

Visa Application and DS-160 FAQ

This information specifically pertains to questions regarding the visa application process and F-1, J-1, F-2, and J-2 submission of the DS-160. For additional information, please review the information on the U.S. Department of State website [here](#).

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Visa Fee Questions

Am I required to pay the I-901 SEVIS fee?

Yes. All incoming students, scholars, and student interns must pay the I-901 SEVIS fee before applying for the F-1 or J-1 visa. The only exceptions are for individuals transferring an existing F-1 or J-1 visa status to Harvard or those renewing their visa (see below). Information about how to pay the SEVIS fee is available on the HIO website for Harvard students [here](#). Information for scholars and student interns may be found [here](#).

Do I have to pay the SEVIS fee again if I am renewing my visa?

No. You must pay the SEVIS fee when you are starting your F-1 or J-1 program; your SEVIS ID should remain the same throughout the duration of your Harvard F-1 or J-1 program, even if your program has been extended. You will, however, need to pay a new SEVIS fee in a visa renewal process if your SEVIS ID is changed/different, for instance, for students returning from a leave of absence on a new SEVIS record.

What are the other visa fees that I will be required to pay?

All visa applicants are required to pay the Machine Readable Visa (MRV) Fee of \$160. Additional visa fees can vary from country to country depending on a variety of factors, including reciprocity agreements that the U.S. Department of State may have in place with your home country's government. Details about what visa fees are required can be found on the U.S. Department of State website [here](#).

Do my F-2 or J-2 dependents have to pay their own SEVIS fees?

No. Only the F-1 or J-1 applicant has to pay the SEVIS fee; dependents are covered by the F-1 or J-1 SEVIS fee. F-2 and J-2 dependents do NOT have to pay a SEVIS fee.

Visa Application Process Questions

The earliest appointment is after my program start date. What should I do?

If there are visa appointments available to book, you should book the earliest appointment possible. If the earliest appointments available are after your arrival date or start date in the U.S., then you will need to follow the U.S. Embassy or Consulate's instructions to request an emergency or expedited appointment or keep checking back to see if more appointment times become available in the coming months. Most Embassies or Consulates have these instructions available on their [website](#). Please note, different U.S. Embassies and Consulates have different instructions and different timelines for when they will allow you to submit an expedite request. Failure to follow your U.S. Embassy's instructions could result in a denial of your expedite request. You cannot request an expedite until you schedule an appointment, even if it is after your anticipated arrival date. If you cannot find instructions unique to your Embassy, contact your HIO (Harvard International Office) advisor for assistance.

There are no appointments available to book. What should I do?

You may view the expected wait times for an appointment at the U.S. Embassy or Consulate in a given city on the [U.S. Department of State website](#). You may also compare wait times at all U.S. Embassies and Consulates worldwide [here](#).

If you are required to book a visa interview, and there are no visa appointments currently available to book at the local U.S. Embassy or Consulate, you will need to keep checking their calendar for more appointment spots to open. Early in the morning tends to be a good time to check for cancellations and new appointment openings. Some Embassies and Consulates also offer appointments through [US Travel Docs](#); you should also review information there because emergency or expedited appointment instructions may be provided there.

Can Harvard book an appointment for me?

While your HIO advisor may guide you through the process, the Harvard International Office is unable to intervene in a visa application or book a visa appointment on your behalf. Incoming students and scholars must follow the U.S. Embassy or Consulate's procedure for booking an appointment.

Can I apply at a U.S. Embassy that is not in my home country?

We always recommend that you apply for a visa in your home country, or your country of residency. If it is impossible to book an appointment in your country, you may explore the appointment wait times for neighboring countries on the U.S. Department of State's [Visa Appointment Wait Times database](#). You will also need to ensure that the given U.S. Embassy or Consulate you choose accepts applications from third country nationals (i.e., or non-citizens or residents of that country; also known as TCNs).

Please note, the HIO does not recommend applying for a U.S. visa in Canada or Mexico unless you are a resident of those countries.

There is no U.S. Embassy or Consulate in my country. What should I do?

If the U.S. Embassy or Consulate in your home country is closed, you must consider which neighboring countries you are able to travel to for a visa appointment, and you must check the website of the U.S. Embassy or Consulate in that country to ensure that they will accept appointments from third country nationals. Citizens of some countries may have designated posts where they should apply. Check with your HIO Advisor for guidance.

Do I qualify for an interview waiver?

To address the backlog of visa applications from the pandemic, the U.S. Secretary of State has authorized U.S. Embassies and Consulates worldwide to grant waivers of the in-person interview requirement in certain circumstances through the end of 2023. Eligibility for the interview waiver will be determined by the U.S. Embassy or Consulate *after* you submit your DS-160. If you are granted an interview waiver, you will be instructed by the U.S. Embassy or Consulate to mail in or drop off your

application materials. In some circumstances, the U.S. Embassies or Consulates may still require the in-person interview prior to granting the visa. Please see the U.S. [Department of State announcement](#), or your country's U.S. Embassy or Consulate's website, for more information.

I've never traveled to the U.S. Will I be required to have an in-person interview?

Only certain first-time F or J applicants who have previously traveled to the United States using an authorization obtained via the Electronic System for Travel Authorization (ESTA) may qualify for an interview waiver. In most cases, if you have never traveled to the U.S., you will be called for an interview by the U.S. Embassy or Consulate. One reason for the in-person interview will be for biometrics collection by the U.S. Department of State.

Do I need to submit a DS-7002 Training/Internship Placement Plan (TIPP) with my visa application?

If you are coming to Harvard as a J-1 Student Intern, you must submit a completed DS-7002 TIPP with your visa application along with the DS-2019. Both forms will be provided to you by Harvard. This form is required for J-1 student interns ONLY. If you are coming to Harvard as a J-1 Professor, Research Scholar, Short-Term Scholar, Specialist, or Student, you do NOT need to submit a DS-7002 TIPP with your visa application.

My visa application is being subject to Administrative Processing/refused under section 221(g) of the Immigration and Nationality Act. What does this mean?

Most visa applications are adjudicated by consular officers at the time of the interview at a U.S. embassy or consulate. [Administrative processing](#), or [INA §221\(g\)](#), are terms used by the U.S. Department of State (DOS) to describe when a consular officer cannot make an immediate decision on a visa application; it refers to the application undergoing additional clearance procedures with DOS. Sometimes the consular officer must review additional documentation that might have been missing from the initial visa application. In other instances, consular officers may be required to forward the case to the DOS offices in Washington, D.C.; in such a case the officer will not have access to information about the case status and lacks authority to expedite processing.

The handling and duration of administrative processing depend on the nature of the case. In the experience of the HIO, most administrative processing cases are resolved in sufficient time for students to begin classes on time. Scholars may need to be more flexible on arrival dates.

If your case is subject to administrative processing or 221(g), please notify your Harvard department administrator and your [HIO advisor](#) immediately so you can receive advising support.

What should I do if my visa application is being subject to Administrative Processing/refused under section 221(g) of the Immigration and Nationality Act?

The U.S. Department of State has been improving their procedures for Administrative Processing. The vast majority of Administrative Processing cases are resolved so that you will be able to arrive to the U.S. to join your program or academic department in a timely manner.

You may wish to notify your [HIO advisor](#) that your application is undergoing Administrative Processing.
(cont. on next page)

Please email your [HIO advisor](#) the following details:

- Full Name
- Date of Birth
- Passport Book Number
- Country of Nationality
- Consular Post
- Visa Application/Barcode Number (Starts with AA)

My visa application case status indicates that my visa was refused, but the consular officer told me that my case is in Administrative Processing/subject to 221(g). Does this mean my visa was actually denied?

Applicants can check the status of their visa application at the DOS [Consular Electronic Application Center \(CEAC\) website](#). If the case status indicates “refused,” that does not necessarily mean that the visa was “denied.” If the visa application is being subject to administrative processing, the case status will indicate “refused,” and an additional paragraph referring the visa applicants to instructions from the consular officer will appear on the page.

Once administrative processing is complete, the post will inform the applicant of its decision. The case status on CEAC will also be updated to either “issued” (visa granted) or “refused” (visa denied) with the date of the change, while no longer displaying the annotation that refers applicants to the consular officer’s instructions.

Please note that if your visa is subject to Administrative Processing/221(g) and the CEAC website reflects a case status of “refused,” you will have to disclose this on all future U.S. visa and ESTA applications. The Form [DS-160](#) asks if the visa applicant has ever had a visa refused. The State Department does formally Administrative Processing/221(g) refusals to be [legal refusals](#), though those refusals can be overcome. You may wish to work with an experienced immigration attorney about how to properly disclose this information in future visa applications.

Do I need to submit a DS-7002 Training/Internship Placement Plan (TIPP) with my visa application?

If you are coming to Harvard as a J-1 Student Intern, you must submit a completed DS-7002 TIPP with your visa application along with the DS-2019. Both forms will be provided to you by Harvard. This form is required for J-1 student interns ONLY. If you are coming to Harvard as a J-1 Professor, Research Scholar, Short-Term Scholar, Specialist, or Student, you do NOT need to submit a DS-7002 TIPP with your visa application.

DS-160 Questions

Who is my contact at Harvard? What U.S. address should I use?

Please add the HIO advisor’s name on the bottom of page one of the I-20 (F-1 Students) or DS- 2019 (J- 1 Exchange Visitors). Then, use the following address: (cont. on next page)

Harvard International Office
 1350 Massachusetts Avenue
 Richard A. and Susan F. Smith Campus Center, 864 Cambridge,
 MA
 02138

Phone: 617-495-2789
 Fax: 617-495-4088

Where is the code for my field of study located on the F-1 I-20?

For F-1 Students, the field of study code is located under the *PROGRAM of STUDY* section of the I-20.

PROGRAM OF STUDY		
EDUCATION LEVEL DOCTORATE	MAJOR 1 Economics, General 45.0601	MAJOR 2 None 00.0000

Where is the code for my field of study located on the J-1 DS-2019?

For J-1 Students and Scholars, the field of study code can be found under #4 *Exchange Visitor Category* section of the DS-2019.

4. Exchange Visitor Category:	
RESEARCH SCHOLAR	
Subject/Field Code:	Subject/Field Code Remarks:
26.0801	HSPH: Genetics and Complex Diseases

How do I find the SEVIS number?

For F-1 Students, the SEVIS Number is found on the upper left-hand corner of the I-20:

Department of Homeland Security U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement SEVIS ID: N0004705512		I-20, Certificate of Eligibility for Nonimmigrant Student Status OMB NO. 1653-0038
SURNAME/PRIMARY NAME Doe Smith PREFERRED NAME John Doe-Smith COUNTRY OF BIRTH UNITED KINGDOM DATE OF BIRTH 01 JANUARY 1980 FORM ISSUE REASON INITIAL ATTENDANCE - Updated Form I-20 for Name	GIVEN NAME John PASSPORT NAME COUNTRY OF CITIZENSHIP UNITED KINGDOM ADMISSION NUMBER LEGACY NAME	CLASS F-1 ACADEMIC AND LANGUAGE

For J-1 Students and Scholars, the SEVIS Number is found on the upper right-hand corner of the DS-2019:

U.S. Department of State
FOR EXCHANGE VISITOR STATUS (J-NONIMMIGRANT)

OMB APPROVAL NO.1405-0119
EXPIRES: 10/31/2020
ESTIMATED BURDEN TIME: 45 min
*See Page 2

Gender: MALE			N0027892026
irth: GERMANY	Citizenship Country Code: GM	Citizenship Country: GERMANY	J-1

How do I find the Harvard's School Code (for F-1) or Program Number (for J-1)?

For F-1 Students, the school code can be found under the School Information section on page 1 of the I-20. The section is entitled "School Code and Approval Date." The code begins with "BOS"

SCHOOL INFORMATION	
SCHOOL NAME Harvard University Harvard University	SCHOOL ADDRESS c/o Harvard International Office, Cambridge, MA 02138
SCHOOL OFFICIAL TO CONTACT UPON ARRIVAL	SCHOOL CODE AND APPROVAL DATE

For J-1 Students and Scholars, the Exchange Visitor Program Number can be found under #2 *Program Sponsor* section of the DS-2019. The number begins with "P-1-0...":

2. Program Sponsor: Harvard University	Program Number:
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Whom can I receive a personal reference from if I have not been employed in the past?

Many students, particularly undergraduates, have asked their school counselor, teachers, or family friends for personal references.

Am I required to provide social media usernames on my visa application?

Yes, this represents a newer series of questions on the Form DS-160. Visa applicants must provide information about any social media platforms they used during the five years before their visa application. You are required to provide any usernames or handles used on those platforms including Facebook, Instagram, LinkedIn, Reddit, Twitter, Weibo, YouTube, and more. You can make selections from a pulldown menu. Additional information is available on the [State Department website](#).

Do my F-2 or J-2 dependents each need to submit their own DS- 160?

Yes. Each visa applicant must complete and submit their own DS-160 and pay a visa application fee prior to their visa interviews. If any of your family members are under the age of 16 or physically unable to complete the application, the applicant's parent or guardian may complete and sign the application on his or her behalf.

Some of my information has changed. May I edit the DS-160 after I have submitted it?

Applicants [cannot reopen](#) submitted DS-160 applications. If something in your circumstances changes and requires updates to the DS-160, there are two ways to reuse information from a previously submitted application to create and submit a new/updated DS-160. Please note that you may also use these options if you are renewing your visa; populating the information from a previously submitted application may help you ensure accuracy and consistency among your previous responses:

- The first option is to log into the CEAC system and select [“Retrieve an Application”](#) using the previous application ID number. Next, you will be asked whether you want to go to the confirmation page or create a new application. Select “Create a New Application,” and much of the form will auto-populate with the previously submitted information. Then, you will need to edit and update the information. Once you have made all required edits/updates, submit the new application. This will generate a new confirmation page.
- The second option applies if you saved the [DAT file](#) from the original application. You can access and amend the previous application at any time. You can select [“Upload a Previously Saved Application”](#) on the Getting Started page. Once the changes have been made, save and submit the new application. This will generate a new confirmation page. (Note: permanently saving your application to a hard drive/flash drive/ will allow you to access your application after 30 days.)

For either option above, if the original DS-160 was used to book the visa appointment and/or pay the MRV fee, you are [required](#) to present the confirmation pages from the new AND original DS-160 at the interview. This is because each submission creates a different barcode, and a consular officer uses the application ID/barcode to retrieve the application. We recommend that you print out and carry all pages of the new DS-160 application in the event the officer cannot retrieve/access the new application (for example, if there were a system outage). You should also be prepared to accurately explain to the officer what specific material changes and related issues resulted in the need for an updated DS-160.

Renewing a Visa

Do I need to complete and submit a new DS-160 if I am renewing a visa?

Yes. You will need to complete a new DS-160 and pay a new visa application fee but you may use information from a previously submitted DS-160 if the information has not changed. No new SEVIS fee is required for a renewal under the same SEVIS number.

- The first option is to log into the CEAC system and select [“Retrieve an Application”](#) using the previous application ID number. Next, you will be asked whether you want to go to the confirmation page or create a new application. Select “Create a New Application,” and much of the form will auto-populate with the previously submitted information. Then, you will need to edit and update the information. Once you have made all required edits/updates, submit the new application. This will generate a new confirmation page.
- The second option applies if you saved the [DAT file](#) from the original application to a hard drive/flash drive/cloud. You can access and amend the previous application at any time. You can select [“Upload a Previously Saved Application”](#) on the Getting Started page. Once the changes have been made, save and submit the new application. This will generate a new confirmation page. (Note: permanently saving your application to a hard drive/flash drive/cloud will allow you to access your application after 30 days.)

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