fee will be assessed if the student or scholar applies for a change of status, reinstatement, change of category (J-1 only) or after absences from the U.S. for more than five consecutive months (except those on an approved study abroad program or approved research abroad). **Note:** the issuance date is when the ISSS staff member signed the Initial I-20 or DS-2019 form. Not be confused with the program start or arrival date.

WHEN TO PAY THE FEE

The fee can be paid only after the I-20 or DS-2019 form has been issued. The fee must be paid prior to the visa interview. It is wise to have at least a three-day gap in between fee payment and the visa appointment. Payment of the fee is valid in the SEVIS database for a maximum of 12 months. **Note:** It can take from two to five weeks if paying by mail to process, so planning is essential, if this payment method is selected.

According to the I-901 Helpline: Because of the fraud issues in certain countries, SEVP is unable to accept credit card payments from certain countries at this time, including: Ghana, Nigeria, Cameroon, and Kenya. Students and scholars from one of these countries will receive the following message. Persons from a country other than those listed above receiving this message, should contact the I-901 Helpline [314-418-8833]:

"The Student and Exchange Visitor Program (SEVP) is not accepting credit card payments at this time. Please remit your payment by cashier's check, money order or Western Union transfer. We apologize for the inconvenience and thank you for your cooperation. If you wish to continue submitting a new payment please click here."

THE SEVIS FEE AMOUNT

The I-901 SEVIS fee amounts will change on October 27, 2008 to the following:

F-1/M-1 visa applicants (full payment)	\$200
J-1 Visa Applicants (full payment)	\$180
Government Visitor (no payment)	\$0

HOW TO PAY THE FEE

DHS created a website to facilitate the collection of the SEVIS fee, using the "I-901 Fee Remittance for Certain F, J, and M Nonimmigrant" form. The fee can be paid online by credit card at www.FMJfee.com. Alternatively, the I-901 form can be downloaded at <http://www.ice.gov/doclib/sevis/pdf/I-901.pdf> to pay via mail. If, paying by mail, a U.S. cashier's check or check drawn from a U.S. bank should be used.

WHO CAN PAY THE FEE

The student or scholar, the academic department, or any other party can pay the SEVIS fee. However, key information about the visa applicant is needed, including address, passport number, and information from the I-20 or DS-2019 form. In either case, it is important that the visa applicant bring a receipt of the payment with them to their visa interview appointment.

SPECIAL NOTE REGARDING CANADIANS

Canadian citizens do not have to obtain a visa in order to enter the U.S. However, they need to pay the SEVIS fee in advance of their entry to the U.S. (a minimum of three days in between is recommended). Fee payment is verified at the U.S. Port of Entry.

WHERE TO GET HELP AND ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

The information and instructions on-line, <http://www.ice.gov/sevis/i901/index.htm>, are fairly comprehensive and easy to understand. In the case of general or case-specific questions, student, scholars or departments should contact the SEVIS FEE Help Desk by e-mail at fmjfee.SEVIS@dhs.gov or (212) 620-3418, which operates during normal business hours (weekdays, 8am - 8pm EST). This phone number is for international callers only.