

Administrative Processing FAQ

The U.S. Department of State (DOS) has indicated that the process of issuing visas to some individuals may be delayed due to "further administrative processing". Administrative processing takes place after the visa interview, and refers to visa applications that undergo additional review or security clearances outside of "normal" visa processing times. Visa applications selected for administrative processing must be reviewed by several U.S. Government agencies before a decision is reached.

If your visa application is selected for administrative processing, please review the FAQ below, and notify your HIO Advisor as soon as possible.

You may also review the ["further administrative processing"](#) information provided by DOS.

Who is subjected to administrative processing?

Individuals may be selected for administrative processing due to their citizenship, field of study or scope of research, prior visa overstays or denials, criminal activities, and more.

Citizenship, Nationality or Country of Birth

Scrutiny is imposed on visa applicants who were born in or are nationals or citizens of certain countries. The list has varied since 2001, and it is often unclear whether a particular country is officially on the list or not. Applicants from countries that DOS has identified as state sponsors of terrorism [always undergo a security clearance](#).

Field of Study or Research

A security clearance is normally required for students and scholars conducting research in certain academic fields. There is no publicly available list of academic fields that would trigger a security clearance. However, our experience has been that most science oriented majors can trigger a security clearance.

Citizenship and Field of Research

Although there is no official statement to this effect, our recent experience has been that citizens of Russia, China and India who are engaged in scientific research are often subject to security clearances that can be outside that 60-90 day window.

How do I know I have been selected for administrative processing?

Generally, an individual will receive a 221(g) letter indicating that their visa application is subjected to further administrative processing. If you did not receive the letter, or notice from the U.S. Embassy or Consulate that you are subjected to administrative processing, you may contact the U.S. Embassy or Consulate directly for more information.

How long does administrative processing last? Can Harvard expedite the process for me?

DOS has stated that their goal is to complete administrative processing within a 60-day period. In recent experience, however, some administrative processing cases may take months. The period of time taken will vary based on individual circumstances. If this happens, the HIO is unable to expedite the clearance process.

What should I do if I am subjected to administrative processing?

First, please review any correspondence from DOS closely. Oftentimes, the U.S. Embassy or Consulate may ask you for additional information or additional forms to be completed in order to proceed.

You must also notify your HIO Advisor and academic program director or PI if you are selected for administrative processing. If your case has been pending for longer than 60 days, the HIO may follow up with DOS on your behalf to inquire on your application status.

The Department of State maintains a site that allows applicants to check the status of their visas. That information can be found here: <https://ceac.state.gov/CEAC/>

I study or research in a science field. Can I do anything to prepare for potential administrative processing?

Our recent experience shows that students who are subject to "further administrative processing" might help expedite this process by including a "research plan" with their visa application materials. The "research plan" should include following:

- Your name, degree level or academic appointment title, the number of years you have been in your current academic program or post-doc position, and amount and source of your funding
- An overview of your research that includes a detailed non-technical description of your research and whether it is basic or applied research. Please specify whether the research has military or defense applications
- When you are expected to return to Harvard to continue your studies or research position

It would be advisable to obtain a letter from your academic advisor or P.I. which describes briefly in non-technical terms the specific area of your research and how that research fits into the overall research goals of your research group.

These letters will not deter a security clearance, but may expedite the clearance.