

BLUE MOUNTAIN ACADEMY

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IMPORTANT VISA AND TRAVEL INFORMATION FOR NEW INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS

Blue Mountain Academy welcomes you as a new student and is pleased to provide you with the following important visa and travel information. Please read it carefully as you plan for your arrival.

If item 3 of your I-20 indicates “initial attendance you are required to pay the Federal SEVIS fee of \$100 and have a printed receipt that proves payment prior to your visa interview. Also, you may enter the United States no earlier than thirty days before the starting date of your I-20.

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PLANNING FOR ARRIVAL

Travel Documents

Enclosed with this brochure is your Certificate of Eligibility, Form I-20. This form is necessary to apply for the appropriate visa for entry to the United States. All students will be applying for an F-1 Student Visa.

Your Certificate of Eligibility indicates the latest date by which you should report to Blue Mountain Academy. This date is generally Registration Day, the Sunday before the first day of school.

IMPORTANT NOTE: If your plans change, and you decide not to attend Blue Mountain Academy, please notify the Admissions Office at the above listed phone numbers or you may send an email message to diana@bma.us

Unless you are a Canadian citizen, you must obtain a F-1 visa before you will be permitted to enter the United States. (Canadian citizens should see the special section that pertains to them).

Your Passport

You must have a passport valid for travel to the United States and with a validity date for at least six months after your proposed date of entry into the United States.

APPLYING FOR YOUR U.S. VISA

When to Apply

If you are currently abroad, and do not yet have a valid U.S. student visa, you generally apply for one at the U.S. embassy or consulate with jurisdiction over your place of permanent residence. Although visa applicants may apply at any U.S. consular office abroad, it is generally more difficult to qualify for the visa outside the country of permanent residence.

You should apply for your student visa well in advance of the date you would like to depart for Blue Mountain Academy. **Remember that you are required to show proof of having paid the Federal SEVIS Fee when you appear for your visa interview.** Holiday and vacation periods are very busy times at the U.S. embassies and consulates world wide, and it is important for you to have your visa in time to arrive on Registration Day, which is the start date on your I-20. Appointments are now mandatory for all student visas, and some U.S. embassies and consulates require that appointments be made at least four to eight weeks in advance. The actual visa interview may be as early as 120 days prior to your planned arrival date in the United States. All U.S. embassies and consulates have a website where you can read the latest information on visa procedures. Visit: http://travel.state.gov/travel/tips/embassies/embassies_1214.html to locate

the embassy or consulate near you. For information on waiting times for student visa appointments, visit the following link:

http://travel.state.gov/visa/tempvisitors_wait.php

What to Bring With You to the Visa Interview

Be sure to bring the following with you to the visa appointment:

- Passport
- Required photo(s)
- Visa fee or proof of visa fee payment
- Federal SEVIS Fee payment receipt
- U.S. non-immigrant visa application forms (unless you will be completing it at the consulate or embassy)
- Blue Mountain Academy admission letter
- Blue Mountain Academy SEVIS I-20 form
- Official Test scores and academic records
- Proof of English proficiency
- Proof of financial support
- Evidence of ties to your home country
- Any other documents required by the embassy or consulate

Remember that if you plan to attend Blue Mountain Academy, you must present the visa officer with an I-20 issued by Blue Mountain Academy. You cannot apply for a U.S. visa using another school's I-20, and then try to attend Blue Mountain Academy as that is considered to be a fraudulent entry by the U.S. Immigration authorities.

Strategies for the Visa Appointment

You are well advised to consider the following matters prior to your visa appointment, as you may be asked about each item.

1. **Academics:** Be definite and clear about your educational plans. You should be able to explain why you chose Blue Mountain Academy for your education. Be especially prepared to explain reasons for studying in the United States rather than your country.
2. **English:** Anticipate that the visa interview will be conducted in English. Do not bring parents or family members with you to the visa interview. The consular official will want to interview you, not your family. A negative impression is created if you are not prepared to speak on your own behalf.
3. **Ties to Your Home Country:** Demonstrate convincing reasons for consular officials to believe that you intend to return home after studies in the United States. Emphasize ties to your home country such as employment, family obligations, property or investments that you own or will inherit, and clear

explanations of how you plan to use your education to help your country or pursue a career when you return home.

4. **Financial Documentation:** Be prepared to prove financial ability to pay for your education and living expenses. While students will be able to work part-time during their studies, such employment is incidental to their main purpose of completing their education. You must show the consular officer that you have the annual amount in United States dollars listed on your I-20 form. Your financial evidence should be in the form of bank statements, affidavits of support, etc.
5. **Be concise:** Because of the volume of visa applications, all consular officials are under considerable pressure to conduct a quick and efficient interview. They must make a decision, for the most part, on the impression they form during the first minute or two of the interview. Consequently, what you say first and the initial impression you create are critical to your success. Keep your answers short and to the point.
6. **Not all countries are the same:** Applicants from countries suffering economic problems or from countries where many students have remained in the United States as immigrants will have more difficulty getting visas. Statistically, applicants from these countries are more likely to be intending immigrants. They are also more likely to be asked about job opportunities in the United States.

Visa Denial or Visa Delay

The vast majority of Blue Mountain Academy students will be successful in obtaining their student visas. Despite this, a small number of students may have their visa applications denied.

The most common reasons for visa denial are:

- Failure to prove sufficient ties to your home country, or
- Failure to provide sufficient evidence of financial support

The visa officer must verbally inform you of the reason for the visa denial. If your visa is denied, please send an e-mail message to dianem@bma.us and provide the date and location of your visa interview, and details regarding the reason given by the visa officer for the denial.

Much more common than a visa denial is a visa delay. This is why it is so important to apply for your visa EARLY! Here are some of the most common reasons for visa delays:

- Closings or reduced hours at U.S. visa issuing posts abroad due to security concerns
- Closings or reduced hours at U.S. visa issuing posts abroad due to political instability in the host country

- Student records do not appear in the SEVIS system at the U.S. embassy or consulate, even though the student presents a SEVIS I-20.
- Student did not present proof of Federal SEVIS Fee payment
- The need for a security clearance prior to visa issuance if the visa applicant has ever been arrested in the United States, or if the applicant has a name identical to or similar to a person with a previous arrest record.
- The need for a security clearance prior to visa issuance if the visa applicant is male, between the age of 16-46 and a citizen of or born in one of the designated countries requiring security clearances (Afghanistan, Algeria, Bahrain, Bangladesh, Egypt, Eritrea, Indonesia, Iraq, Jordan, Kuwait, Lebanon, Morocco, Oman, Pakistan, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Somalia, Tunisia, United Arab Emirates, and Yemen).
- The need for a security clearance for any non-immigrant visa applicant male or female, age 16 or older who is a national of or permanently residing in Cuba, Iran, Libya, North Korea, Sudan or Syria. Such individuals will not be issued visas unless the applicant can show evidence that he or she is not a threat to U.S. national security.
- The new U.S. Department of State requires that all applicants for non-immigrant visas be interviewed. This new policy has created delays at visa issuing posts around the world.

The U.S. State Department has prepared information on student visas on its website that may be useful to you. Visit: <http://www.unitedstatesvisas.gov/studying.html>

Special Note for Citizens of Canada

Citizens of Canada are not required to obtain a U.S. visa to enter the United States. However, a U.S. Customs and Border Protection (CBP) officer will inspect your papers, either at a pre-inspection site in Canada or upon entry to the United States. You must have with you:

- Your Canadian passport
- Your admission letter to Blue Mountain Academy
- Proof of Federal SEVIS Fee payment
- Your Blue Mountain Academy Certificate of Eligibility (I-20 form)
- Proof of financial support that corresponds to the information on your I-20.

It is essential that you enter the United States in the appropriate status, so be sure to have complete documentation with you.

IF YOU ARE CURRENTLY IN THE UNITED STATES

F-1 Students

If you already have valid F-1 student status by being enrolled at another school in the United States, by now you have already completed the required Transfer Verification

Form and requested that the international student advisor at your current school release your SEVIS record to Blue Mountain Academy. Your new Blue Mountain Academy I-20 form, endorsed for pending transfer, is mailed to you as soon as the release date for your SEVIS record (as determined by your previous school) is reached. Once you are enrolled at Blue Mountain Academy and we have confirmed your registration, the transfer process will be completed. If you are in F-1 status, a new I-20 will be issued to you. Be sure to report to the Admissions Office as soon as possible after you arrive.

HEALTH REQUIREMENTS

You will be informed of any health and immigration requirements when you apply for your visa. Blue Mountain Academy further requires, as a condition of enrollment, that all students have a Physical Exam completed by a physician and a Dental Exam completed by a dentist. Also, the Medical Emergency Authorization & Consent Form must be completed and signed by parents/legal guardian. You must comply with certain immunization requirements for Measles, Mumps and Rubella (MMR). Complete the Immunization Record form and return it with your other health forms to the Admissions Office.

THINGS TO BRING

Climate and clothing: Pennsylvania has a varying climate with four distinct seasons:

SEASON	MONTHS	TEMP. FAHRENHEIT	TEMP. CENTIGRADE
Summer	June - September	50 to 90 degrees	10 to 32 degrees
Fall	September - November	20 to 80 degrees	-7 to 26 degrees
Winter	December - March	0 to 45 degrees	-18 to 7 degrees
Spring	April - June	40 – 72 degrees	4 to 22 degrees

Temperatures vary considerably from year to year. During spring, summer, and fall, moderate periods of rainfall occur; snow falls periodically during the winter months.

Three basic types of clothing are essential. In winter, heavy jackets or overcoats, hats, scarves, gloves, and boots are needed. During chilly autumn and spring days, raincoats or medium-weight coats or jackets are worn outdoors, sweaters indoors. A light-weight jacket is sometimes necessary for cool nights during spring, summer, and fall.

Personal items: Once you arrive at Blue Mountain Academy, you will need to provide your own linens for a twin-size bed, blankets, pillows, towels, hangers, and personal items of clothing and toiletries.

THINGS TO LEAVE AT HOME

You can obtain a booklet on customs regulations at the consulate or embassy where you acquire your visa. Prohibited items include some foodstuffs, narcotics, and items for

resale. For more information, visit the website of the U.S. Customs Service at:
<http://www.cbp.gov/linkhandler/cgov/toolbox/publications/travel/visitingtheunitedstates.ctt/visitingtheunitedstates.doc>

Since students are expected to buy required textbooks for all courses, you need not bring any books used in previous study.

It is best to purchase electrical appliances (blow dryers, curling irons, rice cooker, etc.) after you arrive: small appliances manufactured outside the U.S. may not be compatible with the power supply or may not be allowed inside the residence halls.

Arranging for Mail

All mail addressed to you will be delivered by the U.S. Post Office directly to the Principal's Office, where it will be placed in the correct residence hall mailbox. You will be informed if you have received a package. If you wish to send a letter or package, you may buy postage from the Business Office and then mail your letter or package from the Principal's Office. Have mail sent to: Blue Mountain Academy, 2363 Mountain Rd., Hamburg, PA 19526

ARRIVAL IN THE UNITED STATES

Port of Entry Procedures

Once you have obtained your U.S. student visa, you are ready to finalize your travel plans. Be sure to have your I-20 form (for F-1 visas) and your proof of Federal SEVIS fee payment with your passport when you go through your immigration inspection at the U.S. port of entry. Remember that if you plan to attend Blue Mountain Academy, you must present a certificate of eligibility endorsed for study at Blue Mountain Academy.

DO NOT enter on another school's certificate of eligibility, as that is considered to be a fraudulent entry by the U.S. Immigration authorities.

DO NOT attempt to enter the United States on a visitor/tourist visa (B-2) unless it is designated "Prospective Student" by a consular officer. The U.S. Immigration Service rarely authorizes a change of status from B-2 to F-1, and you will be prevented from enrolling in school until your change of status application is approved, which could take several months.

DO NOT attempt to enter the United States under the visa waiver program, available to citizens from nearly 30 countries throughout the world. The waiver program is designed for tourists only, and attending school under the waiver program is a clear violation of U.S. immigration law.

Expect to go through both immigration and customs inspection at the U.S. port of entry. You may also be required to go through a pre-inspection procedure at certain airports abroad. At the immigration booth, present your passport, your I-20, your proof of Federal

SEVIS fee payment, and your completed I-94 arrival/departure card (if the card was distributed on the airplane). Expect to have your index fingers scanned for fingerprint purposes and a digital photograph taken, as required by U.S. federal regulations. In the vast majority of cases, there will be no difficulty. In certain cases, if there is some problem with your documents, you may be issued a 30-day entry on your I-94 card and issued a form I-515, usually with instructions to see your international student advisor. Examine your I-94 card and I-20 carefully as you leave the immigration booth. F-1 students should have their I-94's marked "D/S" which means Duration of Status, along with a stamp indicating the date you entered the United States. The same stamp and "D/S" notation should also be on the I-20. If an expiration date is written on the I-94 instead of "D/S", and you are in F-1 status, come to the office as soon as possible.

Anyone who is denied admission at a U.S. port of entry should be very cautious about arguing with the immigration official. You may risk being issued "expedited removal," which now entails a five-year bar on admission to the United States. If you are denied admission, first try to contact our office for assistance, but also make it known to the immigration official that you are willing to withdraw your application for admission to the country rather than be subject to expedited removal.

Money

It is a good idea to exchange currency for U.S. dollars before your departure, but you should not travel with large amounts of cash—there is too much danger of loss or theft. If you anticipate bringing large sums of money to the United States, ask a bank about the safest and most convenient means of carrying or transferring funds. **Remember that if you carry more than \$10,000 in U.S. or foreign currency, traveler's checks, money orders or negotiable instruments, you must report it on your Customs Form at the U.S. port of entry. Failure to do so can result in the seizure of the currency.** If you make arrangements for funds to be transferred in U.S. dollars to a U.S. bank before you leave home, that money will be available to you when you arrive on campus. Foreign currency is not available in most U.S. cities, and Blue Mountain Academy and all local businesses accept only U.S. dollars.

When you arrive in the United States, you should have sufficient funds to cover your expenses when you reach Blue Mountain Academy. The amount depends, of course, on your travel plans. Once you have decided on your itinerary and estimated expenses, you may wish to purchase traveler's checks in U.S. dollars for the amount of money you need. Traveler's checks, obtained at banks or travel offices, can be cashed by banks and most businesses, including hotels, restaurants, and airports.

It is also advisable to carry a small amount of U.S. cash—at least fifty dollars in paper currency and two or three dollars in coins or "change" for telephones, baggage lockers, bus fares, and tips. The lower denominations of U.S. paper money are: \$1, \$5, \$10, and \$20 bills; coins are 1 cent (penny, \$.01), 5 cents (nickel, \$.05), 10 cents (dime, \$.10), 25 cents (quarter, \$.25), 50 cents (half-dollar, \$.50) and 1 dollar (\$1).

Payment of tuition, fees, and other charges is due prior to registration (when you enroll for classes). Payment may be made by cash, check, or money order. We do not accept credit/debit cards.

If you cannot make full payment at the time payment is due, you must make special payment arrangements with the Business Office. If you fail to do so, you will be charged a late fee. No financial aide is available for International Students. If you wish to deposit funds in your student account before arrival, you may send a check to the Business Office, Blue Mountain Academy, 2363 Mountain Rd., Hamburg, PA 19526. If you have any questions regarding payment procedures, contact the Business Office at dianem@bma.us

REVIEW OF IMPORTANT INFORMATION

We hope this information is helpful to you as you arrange for your new educational experience. You are encouraged to re-read it and carefully note the items that pertain to your situation. Please pay careful attention to your requirements and obligations. To summarize:

1. Make sure your travel documents are in order. Do not finalize your arrangements until you have your passport, Certificate of Eligibility (I-20 form), SEVIS fee receipt and visa stamp. You may enter the United States only if your Certificate of Eligibility is endorsed to the high school in which you intend to enroll.
2. Take care of your financial obligations and arrange for proper monetary transfer. Carefully review requirements for obtaining foreign exchange. Make sure you have adequate funds.
3. Plan to arrive on campus on the start date designated.
4. Be prepared to discuss your academic plans and register for classes with the Registrar on Registration Day.
5. If you do not plan to enroll at Blue Mountain Academy in the semester for which you have been admitted, return the Certificate of Eligibility to the Admissions Office and notify the Registrar of your decision.

Again, we wish you a warm welcome to Blue Mountain Academy. If you arrive on campus after working hours (after 4 p.m.) or on a Saturday or Sunday, and need emergency assistance, please call the boys' dormitory 610-562-6503 or the girls' dormitory 610-562-6505 and speak with a dean.

*Prepared by International Student and Scholar Services
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