



COLLEGE OF THE ALBEMARLE

# International Students

## *Becoming an International Student*

### *At COA*

### *The Process to Get An F-1 Status*

Thank you for your interest in our College! We have over 100 international students on our campuses representing 28 different countries. Before we can assist you in creating the necessary immigration forms you must complete the steps below and gather the necessary documents. .

<input type="checkbox"/>	<p><b><u>Apply for Admission</u></b></p> <p>Our application is located on our website: <a href="http://www.albemarle.edu/students/admissions">www.albemarle.edu/students/admissions</a>. For more information on the application see page 3 of this form! If you experience log-in issues or need assistance with the CFNC account, please call 866-866-2362. Students who have not attended COA for one year prior to the semester they plan to enroll in must re-apply for admission. Student's must submit a \$50.00 processing fee.</p>
<input type="checkbox"/>	<p><b><u>Take the TOEFL Test</u></b></p> <p>Before we can issue you an I-20 we have to determine that you meet the minimum English reading and writing requirements. International students overseas must take the TOEFL or ILETS Academic exam and earn the minimum score: TOEFL:: internet Based 40, Paper Based 425, Computer Based 120. ILETS academic: 5 and above. We only accept the TOEFL, ILETS academic or the RISE placement test (the RISE placement test can only be taken in North Carolina).</p>
<input type="checkbox"/>	<p><b><u>Complete the I-20 Application and Gather Required Documentation</u></b></p> <p>Student must complete the I-20 application, which can be found on our international students webpage. Students should gather the documents required (listed on the next page). Students should scan all their documents to a DOS and should submit all their documents at one time via email. . Please allow for 1-2 weeks for an I-20 to be created and 3-6 weeks for your I-20 to arrive. We mail I-20's using the United States Postal Service. An I-20 can not be emailed and be considered valid.</p>
<input type="checkbox"/>	<p><b><u>Make an Appointment with US Embassy</u></b></p> <p>Once your I-20 have arrived students should make an appointment with the US Embassy in their home country for an F-1 visa. Students will be mailed a list of what is needed at that appointment but can also contact the embassy for a list of required documents.</p>
<input type="checkbox"/>	<p><b><u>Contact a DSO</u></b></p> <p>Please notify your DSO if you are approved or denied for an F-1 visa. If approved your DSO will review the required next steps with you. If you are denied students have the option of deferring their enrollment for up to 1 year. These students must notify their DSO and an I-20 with a new start date will be mailed. Students can defer their enrollment for 2 semesters. After 2 semesters your I-20 will be cancelled.</p>
<input type="checkbox"/>	<p><b><u>Complete the Pre-arrival requirements</u></b></p> <p>Once approved students must complete the online connect session, activate their student account, complete the Introduction to Mycourses 101 modules and quizzes and register for New Student Orientation and New International Student Orientation. Students will need to arrive in the United States at least 2 weeks before classes start as they must take the English and Math Placement test in order to enroll in classes. Please let your DSO know when you will arrive in North Carolina and you will be registered to take the placement test.</p>

## Detailed Application Information

International Students Interested in attending COA must first complete a college admissions application.

To apply:

- ⇒ go to [www.albemarle.edu](http://www.albemarle.edu) and select Apply & Register
- ⇒ Click Online Application listed towards the bottom of the page
- ⇒ Select New User and create a log in account
- ⇒ Once you have created an account, complete the COA Application
- ⇒ Be sure to complete the RDS part of the application
- ⇒ Click Submit when finished

After completing their application students will be sent an email with their acceptance letter, student identification number and user name. Students should save this information.

### More about RDS

RDS stands for Residency Determination Service and is how the state of North Carolina (NC) determines if a student is a resident of the state. International students are not able to be North Carolina residents but still must complete the RDS part of the application.

### To get an RDS/Residency Number

When filling out the COA application there will be a page of the application that asks for an RDS or Residency Number. To get a number please click the RDS link in the text. Students will be taken to a different page and will be asked to verify their information and answer a number of questions. Students should answer that they are not US citizen and an RDS number will be provided. Student will then return to the COA application to complete and submit their application.

### Processing Fee

International students are required to pay a \$50.00 processing fee. Students can pay the fee in person at any campus location using cash or credit card. Students can also pay via mail using a money order or over the phone using a credit card. Students currently overseas should submit a money order via mail to the address provided on page 4 of this document. Students should not mail cash or credit card information.

International Student Applications will not be completed until the \$50.00 processing fee is submitted. Students may submit the payment when they submit their I-20 application. Students who paid prior should submit a copy of their receipt showing payment of the fee. A student's application must be completely processed in order to be issued a Form I-20.

## Placement Testing Information

Before we can issue you an I-20 we have to determine that you meet the minimum English reading and writing requirements. International students overseas must take the TOEFL or ILETS Academic exam and earn the minimum score:

TOEFL: Internet Based 40, Paper Based 425, Computer Based 120.

ILETS Academic: 5 and above.

We only accept the TOEFL, ILETS Academic or the RISE placement test (the RISE placement test can only be taken in North Carolina).

Students who take the TOEFL or ILETS Academic test will have to take the RISE placement test once they enter the United States in order to be registered for classes. Students will take the RISE English and Math placement test at COA and should plan on arriving in the United

States 2 weeks before their semester start date to complete the testing requirements and register for classes.

Students who visit the United States and North Carolina are welcome to take the RISE placement test at any of the College of The Albemarle campus locations. Students who take the RISE test must earn a score of a 34 on the English placement test in order to qualify for an I-20. Students who take the RISE test in order to qualify for an I-20 are only allowed to take the test 2 time in a 10 year period. Students unable to earn the require test score on the RISE test should return home to take the TOEFL or ILETS Academic Test.

There are fees associated with both the TOEDL and ILETS Academic test. Please note COA only accepts the ILETS ACADEMIC test. We do not accept other ILETS tests.

## ☑ Checklist For F-1 Visa

### Documentation

- Copy of student's passport ~ students passport must be valid for 6 months beyond the change of status date. Students with passports that expire within that period should return home and apply for an F-1 visa.
- Copy of student's valid visa ~ Students should apply while they still have a valid J-1 or B Visa. Students must be able to maintain a status while their application is being processed. Current process times vary but can take up to 12 months. Students who are unable to maintain a valid status should return home to request an F-1 visa.
- Copy of I-94 card ~ An I-94 can be printed by visiting the following website:  
<https://i94.cbp.dhs.gov/i94/consent.html>
- Letter from a student's sponsor which states they are "willing to help the student financially" for their ENTIRE length of studies. Sample letter can be found on the bottom of this page. If student is self-sponsoring, he/she should write a letter indicating this. A US business can not serve as an F-1 visa sponsor as it may give the impression that the student would work for that business while an F-1 student.
- Sponsor Bank statements consisting of the three most recent months of bank statements on official bank stationery showing that the sponsor has an ending balance of at least \$23,000 for each month. If the documentation is from a bank overseas the money must be "translated" to the US dollar. The money does not need to be officially converted to the dollar but the statements and the information must be translated to English and shown in the US dollar. More details on the financials can be found on our website.
- High School transcripts in your native language and officially translated to English. If you have attended University those transcripts are also required. We must have proof that you have graduated from High School and must have a transcript of the classes you have taken at your University.
- A completed COA I-20 application, students must apply to COA and take the placement test before completing their I-20 application.
- International Student Application processing fee of \$50.00 must be submitted before your COA application will be completely processed. Students can pay using credit card or pay in cash (at COA). Students currently overseas should submit a money order via the mail.
- MasterCard or Visa credit or debit card** to make a \$350 on-line payment for your SEVIS fee. (Immigration tracking system) – a 901 fee receipt will be given to student to show payment, this confirmation should be submitted with any change of status documentation. **(Only credit cards accepted)**

*Date*

*Dear Immigration Official :*

## Sample Sponsor Letter

*This letter verifies that I will sponsor (name of student) while s/he studies at the College of the Albemarle for their entire length of studies. (Also insert how you know this student & why you want to sponsor them). Attached please find my most recent bank statements (last three consecutive months) which show that I have in excess of \$23,000 in my bank account. (If these funds replenish please note that).*

*Sincerely,*

*Sponsor handwritten signature and typewritten name*

## Transcript Translations and Transferring Credits

COA requires your high school and university transcripts in your native language as well as an English translation of each. The transcripts are used for admitting you to the College, and for that purpose, we will accept your own English translation of your high school documents. All university transcript should be translated to English by an official translation service. We recommend you use translation services in your home country as it is generally quicker and more time efficient. If you would like for any of your University courses to be considered for transfer credit to COA, then you must hire an agency to translate and evaluate your transcript .

All evaluations must be received by COA directly from the evaluating agency at the following address:

**College of The Albemarle,**  
Attention: Registrar's Office  
P.O. Box 2327  
Elizabeth City, NC 27906-2327.

In the gray box below, are a list of agencies which perform evaluations. Remember, an evaluation is not required & it is a student's choice if they want to transfer any of their credits from their home university to COA. Evaluation services typically cost \$70-\$200 depending on the company and the type of evaluation requested. Students should also request a copy of the evaluation.

### Designated School Officials (DSO)

**Katie Cross**  
132 Russell Twiford Rd  
Manteo, NC 27954  
(252) 473-2264  
katie\_cross@albemarle.edu  
located on the Dare Campus

**Cherrie Boyce**  
1208 North Road St.  
Elizabeth City, NC 27909  
(252) 335-0821  
cherrie\_boyce@albemarle.edu  
located on the Elizabeth City Campus

## Translation and Evaluation Service Providers

- ◆ International Educational Evaluations, Inc., 7900 Matthews - Mint Hill Rd., Suite 300, Charlotte, NC 28227; [www.foreigntranscripts.com](http://www.foreigntranscripts.com) , (704)772-0109 Fax : (704)545-2484
- ◆ International Consultants of DE, Inc.; 625 Barksdale Road, Suite 109, Newark, DE 19711; [www.icdel.com](http://www.icdel.com) (302)737-8715; Fax (302)737-8756
- ◆ Globe Language Services, Inc.; 319 Broadway New York, NY 10007; [www.globelanguage.com](http://www.globelanguage.com) (212)227-1994; Fax: (212)-693-1489
- ◆ World Education Service, Inc.; P.O. Box 745 Old Chelsea Station New York, NY 10113-0745; [www.wes.org](http://www.wes.org) (212)966-6311; Fax. (212)7396139
- ◆ Educational Credential Evaluators; P.O. Box 514070 Milwaukee, WI 53203-3470; [www.ece.org](http://www.ece.org) (414)289-3400
- ◆ Josef Silny & Associates; 7101 SW 102 Avenue Miami, FL 33173; [www.jsilny.com](http://www.jsilny.com) (305)273-1616

## What exactly is a Sponsor?

The term sponsor can be confusing because it has 2 different meanings for international students taking classes at a community college in North Carolina. All international students must have an **FI visa sponsor**. These sponsors are individuals that assisted a student in becoming an F-1 student by writing a letter of sponsorship to the US Government. These sponsors also

Provide bank statements to show they have the cost of attendance in a bank account for each of the last 3 months (cost of attendance is \$23,000). A **North Carolina Non Profit sponsor** is a sponsor available to international students studying at the community college that allows the student to qualify for in-state tuition. A nonprofit sponsor is different from an FI sponsor and can

Change from semester to semester. Once a non profit sponsor letter is received the students balance is transferred from their account to the account of the listed sponsor. Sponsors must be approved by the college and must provide documentation. The college does not provide a list of approved sponsors and does not assist in the location of sponsoring organizations.

## Tips for Students Seeking a Change of Status

Students interested in seeking a change of status are encouraged to write a letter to USCIS to submit with their COS request. We recommend you share the reasons why you would like to stay in the United States to study and how this educational opportunity will assist you when you return home. Since an F-1 visa is a non immigrant visa USCIS officials will want to know of your plans to return home. Be prepared to explain how a US education will benefit you in your home country. If you have attended a university at home you will want to let officials know how it benefits you to study in the US versus continuing your studies at home.

Students with multiple J-1 jobs will need to provide proof that their additional jobs were approved by their J-1 sponsor organization.

## Tips for students going Home

Students who return home for an F-1 visa will have a limited time to share valuable information with the State Department official. Generally students are asked only 2-3 questions and should be prepared to share their ties to their home country during the interview process. Students should be able to demonstrate a tie to home via property ownership, a future job, etc. Students will also want to know how the program they are planning on completing and how it fits their career plans. Since F-1 visa holders are not permitted to work students will want to be able to clearly explain their plans to return home at the end of their studies.

Please notify the DSO at COA if approved or denied. Students who are denied can ask COA to defer their acceptance for a future date.



## The difference between a Change of Status and an F-1 Visa

Individuals seeking to become students at an SEVP authorized college or university such as COA can become F-1 students in 2 different ways.

### Change of Status (COS):

Students can apply for a change of status from their current status to an F-1 (student status). These students apply to USCIS while their current visa is still valid and must be able to maintain a valid status while seeking a new status. A student's ability to take classes depends on their current status.

- Processing times vary widely and can take 2-15 months to learn if your status change has been approved.
- Students can not get a US driver's license while awaiting a change of status adjudication.

- Change of Status does not grant students multiple entry to the US meaning once a student leaves the US they are not able to return without first getting a valid F-1 VISA.
- Having an approved F-1 status does not guarantee a student will get approval for an F-1 visa (if the student returns home)
- If a student decides to leave the US while awaiting a change of status their application is considered abandoned and will be denied.

**F-1 Visa:** Students are able to apply for an F-1 visa from their home country. Students seeking to apply for an F-1 visa from home will need to apply to COA, take the placement tests and submit an I-20 application. Students are

encouraged to apply for their I-20 while in the United States.

- F-1 visas allow for multiple entries to the US meaning students can return home during holidays and breaks.
- Students can either take the placement test at COA or can take the TOEFL or ILETS Academic test from their home country.
- Students should be prepared to show ties to their home country to demonstrate they are seeking a nonimmigrant visa and do not have plans to remain in the US after completing their degree.
- Students with F-1 visas are allowed to enter the US 30 days before the start of their program.