O-1 Extraordinary Ability Overview

The O-1 visa is a nonimmigrant employment based visa classification. In most cases, seeking an O-1 visa status is only recommended when H-1B or a J-1 visa is not applicable. Yale affiliates who can demonstrate sustained national or international acclaim and recognition for achievements in the sciences, arts, education, business or athletics can request O-1 sponsorship from OISS. OISS has the right to accept or decline requests depending on how well the individual's achievements meet the USCIS criteria. Yale only sponsors O-1 visas for full-time appointments. The process requires the employer to file a 'Petition for a Nonimmigrant Worker' (Form I-129), along with a preponderance of evidence that the individual has extraordinary ability. The evidence submitted must demonstrate that the individual is one of a small percentage who have risen to the very top of the field of endeavor. In many cases even if the O-1 application is approved, the individual must travel home, get the O-1 visa, and return to the U.S. before being able to work in O-1 status.

Two General Categories of O-1

- For sciences, education, business and athletes
- For the arts and performing arts

Qualifications

- Evidence that the applicant is recognized nationally or internationally as extraordinary in their academic field. This evidence must consist of at least three categories of achievements. In addition each piece of evidence must be accompanied by supporting explanations from independent objective sources.
- Evidence that the employment requires the skills of someone with 'extraordinary ability' as detailed in a faculty support letter and peer group letters.

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Links:
[1] https://oiss.yale.edu/immigration/other-visa-options/o-1/o-1-eligibility-criteria