

Consular Webchat
US Embassy, Damascus
November 12, 2009

Sara Cobb: Welcome to the webchat! We are taking your questions now. The live chat will take place on November 12 between 3:30 and 4:30 Syrian time. Consular Officers in the U.S. Embassy in Damascus are here to answer questions about visas for visiting or immigrating to the United States. We are happy to provide you with all the information you need about the application process. Feel free to submit your questions now!

Andre Goodfriend: I'd like to thank our Public Affairs office for organizing our first web chat in this new format. I would also like to thank those of you who have already submitted questions to this web chat, and welcome those of you who are joining us now. My name is André Goodfriend, and I arrived in Damascus in August as Consul General. As the head of the Consular Section, it is important to me that we provide the best service possible to visa applicants and to American citizens in Syria. The State Department takes customer service very seriously and has posted a customer service commitment on its website at http://travel.state.gov/visa/visa_2796.html. We have translated this statement into Arabic in the "helpful links" document attached to this web chat. In keeping with our commitment, we have already simplified the visitor visa application process, so that a person applying for a nonimmigrant visa now can schedule an appointment online and can use the DHL courier service to send and receive passports from the Embassy. We will be introducing additional service improvements in the near future, and appreciate the opportunity the Internet provides to help make our visa processes more understood. This first web chat will focus on nonimmigrant visas (although we will take some questions on immigration as well). Future web chats will discuss immigration and services to American citizens in more detail. We hope you find the discussion helpful, and we'll look forward to future chats. I'd like to turn the discussion over now to the head of our Nonimmigrant Visa unit, Mark Goldrup.

Mark Goldrup: Thanks, everyone, for attending the web chat and for your interest in traveling to the United States. I see we've already received many questions and we hope this chat will be helpful and informative to all of you as you make your travel plans. Before we start taking questions, I'd just like to second what André said: we are committed to providing excellent customer service to you. We've recently overhauled our appointment processes to make applying for a visa a simpler, less time-consuming process. Our hope is that answering your questions through this chat will be one more way that we make your experience with the U.S. Embassy a positive one.

Question [tchelebi AI]: My wife apply for immigration visa in the year 2005 but it was declined because we did not meet all the requirements. Now we like to go with my wife and my two girls in Visit to the USA, our biggest problem is to come to Damascus from Aleppo to apply for the Visa. Please we need your help if there is any easy way to obtain non immigration Visa for my wife without going through all the traveling hassle.

Answer [Mark Goldrup]: Thanks for bringing this up. We are aware that coming to the Embassy can be time-consuming for people. For that reason, we have instituted a new process over the last month that reduces the number of times you will come into the Embassy. You will still need to come on the day of your interview, but you can now make your interview appointment online, and the visas themselves are now sent to applicants via courier service. We hope that this improved process will make the experience more convenient for everyone. You can schedule the appointment online at: <http://damascus.usembassy.gov/visas.html>

Q: [A]: I'm From Iran; my question is about Iranian Do you accept application from citizen of Iran?

A: [Mark Goldrup]: Yes, we can accept applications from Iranians at the US Embassy in Damascus, if you are physically present in Syria for the interview.

Q: [Mohannad]: what kind of VISAs do I have to get in order to work in the USA??

A: [Mark Goldrup]: There are actually several types of visas that would allow you to work in the United States, depending on what type of work you plan to do. The most common “employment visa” is the H-1B. In order to get an H-1B visa, you must first have a job offer from a sponsoring company or organization within the U.S. The sponsoring organization will file a petition on your behalf. Once that petition is approved, you can be interviewed at the Embassy to determine whether a visa may be issued. For the most part, H-1B visas are only given to applicants in certain specialized jobs. To find out more about the types of jobs that are appropriate under an H-1B visa, and other types of employment visas, you can check here:

http://travel.state.gov/visa/temp/types/types_1271.html

Q: [Hafez]: Hi, I am thinking of doing PhD in some university? What does it cost? What university do you recommend? Is there cheap university that can I do my PhD and work in it at the same time, since I have master degree? Thank you

A: [Mark Goldrup]: Great question! Our embassy has two educational advisors whose job is to help Syrians study in the U.S. There are a lot of great PhD programs in the U.S. in all fields. Costs vary quite a lot depending on where you go and scholarships may be in option for you. You could also possibly apply for teaching assistant or research assistant positions to help with tuition fees. We’d be happy to guide you towards the right university depending on your interests. Please check out the educational office’s website (<http://damascus.usembassy.gov/eato2.html>) or call the office during business hours: 33914171, 33914172. Best of luck!

Q: [Mohannad]: how long does it take to get the green card if I marry an American woman???

A: [Mark Goldrup]: The timing varies from case to case. It will partly depend on whether the American citizen is a resident of Syria or the United States. She must reside in Syria for 6 months before she can file the petition here. Alternatively, she may file the petition in the United States immediately. In general terms, it usually takes about 6 months before the petition is approved, and from there it will take about 2 months before the US Embassy in Damascus can interview you and issue the visa.

Q: [Khalidoun Al Assad]: I’m a H. H. Humphrey fellow for the 2009-2010 academic year, I’m interested to know, that if I get a scholarship to continue my study to get a degree from the US. What are the procedures?

A: [Mark Goldrup]: Nice to hear from you, Khalidoun! We hope you’re enjoying your fellowship. First, according to Humphrey guidelines you are expected to return to your position in Syria eventually. If you want to study in the US in the meantime, you would have to come back to Syria to apply for a student visa. For more information on the application process itself, please visit our website at: http://damascus.usembassy.gov/student_visas.html .

Q: [ME]: I have a US visa in a previous passport and now I want to go to the US again. However, in my new passport the name is spelled differently and my birthday is different by one day. What should I do?

A: [Mark Goldrup]: Thanks for the question. A clerical problem such as this is not something that would prevent you from getting a visa; however, you are right that some action will need to be taken. It is important that the name and information on the visa be the same as that in the passport. You will need to make a new appointment to apply for a visa (you can make the appointment through our web site at: <http://damascus.usembassy.gov/non->

[immigrant visas/apply.html](#)). Bring both the old and new passports on the day of your appointment. During your interview, you can explain to the American consular officer what happened and why there is a difference in spelling and date of birth.

Q: [Darein Assaf]: what are the terms and conditions for immigration to US?

A: [Mark Goldrup]: Great question, Darein. This is a very common one, but very difficult to answer simply. There are many different types of immigrant visas, and each one will have different terms and conditions. A great place to get started learning more is on our website at: http://damascus.usembassy.gov/immigrant_visas.html

Q: [Rasheed Haidar]: Thank you for the invitation. My question is what are the chances for a journalist, with many years in radio and TV, who has been to the US twice, the last one as Humphrey Fellow, to visit the US?:

A: [Mark Goldrup]: The most important question to consider is which type of visa is the most appropriate for your purpose of travel. The “chances” of being issued a visa will depend on whether the visa you are applying for fits with the reason you want to travel to the U.S. If you are applying for a visitor’s visa, your previous travel and your work history will all be considered by the officer. For most types of immigrant visas, your eligibility will depend on your family or marriage relationships to American citizens.

Q: [Tchelebi AI]: I applied for immigrant visa for my wife but the embassy refuse it. We like to apply for non immigrant visa but the biggest problem is traveling from Aleppo to Damascus please advise if there is any way to get some help without waiting at the US embassy or traveling from Aleppo to Damascus

A: [Andre Goodfriend]: We have tried to make the visa application process simpler, particularly for those who do not live in Damascus. Now it is possible to make an appointment online, and passports can be submitted and returned via DHL. Applicants still must come to the embassy in person for the visa interview, but that is only one visit instead of four visits. We are also using webchats like this, and our internet site to explain the processes better.

Q: [Tchelebi AI]: I like to take my children and my wife to visit USA this summer so please we need your help

A: [Mark Goldrup]: Thanks for the question and for your interest in visiting the United States. Please apply! You can find more information on the process for applying on the web at: http://damascus.usembassy.gov/nonimmigrant_visas/apply.html.

Q: [WD77]: My brother is a US citizen and by family reunion he gave my father the green card and he is living in USA now to get the citizenship, my question: is it faster to apply for family reunion on the case of my brother or wait my father to get the citizenship, also during this period can I apply to a visiting or it would affect the family reunion, also is it real that marriage would delay the family reunion? Thank you for your time.

A: [Mark Goldrup]: Currently the waiting period for a petition filed by a brother is much longer than for a petition file by a parent. Waiting periods are updated monthly in the Visa Bulletin, which is online at http://travel.state.gov/visa/frvi/bulletin/bulletin_1360.html . Being married would put you into a different category. The unmarried son or daughter of an American Citizen is the F1 category, whereas the married son or daughter of an American citizen is the F3 category. The waiting period in the F3 category is somewhat longer.

Q: [Lamia]: I need to know if my petition arrived to the embassy from the NVC my receipt number is XXXXXXXX.

A: [Mark Goldrup]: Thanks for the question, Lamia. We are not able to give out information about a specific case in a public forum such as this. However, you may email us at ivdamascus@state.gov to get more specific information. If we do not have a record of the case yet, it means it has not yet arrived from NVC.

Q:[Muthanna]: I'm a fourth year student of English Literature and I would like to continue my study after graduation in USA I want to know about my chances to get the visa

A:[Andre Goodfriend]: If you have been accepted into the graduate program, have the appropriate I-20 and SEVIS clearance, can pay for your studies and can discuss the ties that will compel you to leave the US after your study program, your chances are good. But, it's impossible to say with certainty without you submitting a visa application.

Q:[Khaldoun.j]: what are the conditions that you require to give the student visa

A:[Mark Goldrup]: Thanks again Khaldoun. The most important condition is that you have been accepted to a US university before you apply for the visa. Once you have been accepted, the international students' office at the university will assist you in filing the petition needed to get the visa. Once that has been done and you come to the Embassy for the interview, the most important thing will be for you to be able to demonstrate that you are a serious student and that the degree fits into your life plans.

Q:[A]: Sir how long will take time to get a non immigrant visa ?

A: [Andre Goodfriend]: In most cases, the process takes two to three weeks. Currently, it's possible to schedule an appointment within less than a week, and if a visa is approved, it can be issued about two weeks later. We advise people to try to plan at least three months in advance. Some cases require extended administrative processing, which may add significantly to the time required. Information about appointment wait times can be found at: http://travel.state.gov/visa/temp/wait/tempvisitors_wait.php Information about administrative processing can be found at: http://travel.state.gov/visa/a_zindex/a_zindex_4353.html.

Q:[samer rajab]: referring to VISA wait times, The student waiting time is 1 day does that means that once my documents are complete I can schedule an interview the next day

A:[Mark Goldrup]: Yes, that is exactly what it means. For student and medical visa applicants, you can bypass our normal appointment process and make an appointment for the next day. Check this website for more details: http://damascus.usembassy.gov/student_visas.html

Q:[Feras Alsaleh]: hi everyone I would like to know do you give a student visa to study master's degree on part time basis

A:[Mark Goldrup]: In most cases that we are aware of, an American university would not approve an I-20 petition for a part-time program. For the Embassy's part, we do not consider student visa applications until the I-20 has been approved.

Q:[Ranger]: Can someone start his security clearance before he applies for the visa, so he can avoid the delay ?

A:[Andre Goodfriend]: We are unable to begin consideration of a visa application until the application has been submitted. So, as we say, plan in advance and apply early.

Q: [A]: my other question " will you take the Passport after interview ?"

A:[Mark Goldrup]: If the visa is tentatively approved on the day of your interview, we will then return your passport to you and conduct some mandatory administrative processing. When that is complete, you will send your passport into the Embassy via a courier service and we will then send it back to you with the visa inside.

Q:[Ranger]: If I changed my status from B2 to H1 while I am in the US, and then I came back to Syria for vacation, should I enter the embassy? and if yes, do you send the application for another security clearance or you just stamp the visa on the passport?

A: [Andre Goodfriend]: Yes, if you change your status while in the U.S., the change is valid only as long as you remain in the U.S. When you leave the U.S. you will need to apply for a visa in the new category. It is likely that administrative processing will be required, so factor the additional time into your plans.

Q:[A]: If someone had Visa delay before, and he is planning to apply again, is his visa going to take as long as before?

A:[Mark Goldrup]: Not necessarily, but the Embassy urges applicants to apply for nonimmigrant visas well in advance of planned travel dates.

Q: [A]: How early can an applicant apply for H-1b Visa?

A:[Mark Goldrup]: You may apply 90 days in advance of the start-date, but you can't enter the United States until 10 days prior to the petition validity date.

Q:[Ranger]: If someone has a history of long processing stage for his visas, is that mean that his processing stage will take long time every time he applies for visa?

A: [Andre Goodfriend]: Not necessarily. Processing times have decreased, and it may be that factors concerning your application have changed. However, we can't emphasize enough the benefits of applying early -- just in case.

Q:[A]: If an applicant is expecting to get his visa cleared before his planned starting work date, but he had his visa delayed again what can he do to in request to expedite the processing of his Visa?

A:[Mark Goldrup]: Our primary advice is to apply early. As noted, the State Department has already managed to significantly reduce processing times. Of course, it is possible that delays will be encountered. However, as noted processing times are less than they were a year ago. Nevertheless, it is still important to plan ahead and apply early.

Q:[A]: Why some friends do take a few days to get their visa, while others may take them months or years?

A:[Mark Goldrup]: Each person's situation is different and is considered individually. In the State Department's customer service statement, online at http://travel.state.gov/visa/visa_2796.html we highlight that "the Department of State manages the visa process strictly but fairly in order to best protect the United States. We are committed to the essential openness for which the United States has always been known." In some cases it is easy to make a decision, in other cases it is more complex and additional administrative processing may be required, which can occasionally be time consuming. In general, however, the processing time for even complex cases has been reduced considerably over the past couple years, and we are committed to the upholding the promised made in our Customer Service Statement.

Q:[Khalidoun.j]: I don't have an account in the bank but my parents do and they are my sponsors and they can offer the expenses for my study, accommodation and everything else is that acceptable?

A:[Mark Goldrup]: We have no specific requirement that the funds used to cover your expenses come from you personally. This is not the only factor in whether a visa can be issued, but the funding in your parents' name should be fine.

Q:[Khalidoun.j]: what are the expenses that should be paid to get the student visa and what are the required papers?

A:[Mark Goldrup]: After the I-20 has been approved by your university in the U.S. and the appropriate SEVIS fee paid, the fee for the visa itself is \$131. You can find more about the details and required paperwork here: http://damascus.usembassy.gov/student_visas.html

Q:[Mohamad Skaf]: For a student visa, when a student come back to Syria during the vacation at his/her university, is it required for the student to apply again to the US embassy before he goes back to continue his studies ? Thanks in advance

A:[Andre Goodfriend]: It depends upon the visa. In general we can issue a student visa for up to two years, for multiple entries. So, if the visa is still valid, there is no need to apply again. However, if the visa has expired, the student will need to apply for a new one.

Q:[A]: If an applicant is staying in the States while holding either J-1 or H-1 b visa; can he apply for getting a visa to his wife, while she is staying in Syria? And is a marriage contract provided by his wife and a close relative to the husband (taking his place in his absence) is accepted by the Embassy, or the Husband needs to be available in person at his wife's visa interview date?

A:[Mark Goldrup]: Yes, the husband of wife of a person in the U.S. can apply for a “derivative” visa at a later date, after the principle visa holder is already in the U.S. The “derivative” applicant needs to show that the “principal” visa holder is currently in status, and that the required family relationship exists. Please note that U.S. law does not recognize proxy marriages. Many of our regulations are available online. The regulation that concerns this situation is at <http://www.state.gov/documents/organization/87168.pdf> and states: 9 FAM 41.11 N4.3 Establishment of Nonimmigrant Status Also Required for Derivative Classification(TL:VISA-458; 08-29-2002) A spouse applying for a visa on the basis of derivative classification must establish the requisite nonimmigrant intent to the same extent as the principal alien. Thus, an applicant for a(n) F-2, J-2, H-4 (except the derivatives of an H-1), M-2, O-3, and P-4 visa must establish having a residence in a foreign country which the applicant has no intention of abandoning. If the spouse is applying for a visa in the same company with the principal alien, both applicants should be evaluated collectively. Differing conclusions concerning their entitlement to nonimmigrant classification would be rare and should be based on clearly defined, objective differences in their situations. If the derivative applicant is seeking to join a principal applicant already in the United States, a different situation may exist from that which existed at the time of the issuance of the principal alien’s visa and could justify a determination by the consular officer that the derivative applicant does not have the requisite nonimmigrant intent.

Q:[A]: Can someone apply for B-1/B-2 visa for the same reason he did apply at previous times and still be getting the visa again for the same old purpose of trip?

A:[Mark Goldrup]: Yes, he or she can.

Q:[A]: Does Visa extension of stay can cause any negative effect on an applicant when he gets back home and apply again for a new visa?

A:[Mark Goldrup]: It will depend upon the circumstances that made it necessary to request an extension of stay. On the positive side, it is good that the person continued to be legally in the U.S. by requesting an extension of stay. However, on the negative side, issuance of a visitor visa is based upon an applicant having strong reasons to return within a certain period, and usually the applicant has explained to the Consular officer why it will be necessary to return after a short visit. If someone requests an extension of stay, they should be prepared to explain why the extension was necessary.

Q:[A]: How early can someone apply for J-1 visa?

A:[Mark Goldrup]: You may apply for J1 visa as soon as you get your original approved DS-2019.

Q:[A]: Is there any preference between J-1 and H-1b Visas in terms of how fast the processing of each one of them is going to take?

A:[Mark Goldrup]: The category of visa should be based on the purpose of travel. We hope to process both J-1 and H-1B visas quickly, and both can be handled in roughly the same time frame. Regardless of visa type, The Department of State has instituted requirements in Section 306 of the Enhanced Border Security and Visa Reform Act of 2002 pertaining to the issuance of visas to aliens from state sponsors of terrorism. This involves additional administrative processing for visa applicants from Syria. The amount of time the additional processing takes is not affected by the type of visa for which you are applying.

Q:[A]: If an applicant main concern is having his Visa being delayed (while he is required to get in the States before his planned starting work date) , taking in consideration that he did apply as early as 3 months or even earlier, but his visa is still pending; How can the Embassy provides help this applicant in having his Visa processing being expedited?

A:[Mark Goldrup]: Our primary advice is to apply early. As noted, we have already managed to significantly reduce processing times. If a case has been pending for more than a month, and you would like to check the status, please e-mail us at nivdamascus@state.gov , including the name of the visa applicant, as spelled in his or her passport. We hope to move to an automated process for checking status in the near future.

Q:[Mai Abaza]: Does it help if someone has an uncle or an aunt buried in USA

A:[Andre Goodfriend]: I'm assuming you're asking whether having a relative buried in the U.S. will help a person get a visitor visa. Not necessarily. Visiting the grave of a relative may be a good purpose of travel, but the visa applicant will still need to be able to show that they have strong ties that will compel them to depart the U.S. after their visit. For a U.S. nonimmigrant visa, often the most important thing is to be able to show that you are well settled in your own country.

Q:[m.khooja]: Are we as Fulbrighters applying for a J1 visa ? If not, what visa type are we applying to?

A:[Mark Goldrup]: As a Fulbright student, you apply for a J1. If you would like to apply for any other visa, you are free to do so. For more information, please visit our website <http://damascus.usembassy.gov/visas.html>

Q:[mk]: hello everybody, I am doing my master's, first year, and I will be on the FLTA program next year. Is it possible for me to do the second year of my Master's degree in the US while I'm on the mentioned program. thanks

A:[Mark Goldrup]: While you are present in the US on the FLTA program, it is expected that you will be participating in that program full-time.

Q:[m.khooja]: Is it true that the visa is for single entry? If yes, what is the possibility to obtain a multi-entry visa ?

A:[Mark Goldrup]: No, it's not true. Different types of U.S. visas have different validity periods, which are generally based on reciprocity. That is to say, that if a country issues visas to U.S. citizens for a particular duration and fee, the U.S. will reciprocate and issue visas for a similar duration and for a similar fee. Different types of visas are issued for different periods. The most common visa is the B1/B2 business/tourism visa. We can issue these visas for a multiple entries, up to two years. The full "reciprocity schedule" for Syria, showing the maximum validity that may be issued to Syrian citizens for every type of nonimmigrant visa may be found online at http://travel.state.gov/visa/frvi/reciprocity/reciprocity_3683.html

Q:[A]: Is changing the visa status while in the States from B-1/B-2 Visa to either J-1 or H-1b is something that can be done? And Does it have any negative consequences for any future new visa applications?

A:[Andre Goodfriend]: Yes, it is possible to change visa status from B1/B2 to another category, such as J-1, H1B or F-1. Changing status to a J-1 visa is specifically addressed at http://travel.state.gov/visa/temp/types/types_1267.html#13 where it is noted that "If you want an earlier entry in the U.S. (more than 30 days prior to the course start date), you must qualify for, and obtain a visitor visa; however, this is strongly discouraged. If you travel to the U.S. on a visitor visa, before beginning an exchange program, you must obtain a change of visa classification from the B status to that of J. You must file Form I-539 , Application for Change of Nonimmigrant Status, with application fee, and also submit the required Form DS-2019 to the Department of Homeland Security office where the application is made. Please be aware that you cannot start your exchange visitor program until the change of status is approved, and therefore in view of the processing time to your change status in the U.S., you may be in danger of missing your entire exchange program waiting approval of change of status." There could, however, be negative consequences if it appears that you misrepresented your intentions when applying for a B1/B2 visa or when entering the U.S. in the B1/B2 category. If you applied for a visa stating that your purpose of travel was one thing (e.g. tourism) and then began trying to do something else upon your arrival in the U.S. (began trying to find a job or begin a study program) it could damage your credibility and make it harder to apply for a visa in the future.

Q:[m.khooja]: How long does the whole process take?

A:[Mark Goldrup]: In most cases, the process takes two to three weeks. Currently, it's possible to schedule an appointment within less than a week, and if a visa is approved, it can be issued about two weeks later. We advise people to try to plan at least three months in advance. Some cases require extended administrative processing, which may add significantly to the time required. Information about appointment wait times can be found at http://travel.state.gov/visa/temp/wait/tempvisitors_wait.php Information about administrative processing can be found at http://travel.state.gov/visa/a_zindex/a_zindex_4353.html.

Q:[Mohamad Skaf]: for B1/B2 visa multi entry, when your passport expires and you get another passport, do you have to get back to the embassy to stamp the visa to your new passport ?

A:[Andre Goodfriend]: If the visa is still valid, you don't need to apply for a new one -- even if your passport has expired. However, you will need to travel with your expired passport (containing the valid visa) together with your new, valid passport.

Q:[Feras Alsaleh]: what kind of visa you give for students in the Humphrey program ?

A:[Mark Goldrup]: Humphrey students get a J-1

Q:[Mohanad]: I need a visa to visit the states, what shall I do?

A:[Mark Goldrup]: You should apply! Please visit this link to get started with the application:

http://damascus.usembassy.gov/non-immigrant_visas/apply.html

Q:[tchelebi Al 2]: That mean no need to travel to Damascus to apply for Visa we can send all the document by DHL

A:[Mark Goldrup]: To clarify, you will still need to come into the Embassy for the interview. But you will only need to come in once.

Q:[Khaldoun.j]: what's the I-20?

A:[Andre Goodfriend]: The I-20 is the form that a university issues a student which shows 1) that the school/university is eligible to accept foreign students, 2) explains the program into which the student has been accepts, 3) identifies the costs of the program, and 4) shows how the costs will be met.

Q:[samer rajab]: Thank you for this helpful chat I wish to apply for student visa and I have three question; first of all I have three cousins in the united states is it mandatory to provide their visas (I do not have immediate contact with them)

A:[Mark Goldrup]: Thanks for asking this. No, it is not mandatory, although this is a common misconception. Your cousins' status may come up in the interview, and it may be helpful for you to have copies of their documents to help answer any questions. However, it is not mandatory to provide their visas.

Q:[Mohannad]: if a child is born I USA from a Syrian father and an American mother .. what will be his nationality ??

A:[Mark Goldrup]: In most cases, the child will be an American citizen. The 14th Amendment to the U.S. Constitution states that "All persons born or naturalized in the United States and subject to the jurisdiction thereof, are citizens of the United States and of the State wherein they reside. No State shall make or enforce any law which shall abridge the privileges or immunities of citizens of the United States; nor shall any State deprive any person of life, liberty, or property, without due process of law; nor deny to any person within its jurisdiction the equal protection of the laws." Under this principle, often called "jus soli" or "law of the soil" a child born on the physical territory of the United States, regardless of the nationality of his or her parents, and subject to jurisdiction of the U.S. (that is to say, for example, not the child of a diplomat), is a U.S. citizen. The amendments to the constitution are online at <http://www.america.gov/st/usg-english/2008/April/20080416204259eaifas0.7985803.html> An Arabic translation of the amendments is online at <http://www.america.gov/st/usg-arabic/2008/September/20080916100357bsibhew2.012271e-02.html>

Q:[Khaldoun.j]: if I got the approval from the university what are the procedures that should be followed?

A:[Andre Goodfriend]: Along with the I-20, the university will generally send you information about applying for a visa. The State Department has information about the student visa process online at

http://travel.state.gov/visa/temp/types/types_1268.html

Q:[tchelebi Al 2]: For visit visa we can send the application by DHL and then you will advise us if there is any missing information

A: [Mark Goldrup]: Not exactly. You will print out the application and bring it with you on the day of your appointment. After the interview, and once the administrative process is complete, the Embassy contacts successful visa applicants to have them send in their passports by DHL. We then send the visa back to them.

Q:[A]: and How should we pay the fee please?

A:[Mark Goldrup]: For the time being, the fees are paid in cash (in US bills issued after 1996) on the day of your appointment at the Embassy. However, we are working on a system that will allow applicants to pay fees at bank branches before coming to the Embassy. Please keep an eye on our website for more details coming soon!

Q:[WD77]: My question to Mr. Mark, Thanks for your answer my question: Can I apply to family reunion on my father case (green card only) before he getting the citizenship or I should wait?

A:[Mark Goldrup]: It depends on whether or not you are married. If you are unmarried, your father can petition for you as a legal permanent resident (green card holder). If you are married, he must wait until he has become a citizen.

Q:[samer rajab]: Do I need to get statements of bank accounts from my parents to prove their ability to sponsor my studies in the USA do they have to sign a specific form stating that they are willing to support me

A:[Mark Goldrup]: A bank account may be helpful, but it is not necessarily required. The important thing is that you be able to demonstrate to the officer interviewing you that you and/or your parents have sufficient resources to pay the cost of your studies. As a general rule, it may be helpful for you to have evidence available to help demonstrate this. However, bank accounts are not mandatory.

Q:[Darein Assaf]: is it easy to find a job there when immigrating?

A:[Andre Goodfriend]: That's very hard to say. Finding employment depends upon your skills and the needs within the area to which you plan to immigrate. You may find the information at the following website helpful: http://www.welcometousa.gov/Employment/Finding_a_job.htm . It is a U.S. Government site with information for immigrants about finding employment.

Q:[guest]: I am applying for the Foreign Language Teaching Assistant Program, and I know that if I get it, I'll be given a J1 visa for a year. After the year is over, do I have to be back to Syria directly, or can I apply for a visa to another Arabic country from the embassy of that country in the USA?

A:[Andre Goodfriend]: As noted at http://travel.state.gov/visa/temp/types/types_1267.html#12 When you agree to participate in an Exchange Visitor Program and your program falls under the conditions explained below, you will be subject to the two-year home-country physical presence (foreign residence) requirement. This means you will be required to return to your home country for two years at the end of your exchange visitor program. So, yes, you would be expected to return to Syria, not just to another Arabic speaking country.

Q:[WD77]: I'm 32 years old not married and my father hold the green card from two years but hardly knows the procedures to apply in US for anything as his language is not that good, so can I apply for the family reunion from US Embassy in Damascus or if there is a direct link to family reunion please advise?

A:[Andre Goodfriend]: Then, you could fall into the F2B category, and it would be beneficial to have your father file the petition. Information can be found at http://damascus.usembassy.gov/immigrant_visas.html

Mark Goldrup: Thanks to everyone for participating and for suggesting such valuable questions. We will plan to do another web chat in the near future. In the meantime, please take a look at the Embassy's website, where you will find much of the information needed to make an appointment for a visa interview:

<http://damascus.usembassy.gov>

Andre Goodfriend: Yes, thank you to all of our participants. We've appreciated the open discussion and plan to have more in the future. Please let us know if you found this helpful. You can write about what you thought of this webchat, and any specific questions NIVDamascus@state.gov. Thank you again.

CO.NX Moderator (Mark): This chat is now closed. A transcript of this chat will be available usually within one business day on www.America.gov, here, and on our Facebook page at <http://co-nx.state.gov>. Feel free to send any comments or questions to conx@state.gov or write on our Facebook wall.

“We are committed to providing excellent customer service to you. We’ve recently overhauled our appointment processes to make applying for a visa a simpler, less time-consuming process. Our hope is that answering your questions through this chat will be one more way that we make your experience with the U.S. Embassy a positive one.”