



# Applying for an F-1 Student Visa: How to Prepare and What to Expect

## Things to Consider As You Prepare for the Interview

**TIES TO HOME COUNTRY:** Under U.S. law, all applicants for student visas are viewed as intending to stay in the U.S. You must show that you have reasons for returning to your country and will not remain in the United States after the program. You can provide following reasons: family, job, financial assets that you own or will inherit, investments, etc. Each person's situation is different, of course, and there is no magic explanation or single document, certificate, or letter, which can guarantee visa issuance. If you are asked about the plan after the program, simply state that you intend to return to your home country.

**ENGLISH:** Anticipate that the interview will be conducted in English and not in your native language. One suggestion is to practice English conversation with a native speaker before the interview. If you are coming to the United States solely to study intensive English be prepared to explain how English will be useful for you in your home country.

**SPEAK FOR YOURSELF:** Do not bring parents or family members with you to the interview. The consular officer wants to interview you, not your family. A negative impression is created if you are not prepared to speak for yourself.

**KNOW THE PROGRAM AND HOW IT FITS YOUR CAREER PLANS:** If you are not able to explain the reasons you will study in a particular program in the United States, you may not succeed in convincing the consular officer that you are indeed planning to study, rather than to live in the U.S. You should also be able to explain how studying in the United States relates to your future professional career when you return home.

**BE BRIEF:** Because of the volume of applications received, all consular officers are under time pressure to conduct a quick and efficient interview. They must make a decision on the impressions they form during the first minute or two of the interview. Therefore, the first impression you create is important to your success. Keep your answers to the officer's questions short and to the point.

**SUPPLEMENTAL DOCUMENTATION:** It should be clear at a glance to the consular officer what written documents you are presenting and what they signify. Lengthy written explanations cannot be quickly read or evaluated. Remember that you will have 2-3 minutes of interview time, if you're lucky.

**NOT ALL COUNTRIES ARE EQUAL:** Applicants from countries suffering economic problems or from countries where many people have stayed in the United States as immigrants will have more difficulty getting visas. Statistically, applicants from those countries are more likely to be asked about job opportunities at home after their study in the United States. Check the most up-to-date information about immigration regulations into the U.S. and be prepared accordingly.

**EMPLOYMENT:** Your main purpose of coming to the United States should be to study, not for the chance to work before or after graduation. You must be able to clearly state your plan to return home at the end of your program.

**MAINTAIN A POSITIVE ATTITUDE:** Do not engage the consular officer in an argument. If you are denied a student visa, ask the officer for a list of documents he or she would suggest you bring in order to overcome the refusal, and try to get the reason you were denied in writing.

## Practicing for the Interview

To practice for the interview, start by writing a letter describing why you want to come to TAHS EI. Read the letter out loud to a friend or family. Ask for feedback and suggestions. Then, re-write it and read it out loud again. Remember, this is your story. Tell it and tell it well! Of course, you may or may not have the opportunity to say much at the interview beyond the questions being asked. But be prepared and be yourself! Sometimes these interviews are very direct and to the point; sometimes there is room for more personal discussion.

The most important part of the interview, however, is that you respond to the questions being asked of you in a clear and concise way. Having developed your story, however, you will naturally be able to tell it if a question relating to it comes up, which is likely.

Below are some sample questions that are often asked of our applicants:

- Have you ever been to the United States?
- How did you learn about TAHS EI?
- Why did you choose TAHS EI?
- Why would you want to study to be a pastor?
- Which school(s) did you graduate from?
- Why do you want to go to America?
- Where do you work now?
- How much do you earn now?
- Are you prepared to become a full time student?
- What is your academic background?
- How is TAHS EI structured academically?
- Is TAHS EI an academically rigorous school?
- What are your resources to pay your expenses? Will these resources sustain you while in the U.S.?
- Is your financial support renewable each year?
- Why don't you study for this degree in your home country?
- What will you do after you go back to your home country?

## What to Expect During the Interview

The U.S. Embassy or Consulate official will review your I-20, acceptance letter, bank statements, and passport. Be prepared to answer potential questions about your family, finances, choice of degree program, and why you are choosing to come to TAHS EI. In some instances, these questions may be general and brief; in other instances, the official may ask many detailed questions for quite a long time. Each experience varies. Remember, stay calm and patient throughout your interview. Answer each question politely and with respect for the embassy/consulate official. If you are denied, respectfully request a written explanation of your denial. If approved, the official will issue an F-1 student visa (and F-2 visa(s) for your dependents) to you. This visa will allow you to enter the U.S. for the purpose of studying at TAHS EI.