



इक्ष्वा  
पट वेवरोइ

# New Students

Frequently Asked Questions

September 1, 2017

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## 1 VISA

### **How early can I apply for my Visa interview?**

You can apply as early as you want by filling up the different online forms (mentioned later) however ensure that the Visa interview (2 day process one for your biometric details and clicking of photograph and the other one is a one-on-one interview with a consulate representative) date is chosen such that it is no more than 120 days prior to the date that classes begin (mentioned on I-20). For e.g. if your classes begin 15 September 2018, ensure that Visa Interview is scheduled for a date that is after 20 May, 2018 (preferably)

### **Within how many weeks of my Visa Interview should the financial documents be dated?**

Your financial documents should be dated preferably within 1 to 2 weeks of your Visa Interview. Avoid documents that are more than a month old.

### **While filling up the Visa forms, I came across fields which asked for the following**

- *Full Name in Native Alphabet:* You need not fill it up. Either leave it blank or choose an option that most closely resembles Does Not Apply
- *Passport Book Number:* You need not fill it up. Either leave it blank or choose an option that most closely resembles Does Not Apply
- *Address that you will stay in US:* You could mention the University Address mentioned on the i20 received from UC Davis
- *Contact person / organization:* Mention your Grad Advisors details as given on the i20 received from UC Davis

### **If I have made my payment using NEFT, then how will I receive my Visa Fee (MRV) receipt?**

No need to worry. You will only be asked for your Visa Appointment Confirmation page, DS-160 Confirmation page and SEVIS payment receipt.

### **Am I supposed to upload a photograph of mine during the online application process?**

No, you are not required to upload one. Your photograph will be clicked during the OFC appointment.

### **Am I required to upload financial documents while filling the visa application form?**

No, it is not required to upload financial documents. You are asked for your source of funding during the Visa interview itself (for both PhD and Masters students).

**Will it be a problem if the passport expiry date is a month or more than the intended duration of study?**

In most cases, the passport will be printed with a visa duration up to that intended on your I-20 but you need to have your passport updated before the expiry. Thus, it will be issued with the intended study dates despite the expiry date of your passport.

**What kind of financial documentation needs to be shown by PhD and Masters students?**

PhD candidates will suffice showing the funding letter along with the offer letter. The funding for PhD students is usually mentioned on I-20 and covers tuition fee, health insurance, and other benefits. For Masters students without funding, it is recommended to show strong financial roots i.e. in the form of - combination of Bank Account statement for past 3-6 months, Loan Sanction letters, Liquid assets, Property, Stocks etc. Some of these documents may also suffice while applying for the I-20 but it should be able to cover the amount mentioned on I-20 which will include tuition, and living expenses for a year on the I-20 form.

**Which online forms need to be filled and submitted for the F-1 visa? What are the documents needed for the Visa interview?**

DS-160 form is to be filled and submitted for the F-1 visa application and interview process. Besides, you have to pay the SEVIS fees and also create your account on [www.ustraveldocs.com](http://www.ustraveldocs.com) to book your Visa interview date.

**– Generic Documents:**

- \* *Passport*
- \* *I-20*
- \* *DS 160 confirmation page (with stamp from OFC Appointment)*
- \* *Visa Appointment letter*
- \* *SEVIS FEE Confirmation page*

**– Funding Documents:**

- \* *Loan sanction letter or loan approval letter*
- \* *Bank passbooks or account transaction statements*
- \* *Fixed Deposit receipts*
- \* *Demat account for mutual funds*
- \* *IT TAX returns for the past two years*
- \* *Salary slips of sponsor (if employed)*

**– Academic Documents:**

- \* *Bachelors degree certificate and marksheets*

\* *GRE and TOEFL Score cards*

**What is administrative processing? Also, under what circumstances will my Visa application undergo one?**

Administrative processing means that a security clearance is required on your application. Your application may require one if you have had prior Visa problems (i.e. denials or overstays), criminal charges, or if an entry made by you in your DS-160 requires one.

In our experience, maximum administrative processing requests are because of your program. If it is a part of the TAL (Technology Alert List), a list of sensitive technologies that have been identified as dual-purpose technologies, i.e., technologies with both civilian and military applications. A list of such majors is available online. *E.g. M.S in Pharmacology*

If your program is in this list; you are requested to apply for your Visa ASAP, as an administrative hold can take somewhere around a month to get cleared.

**What precautionary measures should I take if my program falls in the TAL list?**

Be prepared with an answer which can convince the Visa officer that your research and interests would not be associated with anything dangerous / threatening and that it would not jeopardize the safety of the States.

**How many days after my Visa Interview will I receive my passport / visa?**

In most cases, you receive a notification for passport / visa pick up within 7 days of your visa approval.

## 2 IMMUNIZATIONS AND HEALTH INSURANCE

**How necessary is it for me to get immunized for the vaccinations listed on the SHCS page? Also, is there any last date before which I should get this done?**

Usually, SHCS is not very stringent with these requirements and they usually do not place holds on course registration due to this reason. However, it is best that you get in touch with SHCS via email or call and inquire about the same. At the same time, if they have any required vaccinations mentioned, ensure that you get those shots before landing in the US.

**Am I covered under the University's health insurance plan? When and how much am I supposed to pay for it?**

By default, every graduate student is covered under UC SHIP (University's Health Insurance Plan). It has a good coverage and is suggested for graduate students. You will be paying for it along with your quarter fees, approximately \$1450.

You could look for another health insurance plan (please note that Indian Insurance policies from ICICI and other providers usually gets rejected) other than UC SHIP, but ensure that it is compliant with the University's requirements. Also, if you choose this route, make sure to apply for the waiver well in advance. For more information regarding the waiver date, visit <https://registrar.ucdavis.edu/calendar/fees.cfm>.

If you are funded in the form of a GSR or TA , the University will take care of your health insurance (UC SHIP). Besides, you will get more information regarding medical insurance matters during the SISS Orientations.

**Note:-** The Indian Graduate Student Association (IGSA) at University of California, Davis has partnered with Truedime (<https://www.truedime.com/>) to provide a suitable health insurance option for our members. Truedime's plans are underwritten by UnitedHealthcare (<https://www.uhc.com/>), which is the largest health insurer in the US and has a nationwide network of top-class medical facilities. They meet all UC-SHIP waiver requirements and are designed to meet the unique needs of the international population.

To learn more about Truedime, please visit our Facebook page at <https://www.facebook.com/truedimeinsurance/> or the website at <http://join.truedime.com>. To learn more about the designed plan, check out this video: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=V9yKw4Q95Ec&>

### 3 I-20

**In order to obtain the I-20, which documents can be submitted for proving that I have sufficient funds?**

Sponsors bank statement should be the highest priority. If it can't meet the requirements, you can get a letter from bank where in they will mention about sanctioning loan in future once I-20 gets approved. Solvency certificate may work fine, but that should not be the highest priority as it will include all movable and immovable property; however, the latter one bank also needs to include during sanctioning loan. Only liquid assets should be shown (no property documents).

A Sponsor's bank statement should be given highest priority, followed by a letter from the bank about loan confirmation, and lastly, Solvency Certificate (do confirm from the University if this allowed). Money can be in any format (INR/USD), however you can ask bank to mention in USD.

**How much of the I-20 amount should I show while submitting my documents?**

Greater than or equal to the I-20 amount should be fine. Good to show more but no harm at all in equal funding.

**What is the processing time for I-20? How much will it cost to get it mailed/couriered and how long before we receive it? Which courier service should I choose?**

Maximum 4 weeks, in most cases you would receive in 2-3 weeks. Students who apply early may receive their I-20 within 2 weeks (including processing time and shipping time) Courier charges vary from 65–75, depending on which service you opt for. FedEx or DHL, either will do. Choose the cheaper one if you have no personal preference.

**I completed the I20 request form and it says I20 request submitted but at the end of the page, the section named Submit Document Request is pending review. When I click on it, form status = pending is displayed. Is this the 4 weeks processing time or is this a review before that?**

The University does have some sort of an initial review, but they will also send you an e-mail regarding that. Once it is reviewed by the university admin and approved by SISS, you will get an e-mail with the SEVIS ID, asking you to order shipping of the I-20.

**What is the fee calculator?**

The fee calculator on I-global portal calculates the approximate cost endured by an admitted student keeping into account the tuition fee and living expense only (usually by American standards. Indians manage in almost half the living expenses mentioned in the fee calculator). Medical insurance is not covered.

## 4 TRAVEL

**What are my options for traveling from San Francisco / Sacramento to Davis?**

From Sacramento, you have 3 options Davis Airporter Van service, Yolobus and Taxi service. From San Francisco, you have 2 options Davis Airporter Van service and BART.

For further details, refer the IGSA website <http://www.igsa-ucd.com/resources/>

## 5 TEACHING ASSISTANSHIP (TAsHIP)

**What is the difference between a TA and a Grader?**

In terms of pay, TA (with 50% appointment, i.e. 20 hours/week) can get \$2200 per month. For grader (with 50% appointment) the pay would be about \$1100 per month.

The work of a TA is essentially to take lab sessions, grade lab reports, and review sessions before midterm or final. A lead TA may have to design labs in accordance

with the professors. A grader has to grade home assignments or midterm papers usually and is restricted to the grading students i.e. lesser participation.

**When does the registration for TAsip begin? What are the requirements for TAsip?**

Details regarding TAsip registration can be obtained from the departments graduate coordinator or on this website <https://cee.ucdavis.edu/tao/index.html>. There will be a separate orientation of the department where the Graduate coordinator and Professors will discuss about different aspects of TAsip.

For TAsip, a minimum of 26 on the speaking section of TOEFL is required. Or if the score is below 26, then SPEAK or TOEP test is conducted in the first couple of weeks after the orientation

**Do we have to start looking for TAsip or positions of GSRs from now by contacting professors? Also what are the eligibility criteria for the same in general?**

In general, it's a TOEFL speaking score of 26 or you need to give a SPEAK test (free of cost) which, if you qualify makes you eligible for the TA. For the TA position, you can contact your Admissions Director. They basically need a strong academic record in undergraduate studies. Also, requirements are not the same for all the programs. Few departments are rigid while others are flexible. Please refer: [http://iae.ucdavis.edu/graduate/qualify\\_as\\_ta.html](http://iae.ucdavis.edu/graduate/qualify_as_ta.html)

## 6 COST OF LIVING / ACCOMODATION

**What are living expenditures in Davis, roughly?**

Rent is around \$600 to \$800 for single room, half for shared room. Phone bill + utilities = \$100 approximately. Food expenses \$250 to \$600 depending on how many times you cook and how much you eat outside.

## 7 EDUCATION LOAN

**Which banks can we approach in India for education loans?**

SBI, HDFC Credila, Avanse, Axis Bank do provide education loan. You may also approach through Gyandhan if the loan amount is more. Please refer individual sites of these financial institutions.

**Does Prodigy Finance have a tie up with UC Davis?**

Till last year, UC Davis was not a partner school with Prodigy Finance. However, upon multiple requests in 2017, they may have made it available this year. Please



refer: <https://prodigyfinance.com/>. Its one of the easiest and most convenient options.

## 8 ORIENTATIONS

### What are the different orientations?

For Fall 2017 incoming graduate students, there were 4 orientations

1. **IGSO (International Graduate Student Orientation)** It has 2 parts to it. One which was mandatory while the other one was optional (but recommended).
2. **GSO (Graduate Student Orientation)** A 2-day general orientation for all graduate students (recommended).
3. **GDOP (Graduate Diversity Orientation Program)** Not a mandatory orientation usually.
4. **TA Orientation** It gives incoming students information regarding TAship (recommended).

## 9 COURSES

### When does registration for courses begin? What should I keep in mind about course registration?

You will be informed by your program co-ordinator regarding course registration (beginning date, CRNs for certain courses, suggested courses, etc.). To ensure that you do not have any holds, make sure that the hard copies of your transcripts / marksheets and degree certificates, duly attested by the registrar, reach UC Davis in time. Also, fulfill other prerequisites like immunizations, if any (as per the current requirements of SHCS, it is necessary for every incoming student to fill up the TB questionnaire and submit the Health Assessment forms along with preliminary screening test for TB, prior to registration. However, usually, just the results of the TB test are sufficient to ensure no holds).

For more details related to courses available, visit <https://sisweb.ucdavis.edu/> Click on Login to Schedule Builder and select Fall 2017 quarter from drop-down list. Then you can see Class Search Tool. Select your major /department; you can see all classes listed along with course instructor, class units details. The course registration date can be found on the registrars website: <https://registrar.ucdavis.edu/calendar/registration.cfm> (which mentioned the opening date of registration for Fall 2017 as June 22nd, 2017).

**How many units am I supposed to be registered for every quarter? Is the number of seats fixed for courses?**

A minimum of 12 units is required for an F-1 holder in every quarter. The requirements are mentioned on each programs website for Masters and PhD candidates. The credits can comprise a combination of coursework (usually 3-4 units/course), seminars and research work. Registration is to be done on the Schedule Builder through the myucdavis account which can be logged into with the CAS login and password. The number of seats is fixed and late registrations (after all the seats have been filled) are put on a wait-list.

**When is the tuition fee paid for a year? Is it dependent on the number of courses (units) taken in a quarter/year?**

Tuition fees for Masters students are usually paid at the start of each quarter. It is not dependent on the number of units for a quarter/year unlike some other private universities. There is however a cap on the maximum number of units that you can take in a year as outlined by the graduate program specific to your department. (Get in touch with your graduate coordinator for more details).

**What is the number of units required for major and minor subjects?**

A minimum of 30 units is required to show a major specialization and 15-20 units for a minor area. For MS, the diploma/degree/transcript will carry the title MS in Department name unlike the major.

For PhD, a mention of both major and minor is required after coursework completion.

## 10 MISCELLANEOUS

**What is the relevance of Social Security Number (SSN) for admitted students?**

Matters regarding the SSN will be explained post arrival by the SISS during orientation sessions.

**Does proximity to Silicon Valley actually help me in terms of internships and jobs?**

Well, proximity to Silicon Valley is definitely a big plus; however, in the end it just boils down to your profile, projects and how you perform during interviews.

**When does the quarter begin?**

Please refer: <https://registrar.ucdavis.edu/calendar/quarter.cfm>

**Should I get my MS degree converted to PhD in the first year? Do I have that option?**

A PhD right after your undergraduate degree is a nice idea, however, you can switch to PhD program right after your first year of MS too by giving PhD prelim exam (basically a viva/written test on undergrad domains) and your GPA must be  $> 3.5$ , which again is not a big issue.

**How much collaboration is there amongst different UCs? Do they often have students working at different campuses? Do professors prefer students or consider students from other UCs?**

Depends on your major supervisor and his projects. If they have collaborative projects with professors from other schools, then definitely yes. Some professors get dual appointment, e.g. they have labs here as well in UC Berkeley or some other UC. In such a case, you're flexible to work anywhere based on your project requirements.

**Is it mandatory for everyone to fill the SLR (Statement of legal residence) for tuition purposes?**

It depends on your department, for few department its mandatory and you should receive an email about the same. Follow this url <https://registrar.ucdavis.edu/forms/secure/FormIntro.cfm?Form=SLR>

**Please tell me something about grad-school policy about tuition remission.**

Please refer to the following url : <https://grad.ucdavis.edu/resources/student-employment/tuition-and-fee-remission/eligibility-remission-benefit>