



# **F1 Visa and Student Enrollment Data**

**Compiled by  
Department of Institutional Research  
Westcliff University  
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# F-1 Visas

The State Department now reports a total of **393,573 F-1 visas issued** for the fiscal year ending 30 September 2017. This represents a 17% decline from the 471,000 F-1s issued in 2016, and a nearly 39% drop in F-1 visa issuance from the recent-year high in 2015.

	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017
F-1 (academic study)	534,320	595,569	644,233	471,728	393,573
M-1 (vocational study)	11,320	11,706	11,058	10,305	9,587
J-1 (exchange visitor)	312,522	331,068	332,540	339,712	343,811

*US student visas issued, by class, for fiscal years 2013–2017. Source: US State Department*

# F-1 Visa Students Enrolled in US Higher Ed Schools

(Source: NSF)

- Foreign undergraduate enrolment in STEM subjects (science, technology, engineering, and math) was essentially flat between 2016 and 2017. The overall drop in international undergraduate numbers is attributed to declining enrolment in non-STEM fields.
- The enrolment decline is more pronounced at the graduate level. In percentage terms, both STEM and non-STEM programmes saw roughly the same dip in 2017 (around 5–6%). With respect to absolute numbers, however, the drop was more pronounced in the STEM fields. This will be an interesting indicator to watch closely in 2018, given the heavy proportion of international graduate enrolment in STEM subjects.

Also of note: foreign enrolment in US graduate schools is highly concentrated in terms of sending markets, with nearly seven in ten students coming from either China or India. Along that line, the NSF analysis more or less tracks with the Open Doors findings in terms of broad year-over-year shifts in major sending markets. In short, the softening enrolment outlook for 2017 has much to do with slowing growth from the massive Chinese market paired with a dramatic decline in Saudi numbers (on the order of 15% or more).

Field and level	2015	2016	2017
<b>All fields</b>			
All levels	776,720	840,160	808,640
Undergraduate	416,350	450,850	440,720
Graduate	360,380	389,310	367,920
<b>S&amp;E fields</b>			
All levels	384,540	420,610	406,240
Undergraduate	157,820	176,570	176,930
Graduate	226,720	244,040	229,310
<b>Non-S&amp;E fields</b>			
All levels	392,190	419,550	402,400
Undergraduate	258,520	274,280	263,790
Graduate	133,660	145,270	138,610

International students (holding F-1 visas) enrolled in US higher education institutions, by field and level of study, 2015–2017. Source: NSF

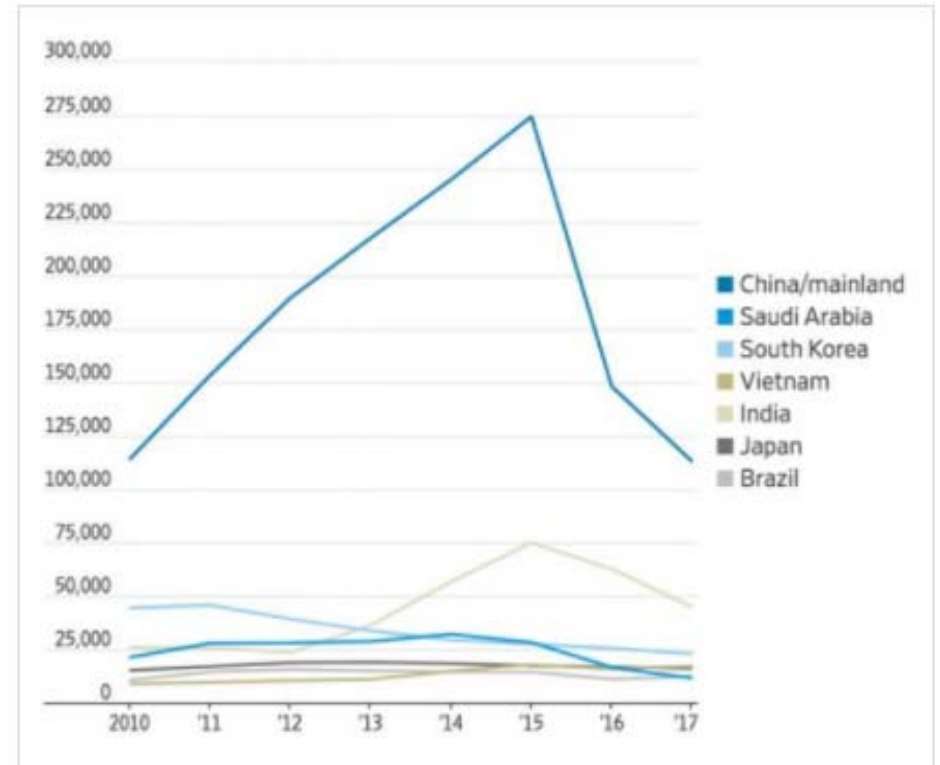
## F-1 Visa Students Enrolled in US Higher Ed Schools (Cont.)

As always, the normal cautions apply when considering visa data, as opposed to actual enrolment numbers, as visa counts may not correspond precisely to enrolment. This point is particularly relevant in the case of Chinese students, given that a 2014 change in US visa policy now allows Chinese applicants to receive an F-1 that is valid for five years as opposed to one, thereby foregoing an annual renewal of visas for continuing studies. This revision alone could account for a significant proportion of the dramatic drop-off in F-1s issued to Chinese students from 2015 on.

*F-1 visas issued to students of top source countries, 2010–2017. Source: US State Department, Wall Street Journal*

Even so, these overall visa counts represent the latest significant indicator of a levelling off and decline in foreign enrolment in the US over 2016 and 2017.

- Data from US Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) points to a [2% decline](#) in international undergraduate enrolment between 2016 and 2017, and a 5% decline in the number of foreign students enrolled in US graduate programmes
- The Institute of International Education's (IIE) [Open Doors report](#) highlights a record-high enrolment among survey institutions for 2016/17 but also notes a 3% decline in international commencements
- The latest [admissions survey](#) from the Council of Graduate Schools (CGS) also indicates that both international application volumes and commencements dipped between 2015/16 and 2016/17

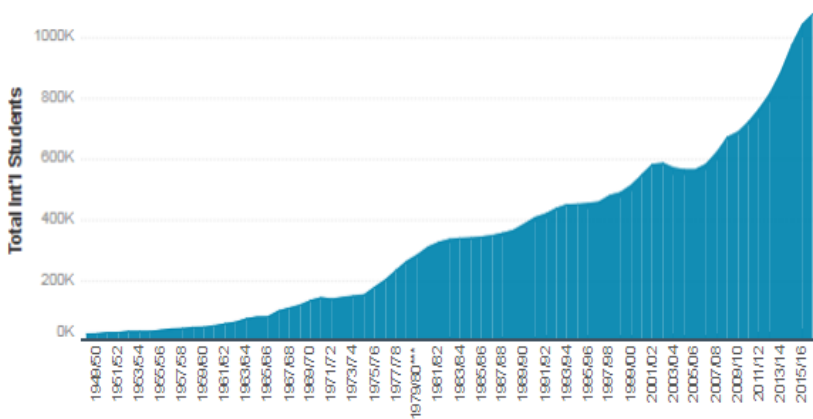


## Enrollment Trends

INTERNATIONAL STUDENT DATA  
FROM THE 2017 OPEN DOORS® REPORT



Year	Enrolled Int'l Students	OPT	Total Int'l Students	Total U.S. Enrollment*	% Int'l	Annual % Change
2016/17	903,127	175,695	<b>1,078,822</b>	20,185,000	5.3	<b>3.4</b>
2015/16	896,341	147,498	<b>1,043,839</b>	20,264,000	5.2	<b>7.1</b>
2014/15	854,639	120,287	<b>974,926</b>	20,300,000	4.8	<b>10.0</b>
2013/14	780,055	105,997	<b>886,052</b>	21,216,000	4.2	<b>8.1</b>
2012/13	724,725	94,919	<b>819,644</b>	21,253,000	3.9	<b>7.2</b>
2011/12	679,338	85,157	<b>764,495</b>	20,625,000	3.7	<b>5.7</b>
2010/11	647,246	76,031	<b>723,277</b>	20,550,000	3.5	<b>4.7</b>
2009/10	623,119	67,804	<b>690,923</b>	20,428,000	3.4	<b>2.9</b>
2008/09	605,015	66,601	<b>671,616</b>	19,103,000	3.5	<b>7.7</b>
2007/08	567,039	56,766	<b>623,805</b>	18,248,000	3.4	<b>7.0</b>



\*Data from the National Center for Education Statistics.

\*\*The data collection process was changed in 1974/75. Refugees were counted from 1975/76 to 1990/91.

\*\*\*OPT was first reported separately for the 1979/80 academic year.

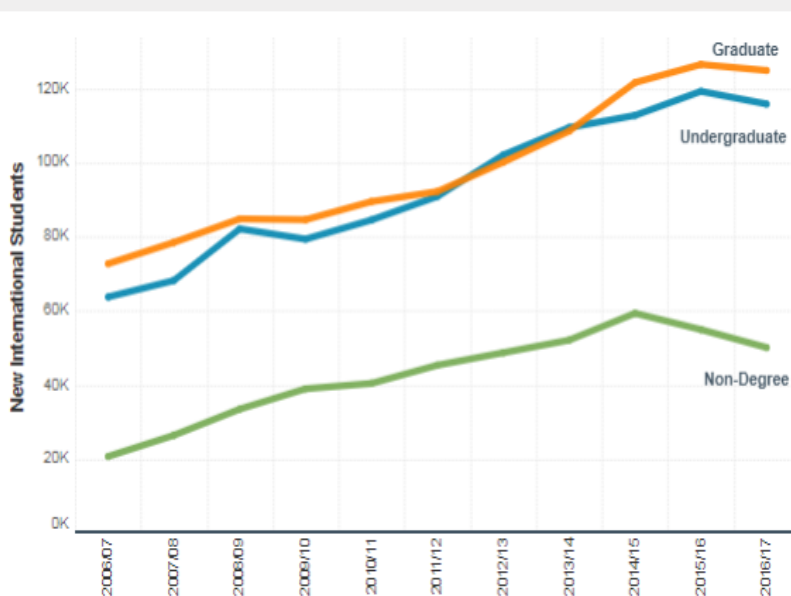
Suggested citation: Institute of International Education. (2017). "International Student Enrollment Trends, 1948/49-2016/17." Open Doors Report on International Educational Exchange. Retrieved from <http://www.iie.org/opendoors>

## New International Enrollment

INTERNATIONAL STUDENT DATA  
FROM THE 2017 OPEN DOORS® REPORT



Academic Level	% Change from 2015/16	Year					
		2016/17	2015/16	2014/15	2013/14	2012/13	2011/12
Undergraduate	-2.9	<b>115,841</b>	<b>119,262</b>	<b>112,765</b>	<b>109,486</b>	<b>102,069</b>	<b>90,900</b>
Graduate	-1.3	<b>124,888</b>	<b>126,516</b>	<b>121,637</b>	<b>108,519</b>	<b>100,129</b>	<b>92,000</b>
Non-Degree	-8.8	<b>50,107</b>	<b>54,965</b>	<b>59,364</b>	<b>52,123</b>	<b>48,722</b>	<b>45,000</b>
Total	-3.3	<b>290,836</b>	<b>300,743</b>	<b>293,766</b>	<b>270,128</b>	<b>250,920</b>	<b>228,000</b>



Suggested citation: Institute of International Education. (2017). "New International Student Enrollment, 2006/07-2016/17." Open Doors Report on International Educational Exchange. Retrieved from <http://www.iie.org/opendoors>



# F1 Visa Holders (2015-17)

The NSF analysis takes this a step further still by isolating F-1 visa holders (that is, those enrolled in higher education institutions for long-term degree study). It again finds that after years of steady growth, total foreign enrolment in US higher education dipped from 2016 to 2017. As the following table reflects, total international enrolment (that is, both undergraduate and graduate) fell by nearly 4% last year. Undergraduate numbers dipped by just over 2%, and graduate enrolment fell off more sharply with a nearly 5.5% decline.

Field and level	2015	2016	2017
<b>All fields</b>			
All levels	776,720	840,160	808,640
Undergraduate	416,350	450,850	440,720
Graduate	360,380	389,310	367,920
<b>S&amp;E fields</b>			
All levels	384,540	420,610	406,240
Undergraduate	157,820	176,570	176,930
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All levels	392,190	419,550	402,400
Undergraduate	258,520	274,280	263,790
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*International students (holding F-1 visas) enrolled in US higher education institutions, by field and level of study, 2015–2017. Source: NSF*

As the table also reflects:

- Foreign undergraduate enrolment in STEM subjects (science, technology, engineering, and math) was essentially flat between 2016 and 2017. The overall drop in international undergraduate numbers is attributed to declining enrolment in non-STEM fields.
- The enrolment decline is more pronounced at the graduate level. In percentage terms, both STEM and non-STEM programmes saw roughly the same dip in 2017 (around 5–6%). With respect to absolute numbers, however, the drop was more pronounced in the STEM fields.

INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS BY INSTITUTIONAL TYPE\*, 2015/16 & 2016/17

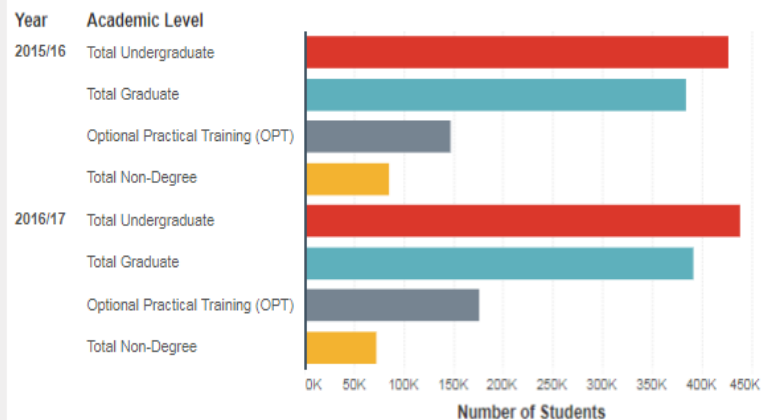
Institutional Type	Total		% Change
	2015/16	2016/17	
Doctorate-granting Universities	718,710	747,175	4.0
Doctoral Universities: Highest Research Activity	512,003	540,185	5.5
Doctoral Universities: Higher Research Activity	142,242	143,965	1.2
Doctoral Universities: Moderate Research Activity	64,465	63,025	-2.2
Master's Colleges and Universities	159,501	162,418	1.8
Master's Colleges & Universities: Larger Programs	130,255	132,735	1.9
Master's Colleges & Universities: Medium Programs	20,738	20,708	-0.1
Master's Colleges & Universities: Small Programs	8,508	8,975	5.5
Baccalaureate Colleges	34,622	36,073	4.2
Baccalaureate Colleges: Arts & Sciences Focus	22,114	22,869	3.4
Baccalaureate Colleges: Diverse Fields	12,508	13,204	5.6
Associate's Colleges	95,376	96,472	1.1
Associate's Colleges: High Transfer	58,430	58,851	0.7
Associate's Colleges: High Vocational & Technical	2,578	2,527	-2.0
Associate's Colleges: Mixed Transfer/Vocational & Technical	18,500	18,677	1.0
Baccalaureate/Associate's Colleges	15,868	16,417	3.5
Special Focus Institutions	35,630	36,684	3.0
Arts, Music & Design Schools	21,627	22,575	4.4
Business & Management Schools	4,704	5,167	9.8
Engineering Schools	568	593	4.4
Faith-Related Institutions	2,061	1,885	-8.5
Law Schools	121	121	0.0
Medical Schools & Centers	3,869	3,886	0.4
Other Health Professions Schools	2,071	2,249	8.6
Other Special Focus Institutions	521	166	-68.1
Other Technology-Related Schools	88	42	-52.3
Tribal Colleges	0	0	0.0
<b>ALL INSTITUTIONS</b>	<b>1,043,839</b>	<b>1,078,822</b>	<b>3.4</b>

## Academic Level



INTERNATIONAL STUDENT DATA  
FROM THE 2017 OPEN DOORS® REPORT

Academic Level	Sub Category	% Change from Previous Year	2016/17
Total Undergraduate	Total	2.7	439,019
	Associate's	-2.5	76,353
	Bachelor's	3.9	362,666
	Bachelor's, Unspecified	13.7	57,368
	Freshman	-2.2	76,789
	Sophomore	2.8	67,513
	Junior	4.6	72,443
	Senior	4.0	88,553
Total Graduate	Total	1.9	391,124
	Master's	1.8	237,679
	Doctoral	1.7	124,705
	Graduate, Unspecified	10.1	16,602
	Professional	-4.7	12,138
Total Non-Degree	Total	-14.2	72,984



Suggested citation: Institute of International Education. (2017). "International Students by Academic Level, 2015/16 - 2016/17." Open Doors Report on International Educational Exchange. Retrieved from <http://www.iie.org/opendoors>

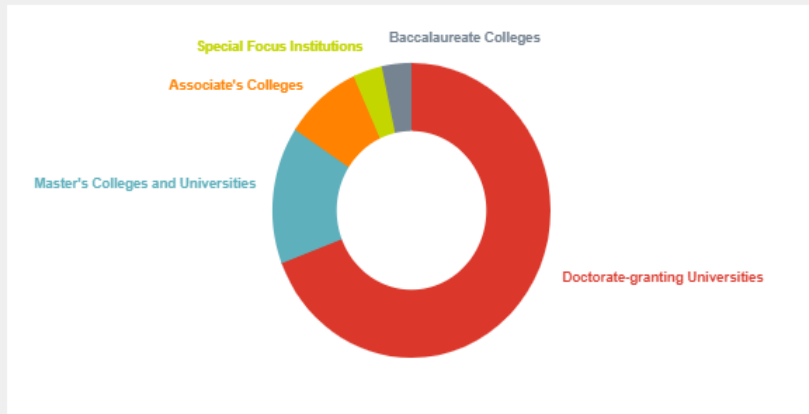


## Enrollment by Institutional Type



INTERNATIONAL STUDENT DATA  
FROM THE 2017 OPEN DOORS® REPORT

Institutional Type	Institutional Type, detailed	% Change from 2015/16	Number of Students
ALL INSTITUTIONS	Total	3.4	1,078,822
Doctorate-granting Universities	Total	4.0	747,175
	Doctoral Universities: Higher Research Activity	1.2	143,965
	Doctoral Universities: Highest Research Activity	5.5	540,185
	Doctoral Universities: Moderate Research Activity	-2.2	63,025
Master's Colleges and Universities	Total	1.8	162,418
	Master's Colleges & Universities: Larger Programs	1.9	132,735
	Master's Colleges & Universities: Medium Programs	-0.1	20,708
	Master's Colleges & Universities: Smaller Programs		



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International Student and U.S. Higher Education Enrollment, 1948/49 - 2016/17

Year	Enrolled	Optional Practical	Total Int'l	Annual	Total U.S.	%	
	Int'l Students	Training (OPT)	Students	% Change	Enrollment*	Int'l	
1985/86	339,627		4,150	343,777	0.5	12,247,000	2.8
1986/87	344,879		4,730	349,609	1.7	12,504,000	2.8
1987/88	351,387		4,800	356,187	1.9	12,767,000	2.8
1988/89	359,334		7,020	366,354	2.9	13,055,000	2.8
1989/90	379,139		7,712	386,851	5.6	13,539,000	2.9
1990/91	398,759		8,770	407,529	5.3	13,819,000	2.9
1991/92	411,355		8,230	419,585	3.0	14,359,000	2.9
1992/93	427,608		11,010	438,618	4.5	14,487,000	3.0
1993/94	438,319		11,430	449,749	2.5	14,305,000	3.1
1994/95	439,427		13,208	452,635	0.6	14,279,000	3.2
1995/96	438,337		15,450	453,787	0.3	14,262,000	3.2
1996/97	439,859		18,125	457,984	0.9	14,368,000	3.2
1997/98	464,698		16,582	481,280	5.1	14,502,000	3.3
1998/99	474,091		16,842	490,933	2.0	14,507,000	3.4
1999/00	489,866		24,857	514,723	4.8	14,791,000	3.5
2000/01	526,809		21,058	547,867	6.4	15,312,000	3.6
2001/02	560,251		22,745	582,996	6.4	15,928,000	3.7
2002/03	558,530		27,793	586,323	0.6	16,612,000	3.5
2003/04	543,169		29,340	572,509	-2.4	16,911,000	3.4
2004/05	532,040		32,999	565,039	-1.3	17,272,000	3.3
2005/06	526,670		38,096	564,766	-0.1	17,487,000	3.2
2006/07	541,324		41,660	582,984	3.2	17,672,000	3.3
2007/08	567,039		56,766	623,805	7.0	18,248,000	3.4
2008/09	605,015		66,601	671,616	7.7	19,103,000	3.5
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