VISA TIPS, TRICKS, & CHANGES

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UNIVERSITY of WASHINGTON
OFFICE OF ACADEMIC PERSONNEL
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TODAY'S AGENDA

- J-1 Visas
- H-1B Visas
- Administrative/General

J-1 VISAS

J-1 VISA REQUEST TIPS

- Use checklists to determine necessary documents
  - E.g.: Do not include Postdoctoral Data Sheet and/or CV with signed final packets
- Gather or prepare English proficiency documentation as part of interview/recruitment process with scholar
  - If using a “documented interview”, include how proficiency was assessed

J-1 VISA REQUEST TRICKS

- Additional Information section: Special DS-2019 handling requests like sending the DS-2019 to someone other than listed requestor
  - Example: Send the DS-2019 to John Smith, Campus mailbox #350000
- Submit visa request far ahead of the sponsorship start date (as much as 5 months)
  - Share ISO's How to Sponsor page with scholars/supervisors to establish realistic expectations around processing times

J-1 EXCHANGE VISITOR ARRIVALS

- Scholars can arrive up to 30 days before work start date
  - Scholars can't work until DS-2019 start date, even if they arrive early
  - If scholar is unable to enter the U.S. by their start date or start their work on time, request a DS-2019 date amendment using the online request form

REMOTE CHECK-IN AND VALIDATION

- J-1 scholars must request a mandatory ISO remote check-in **upon arrival** in the U.S.
- **If ISO does not receive the check-in materials and validate the scholar's immigration record, it can cause big problems**
- Remote J-1 Check-In & Validation Request form must be completed, signed by the scholar and faculty supervisor, and returned with the appropriate documentation to do this
- Travel validation signatures are currently not a part of the remote check-in process
  - If a scholar needs to return to the U.S. after international travel, they must have this signature on their DS-2019
    - **If the scholar needs a signature, they should contact ISO or use our walk-in hours**

J-1 VISA TRAVEL TIPS

- Out of Country Requests (approval needed)
  - If scholar is out of the U.S. for more than 30 days, they must submit an Out of Country Request to ISO
  - One of the following must be approved before submitting to ISO:
    - International Remote Work Request – approved by Tax Office
    - Protected Leave Request – approved by Academic HR
  - Facilitates re-entry into U.S. after a prolonged absence

J-1 EXTENSION VISA TIPS

- Ensure Statement of Compliance for Insurance is completed and signed
  - Note: Emergency evacuation and repatriation are **not included** with UW benefits plans, so scholars should plan on obtaining that coverage separately themselves
- If J-1 extension indicates scholar is outside the U.S., ISO will follow up
  - Scholars are required to maintain U.S. residence throughout their J-1 program
  - Additional Information section: Include out-of-country dates and current U.S. residence
- List all worksites including remote (especially if working from home)
  - First address is considered “primary site of activity”
  - If the site has changed, you will be asked to confirm the primary site of activity
  - Include all secondary worksites as well

J VISA CHANGES

- You can now forward the DS-2019 digital scanned copy to scholars **or** mail them the original DS-2019.
  - The scholar must take a printed, double-sided version of the scanned copy to the consulate visa appointment to obtain a visa.
- List of reportable incidents for J-1s has changed
  - See our J-1 Incident Reports page for more information

J-1 Q&A

Q: Where can I find more information on J-1 reportable incidents?

A: Please see our J-1 Incident Reports page at https://ap.washington.edu/ahr/visas/admin-resources/j1/j1-reporting-requirements/j-1-incident-reports/.

H-1B VISAS

H-1B VISA REQUEST TIPS

- Make sure to list the **correct title**
  - The visa request form has a lot of built-in logic based on title, including required uploads and approvals routing
  - If you don’t see it in the title dropdown, contact ISO to confirm!
- **List all worksites** on visa request and confirm if scholar will work remotely from home

H-1B DOCUMENT TIPS

- Include all H-1B required documents with visa request packet
- Forward digital (Word doc) copy of USCIS letter to ISO with H visa packet
  - Use ISO's USCIS template letter
  - ISO will often require edits to this letter to support H-1B eligibility
- Include scholar's name and/or visa request tracking number on the filing fee checks so that ISO can assign it to correct scholar's case and file

H-1B PROCESSING TIPS

- Tell ISO your preferred posting method and if you'd like a separate LCA for posting at a remote home address (each method has different instructions for posting):
  - **physical posting at the worksite**
  - **listserv posting**
  - **intranet posting**
- Provide FedEx label to ISO as soon as possible after filing or approval with USCIS if you want the receipt and/or approval notice sent directly to the scholar
  - Courtesy copy of approval notice will be sent to the department by campus mail

H-1B TIMELINE TRICKS

- Title and current visa status can impact H-1B processing times
  - Consult timeline to help determine start date
  - When in doubt, ask ISO for estimated timeline, but remember that we recommend 4 months of lead time where possible
- Share the How to Sponsor page with scholars/supervisors to establish realistic expectations
  - ISO will manage case timeline, but follow up from units is always helpful
  - Periodic check-ins with scholar/supervisor may help them to understand process/timeline better (and send you fewer emails)
- Check visa appointment wait times if the scholar will need a new visa stamp

H-1B TRICKS - REPORTING

- Some changes can require a new posting or a new filing with USCIS; watch out in particular for:
  - New worksites
  - New appointment/job titles
- Changes that are not allowed:
  - Outside professional work for pay
  - FTE changes
- Check with ISO if you're not sure what changes have to be reported!

H-1B CHANGES FOR STAFF

- ISO/UWHR partnership on staff visa sponsorship pilot program
  - Units must go through initial review by UWHR before submitting visa request to ISO
  - Most common titles so far:
    - Research Scientist/Engineer 1-4
    - Senior Computer Specialist
    - Software Engineer
  - Stay tuned for updates on this pilot program!

H-1B PROCESSING CHANGES

- UW no longer requires a Prevailing Wage Determination from the US Department of Labor for H-1Bs
  - This cuts about 6 months of processing time from non-CBA cases
  - H-1B visa requests move a lot faster now!
- ISO uses a new system ("INSZoom") to support H-1B visas
  - This system will eventually allow ISO to
    - Collect information and documents directly from scholars
    - Share status and approval information with unit contacts

H-1B Q&A 1

Q: Can faculty members on H-1Bs perform outside professional work?

A: H-1Bs are employer-specific, so a UW-sponsored H-1B doesn't allow outside professional work for any other employer, regardless of the appointment title.

Q: If a faculty is already here on OPT, and they have an H-1B approval notice, and they need to travel outside of the U.S. to get an H-1B visa stamp, do they have to go to their home country or can they go to Canada to get this?

A: This is consulate-specific. Check directly with the U.S. consulate to see if they are accepting "third-country national" visa applications.

H-1B Q&A 2

Q: Do you find that the USCIS letter guidelines have become more strict/stringent recently for H-1B applications? We're seeing requests for edits and greater detail where we hadn't seen them before.

A: There hasn’t been a recent change, but the agency has been getting more picky about the content included in the employment letter. For faculty positions with teaching, list courses they’ll teach. For researchers, list research goals and the work being performed/tools being used in detail. We are asking for more detail on the front end to help avoid requests for evidence by USCIS.

ADMINISTRATIVE

VISA REQUEST TIPS

- Enter scholar name in lowercase on visa request
  - Automatically modifies last name to all caps
  - Helps with consistent, clean, and efficient file organization
- Visa request dates and appointment dates should align whenever possible
  - Interactions between visa and appointment dates are complicated; always reach out to ISO if you have questions about a specific case
- For Section 5: UW home department/program section
  - Use academic unit name followed by division name
    - Example: Physics/Institute of Nuclear Theory
    - Example: International Studies/Center for Korea Studies

VISA REQUEST – PRIOR VISITS

- **Visa request "Prior U.S. Visits" section:**
  - Include scholar's current status and current status start/end dates
  - ISO is looking for time spent in each status (how long the scholar held their visa in total)
  - NOT a list of every single entry/exit within a certain status or program
- **Expiration dates:**
  - Avoid using End Date: "to present"
  - Use scholar's current immigration documents for end date
  - List start date on the visa request as the next day after the expiration date listed on the immigration document
- **Upload current and former visa documents to visa request when possible**
  - E.g., DS-2019, EAD card, I-797 Approval Notice
  - Helps prevent unnecessary back and forth with departments and delays

CONDITIONAL APPROVAL TIPS

- If something on a visa request needs changing, reply to the visa request ticket by clicking "Reply All"
  - Example: change of title, duties/activities, address, name, dates, leaving early, changes in dependents, etc.
  - Conditional approval and billing are based on initial information; some changes WILL require a new visa request and/or new ISO fee
- ISO accepts electronic signatures and documents for almost everything.
  - Submit all required documents as one PDF document or portfolio
  - Convert documents to PDF rather than printing and scanning
  - Limit email attachments to 20 MB or less
  - For files 20 MB and over, use the “Manage Files” function on the visa request form

VISA REQUEST CHANGES

- Minor changes to the J and H visa request forms
  - Self-determination language added to conditional approvals
  - Better support for staff titles
  - Addition of Clinical Practice track
- Changes to visa request review
  - ISO now reviews for both visa and appointment eligibility
  - This means shorter review time and quicker conditional approval!

WORKDAY ADMINISTRATIVE TIPS

- Ensure all scholars, including courtesy appointments such as visiting scholars, **are entered in Workday**
  - Supports keeping UW academic personnel records complete
- Use R0040 to identify upcoming visa expirations so you can start the extension process
  - But note that this report will include people whose visas weren't issued by ISO, or by UW

CONTACTING ISO: GENERAL QUESTIONS

- Email acadvisa@uw.edu
  - uses a ticketing system with a shared inbox (any ISO team member can respond)
  - Anyone in ISO can see the whole email thread; keeps records cleaner
  - If working with a specific advisor, include their name in the greeting or email body
- Let ISO know your availability (work hours/location) if you have requested an immediate response

CONTACTING ISO: SPECIFIC VISA REQUESTS

- Each visa request generates a ticket in ISO's ticketing system
  - Subject line will include a ticket number ("[UW-AP #XXXXX]")
  - Reply to ticketing emails with this ticket number in the subject line
  - Best used for active, unresolved cases
- If you send an email to acadvisa@uw.edu without a ticket number in the subject line, it will create a new ticket that has to be manually assigned to an advisor (and delay ISO's response!)
- Include a screenshot or reference a particular web page excerpt you don't understand when emailing ISO for clarification

WHERE TO SEND VISA QUESTIONS

Visa type	Where to look	Who to contact
J-1 or J-1 Academic Training	Most recent DS-2019 #2 Program Sponsor AND #4 Exchange Visitor Category	If program sponsor is UW AND exchange visitor category is Short-Term Scholar, Research Scholar, Professor, or Specialist Contact: UW ISO (acadvisa@uw.edu)
		If program sponsor is UW AND exchange visitor category is Student Contact: UW ISS (uwiss@uw.edu)
		If program sponsor is UW AND exchange visitor category is Student Intern or Student Non-Degree Contact: UW IELP VISIT/VISER program (uwvisit@uw.edu)
		If program sponsor is not UW, scholar should ask the program that issued the DS-2019

WHERE TO SEND VISA QUESTIONS

Visa type	Where to look	Who to contact
H-1B, TN, E-3, or O-1 sponsored through UW ISO	Most recent I-797 upper right-hand corner “Petitioner”	If petitioner is UW/UW ISO Contact: ISO acadvisa@uw.edu
		If petitioner is other entity, scholar should contact that entity
F-1 or F-1 OPT	Most recent I-20 School Information: School Name	If school name is UW Contact: UW ISS (uwiss@uw.edu)
		If School Name is not UW: scholar should ask the school that issued the I-20
Other status		Scholar should ask private immigration attorney: www.ailalawyer.com

WORKTAG TIPS

- Double check worktag information and name of budget contact on visa requests (saves time in reconciliation and billing later)
  - Ensure worktags are active before entering them on the visa request
  - Email acadvisa@uw.edu to change worktags once visa request is submitted
- ISO **cannot split visa fees** between worktags
- Invoicing system automatically generates and emails invoices after conditional approval
  - Email acadvisa@uw.edu to request invoices if you didn't receive them

WORKTAG TIPS

- The Company field is required for **all visa requests**
- For the School of Medicine:
  - If a Cost Center is provided, please also provide a Fund worktag
  - A Resource worktag is required when using FD108 & FD101
- For all Grant worktags, please confirm whether it can be applied to spend category: SC2116
  - Please be sure that the accompanying worktags (to a grant) match the grant

WORKTAG TIPS

- For Company worktag UW1861, funding can be a combination of the following:
  - **Cost Center + Resource** (NOT a Cost Center + Fund & Function - this is not an acceptable combination)
    + Project
    + Grant
    + Gift
    + Program
- Please verify that what is being provided is what is outlined in the Foundation Data Model/FDM (this applies to both SOM and UW1861)

FILING FEE CHANGES

- **USCIS Premium Processing**
  - Filing fee went up from $2500 to $2805 on 03/01/2024
  - Processing period went up from 15 calendar days to 15 business days
- **April 1 filing fee changes**
  - Different fees for different visa types (H-1B, TN, E-3, O-1) using the same form I-129 – see Slide 39
  - I-140 Immigrant Petition filing fee went up from $700 to $715 on 04/01/2024
- **ISO now accepts credit card payment for USCIS fees**
  - See our Visa Fees page for information on how to pay using credit cards and USCIS Form G-1450

REFERENCE MATERIALS

ISO fees
(as of 05/22/2024)

Visa	Expense	Fee	Payee
J-1 New or extension		$562	ISO
J-2 New or extension		$562	ISO
J-1 Add'l Year		$562	ISO
J-2 Add'l Year		$562	ISO
DS-2019 Reissue		$105	ISO
H-1B/TN/E-3 New		$562	ISO
H-1B/TN/E-3 extension		$562	ISO

See our Visa Fees page for more information

USCIS fees
(as of 05/22/2024)

Visa	Expense	Fee	Payable
H-1B	I-129 Fee	$460	US Department of Homeland Security
H-1B	Fraud Prevention Fee (new app or transfer)	$500	
H-1B/TN/E-3	Premium Processing (optional)	$2,805	
H-4/TD/E-3S	I-539 Dependent Filing	$470	
TN/E-3	I-129 Fee	$510	
O-1	I-129 Fee	$530	
Permanent residence	I-140 Immigrant Petition	$715	

See our Visa Fees page for more information

J-1 & H-1B RESOURCES

J-1 Resources

- How to Sponsor a J-1 Visa
- J-1 Visa Intake Form
- J-1 Checklist
- J Visa Request Form
- J-1 Amendment Form
- J-1 Check-In Information
- Statement of Compliance for Insurance
- Out of Country Request Form
- Add J-2 Dependent Form

H-1B Resources

- How to Sponsor an H-1B Temporary Worker
- H-1B/E3/TN Visa Intake Form
- H-1B Checklist
- H Visa Request Form
- USCIS Employer Letter Template
- Postdoctoral Scholar Letter Templates:
  - New hire offer letter
  - Reappointment letter

ADMINISTRATIVE RESOURCES

- Visa Guidance for Unit Administrators
- Visa Request Launch Page
- Academic Titles and Ranks
- eDigest Archive
- Training and Administrators Forum Archive
- Visa Fees

General Email Addresses

- ISO: acadvisa@uw.edu
- AHR: acadpers@uw.edu

Other Resources

- UWHR Staff Pilot Program page
- UW Procurement Services
- FedEx