2.2.1 Requirements for New International Students: Policy

Last updated on:

Summary

Presents policy and procedures for the initial processing of international students, including the handling of visa requests; initial student enrollment; and language requirements, if any.

Rationale

In order to register as students, Stanford University requires that all those who are not U.S. citizens or U.S. registered permanent residents must obtain and maintain an appropriate and valid visa status for their stay in the United States.

For students on F-1 or J-1 visas, Stanford University is required to verify the student's initial arrival on-campus and current U.S. residence address before permitting the student to enroll. In addition, based on scores from the Test of English as a Foreign Language (TOEFL), Stanford's offer of admission to graduate study may be contingent on completion of the English Placement Test or completion of intensive English language study prior to first-quarter enrollment.

Receipt of university funding may be contingent on the applicant's successful completion of these requirements, and, in the case of an anticipated teaching assistantship, on the successful completion of the TA Screening, an assessment of a student's readiness to use English in a teaching role.

Authority:
- Bechtel International Center [1]
- Graduate Admissions Office [2]

Applicability:
All incoming matriculated international students.

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1. Visas for International Students

The types of student visas sponsored by Stanford include the following:

- **F-1 VISA**, obtained with an I-20 Certificate of Eligibility issued by Stanford University. The graduate student on an F-1 visa must enroll in a full course of study. The accompanying spouse or child enters on an F-2 visa. F-2 visa holders may not hold employment or engage in business under any circumstances. The F-2 spouse of an F-1 student may not engage in full-time study, and the F-2 child may only engage if the study is in an elementary or secondary school (kindergarten through twelfth grade). The F-2 spouse and child may engage in study that is avocational or recreational in nature.

- **J-1 VISA**, obtained with a DS-2019 Certificate of Eligibility issued by Stanford University or a sponsoring agency. (Examples of such sponsoring agencies include the Institute for International Education, and the Fulbright Commission.) This visa is required for graduate students sponsored by certain agencies, foundations, and governments. In some cases, exchange visitors must leave the United States at the conclusion of their programs, may not change to non-student visa status, and may not apply for H-1 visas or permanent residency in the United States until they have returned to their home countries for at least two years. The accompanying spouse or child of an exchange visitor enters on a J-2 visa and may obtain permission to work by means of an application to the US Department of Homeland Security. There is no regulatory restriction on study for J-2 dependents.

Graduate students may qualify for a J-1 visa as long as they are funded by the university, or a government agency, foundation or company, and at least 50% of the student's funding comes from a non-personal or non-family source.

The J-1 visa is also used for nonmatriculating international graduate students, including Postdoctoral Scholars and Visiting Student Researchers.

The certificate of eligibility (I-20 or DS-2019) is issued to an admitted student accepted for admission only after receipt of evidence of satisfactory proficiency in the English language and certification of adequate financial support for the student and his/her dependents. Proof of support for multiple years (two years, or the duration of the program) may be required. An F-1 student transferring from another U.S. school must obtain a new certificate of eligibility I-20 document from Stanford, and complete a transfer process at the Bechtel International Center no later than 15 days after the effective date of the transfer. A J-1 student transferring from another US school must obtain a new DS-2019 document from Stanford, and complete a transfer process at the Bechtel International Center no later than 30 days after the effective date of the transfer.

Information is provided for newly admitted international graduate students on the [Grad Admissions web page for admitted students](#) and on the [Bechtel International Center web page](#).

2. Initial Registration

Upon their acceptance to Stanford University, the Graduate Admissions Office determines whether Stanford University (or another sponsoring agency) must sponsor the visa to permit the student’s entry into the United States. If the visa is to be sponsored by Stanford, the Graduate Admissions Office will forward the student’s I-20/DS-2019 request form and supporting documents to the Bechtel International Center. The Bechtel International Center will review the student’s financial documents before issuing and mailing the initial immigration paperwork (the I-20/DS-
2019 and, if applicable, the I-20/DS-2019 for the student’s dependent(s).

The Graduate Admissions Office then places a hold on enrollment until the student arrives on the Stanford campus.

In order to have the enrollment hold released, the new international student must go in person to the Bechtel International Center to verify physical presence at Stanford. The student must also:

- attend a “Maintaining Your Legal Status” workshop offered by the Bechtel International Center (normally during Orientation Week),
- enter his or her local residence address into the “Student Directory (local) address” field of Axess.

Upon completing these requirements, Bechtel International Center staff will release the enrollment hold in PeopleSoft Student Administration, and the new student will be able to register for classes.

The Bechtel International Center maintains information for new international students, including the schedule of mandatory workshops, on their web site [4].

3. English Placement Examination and Enrolling in Summer Quarter Language or Other Courses

Based on performance on English language tests, the Graduate Admissions Office will notify some newly admitted international students of a requirement to complete either the English Placement Test or the intensive English language program as a condition of admission.

The English for Foreign Students (EFS) program administers the English Placement Test for new international students before the start of each Autumn quarter. The examination may result in a list of courses that the student is required and/or recommended to complete for their degree. The student’s degree may not be conferred until the required courses are completed or the student subsequently meets the requirement through additional examinations. 

In addition, the EFS program offers a six-week intensive English course during Summer quarter for students who have been admitted to graduate degree programs starting in the autumn. The focus is on spoken and written fluency, including the production of research-oriented papers and oral presentations.

Incoming international students should indicate their desire to enroll in this language program or other Summer Session courses on their request for an I-20 form before the start of their graduate degree program at Stanford, and complete the corresponding program application. Information and program applications can be found at:

- English for Foreign Students Program [5]
- Summer Session Program [6].

If planning to enroll in any Summer Session courses, international students must provide evidence of adequate financial support for the summer (including the payment of Summer quarter tuition), in addition to that required for the academic year.

Upon receipt of this additional documentation and approval from the English for Foreign Students / Summer Session Program, the Graduate Admissions Office will create a summer visitor record for the individual, enabling the student to attend the Summer Session Program during the Summer quarter preceding the first quarter of matriculated study.

NOTE: Language requirements for international graduate students who are appointed to teaching assistantship
positions during their graduate program at Stanford are in addition to those described here for incoming students (see GAP 7.3, Assistantships [7]).

Related Content:
Related Policies
- GAP 2.1, Admitting Graduate Students To Matriculated Study [8]
- GAP 7.3, Assistantships [7]

Related Bulletin Sections
- Visas [9]

Related Information and Forms
- Bechtel International Center [4]
- Graduate Admissions [3]
- International graduate students at Stanford: A guide for departments [10]
- Information for Newly Admitted Graduate Students [3]
- Stanford Summer Program [12]