



B-1 and B-2 Visas and ESTA

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Introduction

A **B-1 visa** is a visa for business activity. A **B-2 visa** is a visa for tourist activity. An international entering the US on B-1 or B-2 visa may request admission to the US for a stay of up to 180 days.

The Visa Waiver Program, sometimes called **ESTA**, permits citizens of over 30 countries to enter the US for business or tourist activity without a visa.

This document addresses B-1 and B-2 visas first, and then ESTA.

What activities can I engage in on a B-1 or B-2 visa?

B-1 activity includes consulting with business or professional colleagues, attending a business, professional, or scholarly conference, delivering a lecture or short series of lectures, and interviewing for a job.

B-2 activity includes vacation, visiting places of interest, visiting friends or family, medical treatment, engaging in amateur sports or other events, casual (short-term, no credit) study.

Crossover between B-1 and B-2 activity is permitted, so that an international admitted in B-1 status in order to consult with business colleagues is also permitted to visit places of interest (a B-2 activity).

Can I study in the US on a B-1 or B-2 visa?

If the study is short-term (less than a semester); does not lead to a US degree or certificate; and does not result in US academic credit, you may be able to use a B-1 or B-2 visa to support your studies. If you have any questions about using a B-1 or B-2 visa to study in the US, please contact us before you apply for a program or enroll in classes.

Reimbursement and Honorarium Payments

International visitors in 1 or B-2 status are eligible to receive travel reimbursement and honorarium payments from VCU. The process of making such payments can be complex, however. Please contact us for additional information.

Applying for a B-1 or B-2 visa

To apply for a B-1 or B-2 visa, please visit the following web site:
http://www.global.vcu.edu/students/immigration/visa_stamp_application/

For Canadian Citizens Only

Citizens of Canada (only) do not require B-1 or B-2 visas in order to be admitted to the US in B-1 or B-2 status. If you are a citizen of Canada and want to visit the US in B-1 or B-2 status, simply present an unexpired Canadian passport at any US-Canada land border crossing or pre-flight inspection center at a Canadian airport before departing for the US.

VCU support for a B-1 or B-2 visa

B-1 and B-2 visa applications are personal applications and do not require VCU sponsorship.

You may apply for a B-1 or B-2 visa on your own with no support at all from VCU. Simply follow the instructions online at the US consulate where you will be applying for your B-1 or B-2 visa.

If you have been officially invited to VCU by a university department and you would like a courtesy letter in support of your B-1 or B-2 visa application, please let us know.

Social Security Number and Driver's License

If you are in B-1 or B-2 status, you are not eligible to obtain a Social Security Number (SSN) or a US driver's license. However, if you have a SSN obtained during a previous visit that did allow you to apply for a SSN, you may, if necessary, use your SSN while in a B-1 or B-2 visa.

What is ESTA?

ESTA is a US government program that permits citizens of over 30 countries to enter the US for business or tourist activity without a visa. When someone is admitted to the US on ESTA, she is granted the equivalent of B-1 (business) or B-2 status (tourist).

How does ESTA work?

If you are a citizen of an ESTA country and are coming to the US for business or tourist activity, you just need to register with ESTA online at the following web site several days before you

depart for the US. <https://esta.cbp.dhs.gov/esta/> A current list of ESTA countries appears at the web site.

An international entering the US on ESTA may request admission to the US for up to 90 days only. ESTA admissions cannot be extended from inside the US and if you are admitted to the US on ESTA you cannot change your status to another status from inside the US.

What activities can I engage in on ESTA?

Please see above under B-1 and B-2 visas.

Can I study in the US on ESTA.

Please see above under B-1 and B-2 visas.

Reimbursement and Honorarium Payments

Please see above under B-1 and B-2 visas.

VCU support for ESTA

ESTA applications are personal applications and do not require VCU sponsorship.

You may apply for ESTA on your own with no support at all from VCU. Simply follow the instructions at <https://esta.cbp.dhs.gov/esta/>

If you have been officially invited to VCU by a university department and you would like a courtesy letter in support of your ESTA application, please let us know.

Social Security Number and Driver's License

Please see above under B-1 and B-2 visas.

Questions or concerns?

If you have questions or concerns about B-1 and B-2 visas or ESTA please contact us.

<p>International Student and Scholar Programs • Immigration Advising 912 West Grace Street, 4th Floor • P.O. Box 843043 • Richmond, VA 23284-3043 Telephone (804) 828-0595 • Email GEOIS@vcu.edu</p>
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