

Travelling to the USA

If you want to go to the USA to visit family and friends, or you would like to attend a conference being held in the USA you will need to apply for a non-immigrant visa from the US Embassy in London. A non-immigrant visa can be issued for a maximum of 90 days (3 months). There are certain categories of people who are exempt from needing this visa, please visit the following website for

details: www.usembassy.org.uk/cons_new/visa/niv/index.html

There are many different types of non-immigrant visas, which depend on why and for how long you want to visit the USA. The above website gives clear guidance on the different types of visa. The one which most international students need to apply for is the B-2 Holiday Visa.

When checking which visa is best for you, make sure read the information carefully as certain groups of people need to fill in additional / different forms e.g. Males aged 16 – 45 are required to complete an additional non-immigrant visa application form (DS – 157):

www.usembassy.org.uk/cons_new/visa/niv/add_males.html

Things to check before you make your application

- Your passport **must** have at least one blank page and be valid for 6 months after your return date from the USA. Although the US website does not state how long your UK student visa should be valid for we would recommend that you have at least 3 months remaining on your student visa from your return date.
- Check the above website for processing times for visa applications; it varies depending on the time of year you are applying and your nationality.
- We recommend that you start to plan for your visa application at least 3 months before you want to travel. The US embassy will not guarantee the processing time of visas. Therefore, final travel plans and the purchase of non refundable tickets should not be made until a visa has been issued and you are in receipt of your passport.

Applying for your US visa

If you would like a visa to visit the USA you will be required to make and attend an appointment at the US Embassy in London. You cannot turn up at the embassy without an appointment.

Due to security issues there are some strict regulations that must be followed when attending an appointment at the US embassy. Further information can be found at:

www.usembassy.org.uk/cons_news/visa/index.html

- Complete in full form DS-156 (and form DS-157 if applicable) www.usembassy.org.uk/cons_news/visa/forms/visaforms.html
- Pay the application fee. Each applicant is required to pay a visa application fee. Payment must be made over the telephone using a credit / debit card at the time of making an appointment. No appointment will be made until confirmation your card has been successfully processed www.usembassy.org.uk/cons_news/visa/niv/fee.html

Documents required

- **Passport** – must be valid for at least six months beyond your return date and must have at least one blank page. If your passport is damaged it is recommended that you obtain a new passport before applying for your visa to avoid any delays.
- **Photographs** – you must provide one passport sized photograph which meets the regulations www.usembassy.org.uk/cons_news/visa/niv/photo.html
- **Finances** – you provide original bank statements showing you have sufficient funds to cover all your expenses whilst in the USA.
- **Student Status** – you need to provide a recent letter from the University. Please request a ‘visa letter’ from Student Services. Having this letter will strengthen your application as it will show the US embassy that you need to return to the UK to complete your studies.
- **Reason for visit** – if you are attending a conference or your visit has anything to do with your studies at the University of Bolton, ask your academic department to confirm this in writing. If you are going to visit friends or family you will need a letter of invite. The letter should confirm the length of the visit and whether they will be providing accommodation for you.
- **Reasons for refusals** – one of the main things the embassy will consider before they issue you with a visa is whether they are sure that it is your intention to return to the UK at the end of your visit. If possible it is useful to take with you anything that will show you have good reason for returning such as evidence of part-time work, tenancy agreement or evidence of family in the UK.