



Definitions of Evidence

This document contains guidelines for evidence commonly required to adjudicate a Student Exchange and Visitor Program (SEVP) Form I-17, "Petition for Approval of School for Attendance by Nonimmigrant Student." This is not an exhaustive list and a Request for Evidence (RFE) may be sent to your school outlining additional requirements.

You must submit a statement of explanation for any missing evidence or evidence submitted outside of the guidelines listed below.

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1. Attendance Policy

- A detailed statement on school letterhead that is signed by the Principal Designated School Official (PDSO) outlining the school's attendance policy. For many schools, the attendance policy may be found in the school catalog. If the attendance policy is located within the institution's catalog, please note where in the catalog it is located and submit the catalog in Portable Document Format (PDF) or a link to where it can be found online. If the attendance policy is not included within the catalog, submit documentation outlining the policy.

2. Complete Signed Form I-17

- A COMPLETE Form I-17, "Petition for Approval of School for Attendance by Nonimmigrant Student," with I-17A. The Form I-17 must include signatures as follows:
 - a. Form I-17 signed by the President/Owner/Head of School
 - b. Form I-17 a Designated Official block signed by all P/D SO(s)

Note: For schools seeking Initial SEVP Certification, draft versions of the Form I-17 will not be accepted.

Note: Instructions to print: For updates to petitions, the Form I-17 and all attachments can be printed by logging onto Student and Exchange Visitor Information System (SEVIS) and selecting the "Print I-17 Form" radio button.

3. Designated School Officials

- **For Schools Seeking Initial SEVP Certification:**
Submit ONE of the following for each P/D SO as proof of citizenship or Lawful Permanent Residence (LPR):
 - a. U.S. passport (current or expired);
 - b. U.S. birth certificate or birth certificate card issued by a State Body;
 - c. Alien registration card;
 - d. Naturalization/citizenship certificate.

Note: If the proof of U.S. citizenship or LPR contains names other than those listed on the Form I-17A, "Record of Designated School Officials," a copy of the court order(s) granting the P/D SO name change(s), for example marriage or divorce certificate, must be submitted.

Note: SEVP WILL NOT ACCEPT driver's licenses, hospital birth records, or social security cards.



- **For SEVP-Certified Schools:** Refer to the [SEVP Fact Sheet for Designated School Official Submissions](#) and the [SEVIS Job Aid: Update School Officials](#).

4. **Evidence in Lieu of Accreditation**

- For more information regarding the evidence in lieu of accreditation requirements please reference: [SEVP Policy Guidance S1.2: Evidentiary Requirements for Schools Not Meeting Eligibility Criteria in 8 CFR 214.3 \(b\) and \(c\)](#)

A. **Non-Accredited Post-Secondary Programs (F Classification):**

A minimum of three (verifiable) pieces of evidence that fulfill the criteria listed in “a”, “b”, or “c” below is required. Each program listed on the Form I-17 must be referenced in separate documents. Therefore, it is possible that more than three pieces of evidence are required to ensure that each program is referenced. If submitting letters/articulation agreements, each must be from different institutions that are either owned or operated as public educational institutions or accredited by a U.S. Department of Education (ED) recognized accrediting agency. SEVP seeks evidence pertaining to students who have graduated or transferred from the petitioning school within the two years immediately prior to the submission of the evidence. Additionally, only ONE document from an entity associated with the petitioning school will be accepted.

- a. **Acceptance letters** – All letters must be on the accepting institution’s letterhead and include the following:
 - Signature(s) of the appropriate school official(s);
 - Name of the accepting school’s ED recognized accrediting body;
 - Name of the petitioning institution;
 - Student’s name;
 - Program of study pursued (transferable credits earned) at the petitioning school and program of study entered at the accepting school;
 - Student’s graduation/transfer date;
 - Accepting school’s attestation of acceptance and continued unconditional acceptance of credits earned from the petitioning school;
 - Evidence proving each student referenced in the documentation attended the petitioning (your) institution and completed the program of study referenced in the evidence. The evidence must include program enrollment and completion dates (for example, transcripts).
- b. **Articulation agreement(s)** – Agreements between the petitioning school and a school owned or operated as a public educational institution or accredited by an ED recognized accrediting agency must indicate the following:
 - Program name from the petitioning school and the program name from the accepting school into which the credits will transfer;



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- Accepting school's attestation that credits earned at the petitioning school are unconditionally recognized by and transferrable to the accepting school;
 - Effective date and expiration date of agreement (if applicable);
 - Signatures of the appropriate school officials at petitioning school and accepting school;
 - Evidence proving each student referenced in the documentation attended the petitioning (your) institution and completed the program of study referenced in the evidence. The evidence must include program enrollment and completion dates (for example, transcripts).
- c. **State-issued professional licenses** - Due to a lack of formal education opportunities at the next level with certain professional, graduate, or doctoral programs, SEVP has historically considered submission of state-issued professional licenses related to the school's program to comply with the requirements of *8 CFR 214.3(b)* and *(c)*. A postsecondary school may submit copies of state-issued professional licenses its graduates (not limited to nonimmigrant students) have received as a result of completing the program of study for which it is seeking approval.
- The graduate who received the license must have completed the program within the last two years;
 - The school should submit one license for each program for which it is seeking certification on the Form I-17 or other evidence that its credits have been and are accepted unconditionally by a postsecondary school that confers such degrees.
 - Evidence proving each student referenced in the documentation attended the petitioning (your) institution and completed the program of study referenced in the evidence. The evidence must include program enrollment and completion dates (for example, transcripts).
- B. **Non-Accredited Vocational Programs (M Classification):** A minimum of three (verifiable) pieces of evidence that fulfill the criteria listed in "a" or "b" below are required. Each program listed on the Form I-17 must be referenced in separate documents. Therefore, it is possible that more than three pieces of evidence are required to ensure that each program is referenced. If submitting employment letters, each letter must be from a different employer. SEVP seeks evidence pertaining to students who have graduated or transferred from the petitioning school within the two years immediately prior to submission of the evidence. Additionally, only ONE document from an entity associated with the petitioning school will be accepted.
- a. **Proof of Employment** - Due to vocational programs traditionally preparing students for vocational careers or other technical occupations, rather than further education, SEVP considers proof of graduate employment related to the school's program to comply with the requirements of *8 CFR 214.3(b)* and *(c)*. The graduate's employment must be in the United States. A school may submit proof of



employment obtained by any of its graduates, including but not limited to its nonimmigrant students. SEVP does not accept letters from persons who are self-employed as evidence in lieu. Employment letters must be on the employer's letterhead and include the following:

- The letter must be on employer letterhead, contain the business address and phone number of the employer and the direct contact information (phone number or email) of the letter author;
- The student must be in a field that directly relates to their program of study for which the school is seeking certification on the Form I-17;
- The student must have completed the program within the last two years;
- The letter must contain a signature by the letter author, including the author's title or position within the employer organization;
- Evidence proving each student referenced in the documentation attended the petitioning (your) institution and completed the program of study referenced in the evidence. The evidence must include program enrollment and completion dates (for example, transcripts).

b. **State-issued professional licenses** - Due to the requirement of obtaining state-issued licensure for many vocational careers in certain states, SEVP has historically considered submission of state-issued professional licenses to comply with the requirements of *8 CFR 214.3(b)* and *(c)*. A vocational school may submit copies of state-issued professional licenses its graduates (not limited to nonimmigrant students) have received that directly relate to the program of study for which it is seeking approval.

- The graduate who received the license must have completed the program within the last two years;
- The school should submit one license for each program for which it is seeking certification on the Form I-17;
- Evidence proving each student referenced in the documentation attended the petitioning (your) institution and completed the program of study referenced in the evidence. The evidence must include program enrollment and completion dates (for example, transcripts).

C. **Grades K-12:** A minimum of three (verifiable) pieces of evidence that fulfill the criteria listed in "a" or "b" below are required. Each program listed on the Form I-17 must be referenced in separate documents. At least one letter must reference the highest-grade level listed on the Form I-17 petition. Each letter must be from different institutions that are either owned or operated as public educational institutions or accredited by an ED recognized or SEVP-identified accrediting agency. SEVP seeks evidence pertaining to students who have graduated or transferred from the petitioning school within the two years immediately prior to submission of the evidence. Additionally, only ONE document from an entity associated with the petitioning school will be accepted.



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- a. **Proof of student transfer to the next grade level** - Private kindergarten through grade 12 (K-12) schools may submit proof of student (not limited to nonimmigrant students) transfer to the next grade level in a public school or in a school accredited by an SEVP-identified accrediting agency. The proof of transfer must meet all of the following requirements:
- Be on the receiving school's letterhead;
 - State its SEVP-identified accrediting agency or that it is a public school;
 - Include the complete name of the student and grade level of completion;
 - Date completed at the petitioning school must be within the last two years;
 - Include the grade level entered at the receiving school and date of entry;
 - Include the name of the petitioning school;
 - Have attestation of transfer with signature of the issuing official (a school employee or representative with legal authority to issue an official school record);
 - Evidence proving each student referenced in the documentation attended the petitioning (your) institution and completed the program of study referenced in the evidence. The evidence must include program enrollment and completion dates (for example, transcripts).
- b. **Proof of acceptance to a postsecondary school** - Private schools that are petitioning for grade 12 certification (alone or together with any other grade levels) and issue secondary school diplomas may alternately and/or additionally submit proof of its graduates' (not limited to nonimmigrant students) acceptance by a postsecondary school, such as a college, university, or vocational school. The proof of acceptance must meet the following requirements.
- An ED-recognized accrediting agency must accredit the postsecondary school;
 - The student must have graduated or completed the program within the last two years;
 - Evidence proving each student referenced in the documentation attended the petitioning (your) institution and completed the program of study referenced in the evidence. The evidence must include program enrollment and completion dates (for example, transcripts).

5. Explanation Statement of ANY Form I-17 Edit

- A statement on school letterhead that is signed by the PDSO explaining the edit(s) made to the Form I-17.



Note: This includes explanations for evidence not submitted or submission of edits to ownership or the physical location of the school that are not actual changes of ownership or location.

Note: If you have multiple edits to the Form I-17, you may submit all explanatory statements in one document.

6. **FAA Certification**

- A current copy of the school's FAA Air Agency Certificate under part 141 or Training Center Certification under part 142;
- FAA letter/list of approved programs which identifies the instructional sites and certificates/ratings.

Note: SEVP **will not** accept provisional licenses; see [SEVP Policy Guidance for Adjudicators 1207-04: Flight Training Providers](#).

7. **Facilities**

- Physical location – Description of the facilities, including the number of classrooms used for instruction, the maximum capacity of each classroom, and the purpose of each classroom (for example, instruction, lab, computer) and a labeled floor plan of each building and floor.
- Capacity – Official document(s) issued by either the fire marshal or other state or county government body indicating the maximum capacity for each building of the school, for each location listed on the Form I-17.
- If renting or leasing space, submit a copy of the rental or lease agreement.

8. **Financials**

- A copy of your institution's Certified Financial Statement signed by your accountant. The statement must be the most recent statement within one calendar year. Tax documents are NOT accepted.

9. **Grading Policy**

- A detailed statement outlining the school's grading policy. If the grading policy can be found in the institution's catalog, please note where in the catalog it is located and submit the catalog in PDF or a link to where it can be found online.



10. Ownership

- Legal documentation demonstrating ownership of the school (for example, articles of incorporation showing share ownership, share purchase agreements, limited partnership or partnership agreement, sole proprietorship documents, and/or most recent Bill of Sale). If the institution is a doing business under an assumed name (d/b/a), also submit evidence of the fictitious name.

11. Payment

- Payment Fees:
 - Schools seeking initial SEVP certification
 - Filing fee (non-refundable) - \$3,000
 - Site visit fee - \$655 (per location listed on the Form I-17, non-refundable once a site visit is completed)
 - SEVP-Certified Schools
 - Ownership change fee - \$3,000
 - Site visit fee - \$655 (per location change or additional location added to the Form I-17, non-refundable once site visit is completed)
 - Recertification filing fee - \$1,250
- To make a payment, go to www.pay.gov. In the Search Public Forms box type SEVIS and click enter. Click on the link to the form and follow the instructions.
- Once payment is made, save a copy of your receipt in PDF format to upload as evidence using the Upload Evidence functionality in SEVIS when submitting your application.
- For more information regarding the Payment requirements, please reference: [Form I-17 - Pay Fees](#) on Study in the States.

12. Pre-Kindergarten (Pre-K) Statement

- A statement on school letterhead that is signed by the PDSO and head of school attesting that your institution will not issue Forms I-20 for Pre-K nonimmigrant students.

13. Programs of Study Statement

- A. **Post-Secondary Schools**: A program of study statement must be submitted for **EACH** program for which you are seeking approval to issue Forms I-20 in the format below and include the following information:
 - a. Program name;



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- b. Degree type (if non-degree, specify non-degree program type);
 - c. Visa Classification (F academic and language OR M vocational or technical);
 - d. Date on which instruction of the program **ORIGINALLY** began at your school;
 - e. Mode of delivery (for example: is the program in-person, online, distance, hybrid, low residency, etc.);
 - f. Program Hours:
 - **For credit hour programs**, list the total credit hours per academic session and the time (in days/weeks/months/years) necessary to complete the program for a full-time student. Lecture, lab, employment, internship/externship, and Curricular Practical Training (CPT) must be listed separately;
 - **For clock hour programs**, list the total clock hours per week and how many weeks to complete the program for a full-time student. Lecture, lab, employment, internship/externship, and CPT must be listed separately;
 - For F programs only, if any of the programs have a hybrid, low residency and/or online component(s), indicate the total credits or clock hours of hybrid, low residency and/or online instruction per academic session;
 - For programs where there is a difference between coursework conducted in clock and credit hours (for example, one program component is calculated in clock hours and another in credit hours), the school must provide SEVP evidence showing equivalency to meet the credit or clock hour requirements of 8 CFR 214.2(f)(6)(i)(A), (B), or (D) from a combination of the two components;
 - g. Instructional sites at which the program will be taught, include the address(es);
 - h. Admission standards and enrollment criteria.
- B. **K-12 Schools**: A program of study statement must be submitted for **EACH** grade level for which you are seeking approval to issue Forms I-20 in the format below and include the following information:
- a. Specific grade levels;
 - b. Mode of delivery (for example: is the program in-person, online, distance, hybrid, etc.);
 - c. Time necessary to complete each grade level (for example, Grade level 8 – 1 year);
 - d. Date, to include month and year, in which instruction in each program initially began after the school’s establishment;
 - e. Instructional sites at which the program will be taught, include the address(es);
 - f. Admission standards and enrollment criteria.
- C. **Flight Schools**: Click on the PDF worksheet, [Programs of Study - Flight School Worksheet and fill it out electronically](#). Read, and complete the worksheet in its entirety. A worksheet must be completed for **EACH** program of study that includes your certificates/ratings you are seeking approval to issue Forms I-20. Please make sure to



include ALL the ACTUAL hours that students are involved in instruction/lab work at your institution each week and not just the FAA minimum hours. Include actual supervised hours involved in all facets of instruction/lab work, including ground school, flight time, pre/post debriefing, stage checks, and examinations.

14. Removal Statement

- A statement on school letterhead that is signed by the PDSO explaining the request to remove information from the Form I-17. If your school is removing program(s) of study, or instructional site(s) your statement must include confirmation that there are no longer nonimmigrant students enrolled in the program(s) of study or attending the instructional site(s) being removed and the school will no longer issue Forms I-20 for the program(s) or instructional site(s) once removed.

15. School Type

- A business license or Internal Revenue Service (IRS) tax documentation indicating the operation of your institution.

Note: If this is not a change in school type, submit a statement that is signed by the PDSO and head of school explaining the nature of the edit and any evidence needed to support this statement.

16. SEVP Identified Accrediting Agencies - Elementary and Secondary Institutions only

- A copy of the institution's certificate of accreditation and/or letter from an SEVP-identified accrediting agency. The evidence must indicate the effective date and expiration date(s) of accreditation.

17. State Recognition and Exemption

- Evidence from your state authorizing body that shows the school has authorization to operate in the state or is exempt from authorization to operate in the state. If applicable, the evidence submitted must indicate the effective date and expiration date of state licensure or exemption.

Note: In lieu of state licensing, a postsecondary school which offers courses recognized by a state-approving agency as appropriate for study for veterans under the provisions of 38 USC 3675 and 3676 may submit a statement of recognition signed by the appropriate official of the state approving agency.



18. Statement Acknowledging IIRIRA

- Pursuant to the Illegal Immigration Reform and Immigrant Responsibility Act (IIRIRA) of 1996, F-1 nonimmigrant students may only attend a public high school for a maximum of one year and must demonstrate that he or she has reimbursed the local educational agency the unsubsidized per capita cost of education for the period of attendance. Submit a statement on school letterhead signed by the PDSO and the Head of School acknowledging the following:
 - F-1 students must make payment of the unsubsidized per capita cost of education for the period of attendance;
 - F-1 students may only attend one year and only enroll in grades 9-12;
 - The current unsubsidized per capita cost of education for your school or school district.

19. Teacher Qualifications

- For each member of the teaching staff submit the following information:
 - a. Educational, vocational, or professional qualifications (by name);
 - b. Salary of each instructor (by name);
 - c. Current responsibilities at the school (by name);
 - d. Amount and character of supervisory and consultative services available to students.

20. U.S. Department of Education (ED) Recognized Accrediting Agencies

- Evidence of accreditation that fulfills the criteria listed in “a” and/or “b” below are required: If more than one applies to the institution, submit evidence accordingly. The evidence must indicate the effective date and expiration date(s) of accreditation.
 - a. Postsecondary Institutions:
 - i. A copy of the institution’s certificate of accreditation and/or letter from an ED recognized accrediting agency. The documentation must include evidence of accreditation for all instructional sites and programs for which the school is seeking SEVP certification.
 - b. Schools with English as a Second Language (ESL) programs of studies:
 - i. A copy of the institution’s certificate of accreditation and/or letter from an ED recognized accrediting body which specifically includes the English language program and all instructional sites where the programs are offered.