Applying for the J-1 Student Visa

The COVID-19 pandemic may continue to present many challenges to the process of obtaining a U.S. visa and traveling to Yale to begin your studies. We are hopeful that both visa issuance and air travel will return to normal so that you can arrive at Yale for the fall semester.

Please know that both OISS and Yale University are closely monitoring the COVID-19 global health emergency and will stay in close communication with you about any updates or changes. You will find COVID-19 updates on the OISS COVID-19 webpage [1], as well as Yale University updates [2].

When to Apply

You must apply for your visa well in advance of your arrival, as it can in some instances take several weeks and occasionally longer, to obtain the J-1 student visa.

The Department of State has instructed U.S. consulates that they may issue a J-1 visa no more than 120 days in advance of the program start date. However, an application for a J-1 visa can be submitted more than 120 days in advance of the start date noted on the DS-2019 in order to accommodate long processing times. Check the website of the consulate where you will apply for a visa for detailed instructions.

Pre-Application Checklist

Before you begin the visa application process, you must have the following documents:

**DS-2019 Form**

This will be sent to you in the mail from OISS after you have been admitted. Your original DS-2019 is required when applying for a J-1 student visa at an American embassy or consulate and for entry into the United States. This DS-2019 has been produced by Student and Exchange Visitor Information System (SEVIS) and is an acknowledgement that your record is in the SEVIS system. The form includes your SEVIS ID number, which is the number in the upper corner above the bar code, (usually starts with an N).

**SEVIS Fee Receipt**

All new students coming in J-1 status must pay a one-time SEVIS fee prior to applying for your visa, and must submit the SEVIS fee receipt as part of their application. You can find instructions about paying the fee on this page [3].

**DS-2019 Forms for Spouse and Dependent Children**

Each J-2 dependent is issued an DS-2019 and has their own SEVIS ID. Additional SEVIS fees do not need to be paid for dependents.

The Application Process

1. Complete the DS-160
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The first step in applying for a U.S. visa is the online application DS-160.

Access the DS-160 application at the Consular Electronic Application Center website [4].

Watch an overview [5] of the online application process.

Read Frequently Asked Questions about the DS-160 [6]. There is a $220 visa application processing fee.

2. Schedule a Visa Interview Appointment

The next step in applying for a U.S. visa is making an appointment at your closest U.S. embassy or consulate. At this appointment you will need to present the following documents:

- Your DS-2019 form
- The SEVIS Fee receipt (I-901)
- Your DS-160 confirmation page
- A copy of your financial support documents, i.e. evidence that you have sufficient funds to meet the expenses of studying at Yale, e.g. bank statement, financial aid award letter.
- A valid passport
- Passport-size photographs (that you uploaded in the DS-160 application)
- Completed required visa application forms (available on the U.S. consular websites.)

Check the website of the U.S. consulate/embassy where you are applying to see if there are other requirements.

An application fee and an interview will also be required. There have been (and continue to be) changes in the visa application process and these changes are usually reflected on the consular websites.

Find the nearest U.S. Consulate or Embassy [7].

Find the visa appointment wait times at your local consulate [8].

3. Attend Your Interview

Attend your scheduled visa interview at your U.S. embassy or consulate. Here are 10 points to remember when applying for a non-immigrant visa [9].

4. Receive and Review your Entry Visa

Check the visa in your passport to make sure that all the information on it is correct. If the information is not correct it can only be changed at the embassy or consulate that issued your visa.

Your DS-2019 should be returned to you. You will need it to enter the U.S. [10]

Special Notes

When applying for your student visa, pay careful attention to the following.

Timing Your Arrival to the U.S.

You may enter the U.S. no earlier than 30 day before and no later than 30 days after to the starting date noted on the DS-2019 form (item #3). However if you cannot arrive in the U.S. by your starting date, you must get academic
permission to arrive late. To start this process, please [get in touch with OISS](https://oiss.yale.edu/about/contact-oiss).

**Expiring Visas**

The expiration date on your visa may not match the end date of your degree program. If your visa expires before you complete your degree program, you will apply for a new visa on your first trip outside the U.S. after your current visa expires.

**A Final Note**

If the U.S. consulate has any questions regarding your studies at Yale, please [contact OISS](https://oiss.yale.edu/about/connect-with-oiss). If your visa application is delayed or denied for any reason, please email your [OISS adviser](https://oiss.yale.edu/node/1286) immediately. Safe travels and we look forward to meeting you when you arrive in New Haven!