

2.4 Admission of Non-U.S. Citizens

International (non-U.S. citizen) applicants and U.S. Lawful Permanent Residents may be recommended for admission by the academic department, but cannot be granted official admission by the Graduate School until certain critical documents are received and approved by the International Admissions Specialist. The requirements in this section are only for admission purposes and do not reflect or affect an admitted student's tuition or tax residency determination.

Applicants who are foreign nationals abroad, U.S. Lawful Permanent Residents, DACA recipients or non-U.S. citizens already residing in the U.S. must complete additional paperwork, known as the Visa Clearance Form and/or Certificate of Financial Responsibility, as part of their application, which will be reviewed by the International Admissions Specialist in the Graduate School. Eligible international applicants who are abroad will be issued a visa document by the Graduate School to apply for the student visa required to study in the United States. Current NC State students will have their new visa document issued by the Office of International Services (OIS) (<https://internationalservices.ncsu.edu/>). OIS staff members also provide immigration and cross-cultural assistance to students on F or J nonimmigrant visas throughout their program at NC State.

A. Visa Types and Eligibility

Under immigration law, international students are divided according to their immigration classification. Each visa type has its own eligibility requirements and restrictions.

1. F-1 Student – a resident of a foreign country who is coming to the U.S. temporarily and solely for the purpose of attending a full-time degree program. An F-1 student is required to demonstrate full financial support to obtain the F-1 visa and I-20 visa eligibility document and be admitted to the U.S. There are numerous requirements and restrictions regarding enrollment, employment, travel, etc., and detailed information is available from OIS. Graduate certificate programs, online/distance programs, and part-time programs are not eligible for the F-1 visa status.
2. J-1 Exchange Visitor – a classification that serves a variety of educational purposes. Under this status, students, scholars, professors, and researchers may come to the U.S. temporarily for the purpose of educational exchanges under the sponsorship of an approved organization or institution. Students often enter the U.S. in J-1 Exchange Visitor status when they are participants in sponsored activities such as the Fulbright program.
3. Other Visa Types – in addition to F-1 and J-1, there are other visa types represented among the international student population at NC State, such as H-1B, TN, O, E visas, and DACA recipients. Applicants already in the U.S. in these non-student visa types must submit proof of their legal status and may apply for any type of program if they will maintain this visa type for the duration of their program.
4. Lawful Permanent Residents of the U.S. (“Green Card holders”) – may apply for any type of program, but will need to submit their Permanent Residence Card (“Green Card”) during the admission

process. Permanent Residents may pay the domestic student application fee price.

B. English Proficiency Requirements

To be eligible for admission to graduate study at NCSU, all non-US citizen applicants (i.e., non-resident aliens and permanent residents) must demonstrate proficiency in the English language at a level necessary to be successful in a graduate program at NC State. This requirement can be met for most applicants in one of the following ways; however, some programs may require additional evidence of English proficiency:

1. Provide Test of English as a Foreign Language (<https://www.ets.org/toefl/>) (TOEFL) with a total score of at least 80 on the Internet-based Test (iBT), and with minimum test scores for each section of:
 - Listening 18 points
 - Reading 18 points
 - Writing 18 points
 - Speaking 18 points – for admission, 23 points – for TA appointment where TA has direct verbal interactions with students, 26 points – for TA appointment where TA presents lectures in the class or laboratory NOTE: The current computer- and paper-based versions of the TOEFL test will be given until the iBT version is implemented in a particular location. Computer-based TOEFL scores must be 213 or higher (with at least 17 on three sections and no section score below 13). The paper-based test requires a score of 550 or higher (with scores of 50 on at least two of the three sections and no section score below 45).
2. Provide International English Language Testing System (<https://www.ielts.org/>) (IELTS) scores with an overall band score of at least 6.5. Minimum test scores for each section are listed below:
 - Listening 6.5
 - Reading 6.5
 - Writing 6.5
 - Speaking 6.5 – for admission, 7.0 – for TA appointment
3. Provide Duolingo (<https://englishtest.duolingo.com/>) with a total score of 110 or better.
4. be a citizen of a country where English is the official language (<https://grad.ncsu.edu/students/rules-and-regulations/handbook/english-as-official-language/>) and the language of instruction in higher education;
5. have successfully (cumulative GPA of 3.0 or higher) completed at least one year of full-time study in a degree program at a regionally accredited four-year US College or university.

TOEFL or IELTS test scores must be no older than two years (24 months) prior to the beginning of the requested entry term.

C. Visa Clearance Form

Applicants who are U.S. Lawful Permanent Residents or non-citizens already residing in the U.S. must complete the Visa Clearance Form (VCF) as part of their application. International applicants already in the U.S. in a status that allows study must indicate on the Visa Clearance Form whether they wish to remain in their current nonimmigrant status or change their status to the F-1 student visa status. Because processing times at U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services are sometimes long and there are many factors that must be taken into consideration when deciding to change one's status, applicants considering changing status should contact the International Admissions Specialist early in

the admission process. A link to the online Visa Clearance Form is available in the applicant's portal when the Graduate School sends the academic acceptance letter; applicants cannot access it or complete it until this point in time. The applicant should complete this form as soon as possible once it becomes available to enable the Graduate School to grant official admission.

D. Certificate of Financial Responsibility

The Certificate of Financial Responsibility (CFR) is only required for those applicants who will be applying for or are already in the student visa status (F-1 or J-1). The CFR requires the candidate to provide evidence of the financial resources necessary to cover all expenses, including those of any accompanying dependents, for each year of study. Once approved, the Graduate School (or OIS if a current NC State student) will then issue the Certificate of Eligibility Form I-20 for an F-1 visa or Form DS-2019 for a J-1 visa, depending on which status the applicant qualifies for. International applicants can check on the status of their application/admission, including when the Certificate of Eligibility was issued, by going to: <http://www.ncsu.edu/applygrad> (<http://www.ncsu.edu/applygrad/>). A Lawful Permanent Resident of the U.S. ("Green Card holder") or any other non-citizen not requiring a student visa is not required to demonstrate financial ability on the CFR and needs only to complete and submit the Visa Clearance Form.

E. Health Insurance Requirement

Hospitalization costs in the U.S. are high and having appropriate health insurance is a requirement for all international students at NC State in F-1 or J-1 status. All international students in F-1 or J-1 status must purchase the University student health and accident insurance plan (or opt out through the universities hard-waiver program if other acceptable health insurance has already been purchased) throughout their program of study at NC State. Those who do not maintain this required insurance will have a hold placed on their ability to register.

F. Letters of Assurance for Research Participation

The Board has determined that no international students are required to sign Letters of Assurance, such as those occasioned by the Export Control Act, as a condition of participating in research activities.

G. Full-time Status Requirement

International students in F-1 or J-1 status must carry a full course load in each regular semester to comply with the US Citizenship and Immigration Services (<https://www.uscis.gov/>) (USCIS) regulations. Please refer to Section 3.15 for information on determining full- and part-time status.

H. Assistantship and Employment Limitations

International students in F-1 or J-1 status may not hold graduate assistantships or a combination of assistantships/positions that exceed 20 hours of service work per week during Fall and Spring semesters since this jeopardizes their student status with USCIS. However, these students can have appointments up to 1.0 FTE during the Summer sessions if the summer is considered a vacation term for the student and they will be returning the following fall. For those employed in other capacities on-campus, please visit the OIS on-campus employment webpage (<https://internationalservices.ncsu.edu/student-employment/on-campus-employment/>) for policies and restrictions. International students

should consult with OIS before accepting any type of employment. Employment regulations vary by visa type.

I. Three-Year Bachelors Degrees

Admissions rules require that an applicant have a bachelor's degree from an accredited college or university as determined by a regional or general accrediting agency. These accrediting agencies define bachelor's degrees, in the U.S. custom, as requiring four years to complete. In reality, it may take longer or shorter to complete the degree, but the amount of work involved is typically the same. Confusion may arise as to the equivalence of three year bachelor's degrees offered in some countries. Some are treated as equivalent to the U.S. bachelor's (see below) whereas others may require outside evaluation.

1. The Graduate School only accepts three-year bachelors degrees from member institutions (<http://www.ehea.info/pid34250/members.html>) within the Bologna Process (<http://www.ehea.info/>). If the institution is not part of this organization, the applicant will be asked to provide an evaluation of their higher education background by an international credential evaluation company. If the evaluation determines that the background is not equivalent to a U.S. bachelor's degree, admission will be denied. If the academic background includes a master's degree, that should be evaluated along with the three-year degree to see if the combination is equivalent to a four-year U.S. bachelor's degree. If any part of the master's degree is needed for equivalency, the student will not be entitled to the 18 hour allowance toward a Ph.D. program granted to holders of a previous master's degree. On the other hand, they will be afforded the extra two semesters under the Graduate Student Support Plan for students without a previous master's.
2. We accept international credential evaluations from members of NACES (<http://www.naces.org/members.htm>) (National Association of Credential Evaluation Services) or AICE (<http://www.aice-eval.org/>) (Association of International Credential Evaluators). Others may be acceptable as well, but please check with the Graduate School if a question arises as to the appropriateness of the evaluation.
3. The University of Wisconsin hosts a directory of foreign institutions (<http://www.grad.wisc.edu/admin/gradcoordinators/iadmiss/>) describing their institutional academic environment and the expectations UW has for applicants from these institutions. This should only be used as a guide.