

Arrival in the U.S.

When preparing for your arrival to the U.S. for the first time as an international student, you should be mindful of the following.

Earliest date of admission

Based on immigration regulations, F-1 student visa holders can enter the U.S. up to 30 days prior to the program start date on the I-20. If you are unable to arrive in the U.S. by the program start date, we recommend you inform a DSO who will advise you further.

Documentation to carry with you

Please ensure you carry the following documents with you when you arrive. We recommend you keep these documents in an easily accessible location as you may be required to produce them at the port of entry:

- Current unexpired passport with validity for at least 6 months
- F-1 visa
- Your original I-20 issued by Sofia University
- A copy of your acceptance letter from Sofia University
- I-901 SEVIS fee receipt
- Financial documents provided when applying for Sofia program of study

CBP and I-94

At the U.S. port of entry, you will be required to present your passport and I-20 to the immigration officer who will stamp your passport. In most cases, the officer notes “D/S” (Duration of Status) on your passport pages. This means you are allowed to stay in the U.S. for the length of time indicated on your I-20, provided that you maintain full-time enrollment and a valid F-1 visa status.

Do not enter the U.S. in visitor status (B-1/B-2, WT, or WB). This status does not permit full-time study in the U.S.

After your arrival, print your Admission (I-94) number at cbp.gov/I94 and keep a copy of all travel documents (I-94 information, F-1 visa, and I-20) for your personal records. Ensure your I-94 print out contains the correct information, including F-1 visa status and “Duration of Status.”

Form I-515A

If a U.S. Customs and Border Protection (CBP) Officer issues you a Form I-515A you must notify DSO immediately. The Form I-515A permits you temporary admission into the United States for 30 days. To maintain your F-1 status, you must work with your DSO to review the reason Form I-515A was issued and take immediate corrective action.

Reporting to a DSO after initial entry

Please email a DSO with a copy of your I-94 and U.S. address when you have arrived. When DSO has verified your arrival and enrollment in courses, you will receive an updated I-20 and your SEVIS record will be registered in “active” status.