

# 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](#).

<b>Visa Fee Questions</b> .....	<b>1</b>
Am I required to pay the I-901 SEVIS fee?.....	1
Do I have to pay the SEVIS fee again if I am renewing my visa?.....	1
What are the other visa fees that I will be required to pay?.....	1
Do my F-2 or J-2 dependents have to pay their own SEVIS fees?.....	1
<b>Visa Application Process Questions</b> .....	<b>1</b>
What are current wait times for a visa appointment or visa issuance?.....	1
Is there a way to expedite my visa appointment or visa issuance?.....	2
There are no appointments available to book. What should I do?.....	2
Can Harvard book an appointment for me?.....	3
Can I apply at a U.S. Embassy that is not in my home country?.....	3
There is no U.S. Embassy or Consulate in my country. What should I do?.....	3
Do I qualify for an interview waiver?.....	3
Do I need to submit a DS-7002 Training/Internship Placement Plan (TIPP) with my visa application?.....	3
<b>DS-160 Questions</b> .....	<b>4</b>
Who is my contact at Harvard? What U.S. address should I use?.....	4
Where is the code for my field of study located on the F-1 I-20?.....	4
Where is the code for my field of study located on the J-1 DS-2019?.....	4
The name of my major does not match the major field of study information on my I-20 or DS-2019 – what should I do?.....	4
How do I find the SEVIS number?.....	5
How do I find the Harvard’s School Code (for F-1) or Program Number (for J-1)?.....	5
Whom can I receive a personal reference from if I have not been employed in the past?.....	6
Am I required to provide social media usernames on my visa application?.....	6
Do my F-2 or J-2 dependents each need to submit their own DS- 160?.....	6
Some of my information has changed. May I edit the DS-160 after I have submitted it?.....	6
<b>Renewing a Visa</b> .....	<b>7</b>
Do I need to complete and submit a new DS-160 if I am renewing a visa?.....	7

## 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

### What are current wait times for a visa appointment or visa issuance?

Current visa wait times are available on this website administered by the U.S. Department of State. This represents a snapshot of times; it is hard to know how accurate these times are, or how frequently the times are updated.

Please also allow for additional time for your passport to be returned to you; some consulates may notify you of when you should pick up your passport, or your passport may be couriered to you. These wait times may not be inclusive of passport return.

## Is there a way to expedite my visa appointment or visa issuance?

Generally speaking, U.S. Consulates are consistent in prioritizing F-1 student and J-1 Exchange Visitor visa applications.

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](#).

Instructions for requesting an expedited appointment vary among U.S. consulates. It is critical that you review the information on the website for the post at which you will apply. You should also click on the link from the consulate's page to begin the visa application process; you may be directed to a consular website, U.S. Travel docs, or an AIS page. Please note that the U.S. Travel Docs pages and AIS pages are separate and distinct websites from the general consulate pages, but they do represent official information about the visa application process and include more specific details.

For example, a visa applicant from Belgium may be directed to the following information directly on the consulate's website: <https://be.usembassy.gov/apply-for-an-expedited-visa-appointment/>

The general U.S. Travel Docs directory is available here: <https://www.ustraveldocs.com/>

Other consulates may use AIS pages: <https://ais.usvisa-info.com/>

Please also be sure that you review expedite information that applies to F-1 students and J-1 Exchange visitors. Information about ESTA, B-1/B-2 applications, or other nonimmigrant statuses will not apply to you for purposes of expedite instructions.

You cannot request an expedite until you schedule an appointment, even if it is after your anticipated arrival date. Failure to follow your U.S. Embassy's instructions could result in a denial of your expedited request. Please note, different U.S. Embassies and Consulates have different instructions and different timelines for when they will allow you to submit an expedited request.

## 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 use this site to compare wait times at all U.S. Embassies and Consulates worldwide.

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. Please also review information in the previous question pertaining to expedited appointments.

## 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?

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. The U.S. Embassies or Consulates may require you to appear for an in-person interview or biometrics prior to granting the visa. Please review the website for the U.S. consular post at which you will apply for more information.

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.

## DS-160 Questions

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

Determine your [HIO advisor](#) and use their name and email address. For mailing address, phone and fax number, please use:

*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.

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

### The name of my major does not match the major field of study information on my I-20 or DS-2019 – what should I do?

The codes provided on the I-20 and DS-2019 documents are government codes known as Classification of Instructional Program (CIP) codes. These are established and maintained by the U.S. Department of Education. The Registrars at each Harvard University school and college have determined which U.S. Department of Education CIP codes apply to each

academic program administered by their school. Sometimes the names of the CIP codes provided by the U.S. Department of Education do not precisely match the program names that the school has selected; this is a common occurrence.

## 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:

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

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 <b>FOR EXCHANGE VISITOR STATUS (J-NONIMMIGRANT)</b>			OMB APPROVAL NO.1405-0119 EXPIRES: 10/31/2020 ESTIMATED BURDEN TIME: 45 min *See Page 2
Birth: GERMANY      Citizenship Country Code: GM      Citizenship Country: GERMANY			Gender: <b>MALE</b> <b>N0027892026</b>
			<b>J-1</b>

## 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":

<b>SCHOOL INFORMATION</b>	
<b>SCHOOL NAME</b> Harvard University Harvard University	<b>SCHOOL ADDRESS</b> c/o Harvard International Office, Cambridge, MA 02138
<b>SCHOOL OFFICIAL TO CONTACT UPON ARRIVAL</b>	<b>SCHOOL CODE AND APPROVAL DATE</b> BOS 123456789

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....”:

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2. Program Sponsor: Harvard University

Program Number: \_\_\_\_\_

## 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 it 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.)

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 you print out and carry all pages of the new DS-160 application if the officer cannot retrieve/ access it.