

You can now apply for your US student visa a year before your program begins

In a much needed breather for students looking to study in the United States, the country will now allow prospective F-1 visa applicants to apply for their visa up to 365 days before academic term begins.

However, they will only be able to travel to the US on the visa 30 days before the start of their program.

"F and M student visas can now be issued up to 365 days in advance of the I-20 program start date, allowing more time for students to apply for a visa. Students are still not allowed to enter the U.S. on a student visa more than 30 days before their program start date," the US Department of State announced.

A significant update for international students, this means that universities can accept and issue I-20 forms 12-14 months before term time.

Earlier, visa interviews could be scheduled only up to 120 days, and I-20 forms 4-6 months, before term start.

The United States has been battling to cut wait times for visa processing, with the some applicants having to wait over two years to get visa appointments.

Over the past few months, the US Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) has announced multiple steps to ease the processing time- including special interview slots, interview waivers for some applicants and a plan to allow domestic stamping of H-1B renewals.