

Study Away at Duke Visa Application Guide for iMEP Students



Duke | NICHOLAS SCHOOL of
the ENVIRONMENT

Duke | SANFORD SCHOOL of
PUBLIC POLICY

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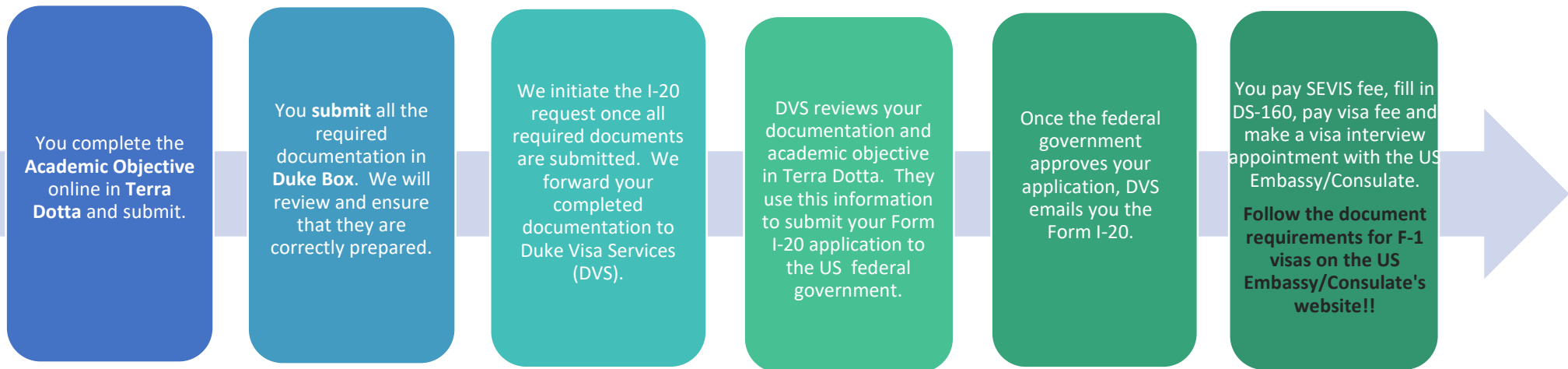
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Documentation Checklist

Please use this checklist to help ensure that you have collected all the required documentation you need. **NOT** all checklist items will apply to everyone.

Academic Objective in Terra Dotta (Duke Visa Services I-20 Application System) is completed and submitted for review.	
Color copies of your passport and previous US Visas are clear and legible.	
Color copies of your spouse's passport and previous US visas are clear and legible.	
Copies of your marriage certificate are clear and legible. Certified English translation is attached if the marriage certificate is not in English.	
Color copies of your children's passport and previous US Visas are clear and legible.	
Copies of your children's birth certificates are clear and legible. Certified English translations are attached if the birth certificate is not in English.	
Originals of proof of funding documents and a sponsorship letter if you are not self-funded.	
Certified English translations are attached to any funding documents not written in English.	
Once you have collected your documents, submit them through this Duke Box folder , and name it using the convention of "Last Name, First Name_Spring 2024" (example: Han, Meimei_Spring 2024). Check for errors or missing information before sharing. The sooner you submit the above documents, the sooner you will receive your Form I-20.	

The Visa Request Process



Online Visa Request Form

Duke Visa Services (DVS) issues I-20s for iMEP students coming to study at Duke University. You need to apply for an F-1 visa to enter the US with the issued I-20. For DVS to issue you the I-20, you must complete the Academic Objective in [Terra Dotta](#). Once the Academic Objective is created, you will receive an email to prompt you to log-in to Terra Dotta with your NetID and Password by selecting "Log in with Campus ID". *Do Not Select "Login with Portal Account"*.

Complete and submit Terra Dotta online application and supporting documents.

- Complete and submit each Questionnaire in Terra Dotta
- Read and acknowledge the Learning Content in Terra Dotta
- Read and submit Signature Documents in Terra Dotta
- [Upload supporting documents](#)

IMPORTANT! Students will see a section in [Terra Dotta](#) to upload documents. Although students are welcome to upload documents in Terra Dotta, please keep in mind, your I-20 application will **not be processed** by the department **until** your documents are also **uploaded** to the [iMEP Student Document Duke Strong Box](#)

The Visa Services Office recommends obtaining two (2) original copies of your **financial documentation** (upload only one original to [Duke Strong Box](#)) because you will most likely need an additional set when you apply for your visa at the U.S. Consulate in your home country.

Once you have completed the academic objective in Terra Dotta and supplied the necessary supporting documents, we will initiate the I-20 process. The I-20 is a required document that is used when applying for your student visa at the US Consulate in your home country.

The iMEP Program Coordinator at Duke **cannot** request an I-20 for you until **all** required **supporting documents** have been uploaded **and** the online application in **Terra Dotta** has been submitted.

Once the student submits the online application and uploads the supporting document, the iMEP Program Coordinator at Duke must review and submit to Duke Visa Services for processing.

Once you have completed all of the elements of the Academic Objective, select Submit. In addition to submitting the academic objective, all required documents must be submitted to the [Duke Strong Box](#) for review by the iMEP Coordinator. Once your documents are reviewed, they will be attached to your Academic Objective and Duke Visa Services will be notified.

Step-by-step Instructions for Academic Objective in TDS

Learning Content:

Checklist for New and Transfer Students (F-M)

1. Read the “Checklist for New Students” and “Checklist for Transfer Students” documents
2. Select “Mark as Read” after reading the documents.

Student Funding Requirements (F-M)

1. Read the contents of the **Student Funding Requirements** information.
2. Select “Mark as Read” after reading.

Materials:

Incoming Student Acknowledgement (F)

1. Read the “Checklist for New Students” and “Checklist for Transfer Students” documents
2. Use the “Sign Digitally” button after reading to confirm.

Incoming Student Travel Advisory (F)

1. Read the contents of the **Incoming Student Travel Advisory (F)** information.
2. Use the “Sign Digitally” button after reading to confirm.

Questionnaires:

Intake Form – Student (F)

1. Enter your Non-Duke Email Address
2. Enter the Country of your passport. If you hold more than one passport, then enter data about the one you will use to enter the U.S.
3. Enter Passport Number
4. Enter Passport Issue Date
5. Enter Passport Expiration Date
 - a. Your passport must be valid for at least six months beyond your period of stay in the US unless exempt by [country-specific agreements](#). The spring 2023 participants' passports should be valid through December 15, 2023.
 - b. Your passport must have at least two blank visa pages. If you have less than two blank visa pages, you should immediately apply for a new passport or have new visa pages added to your passport. Note: visa pages typically have the word "visa" printed on them

6. Enter Countries of Citizenship
7. Enter City of Birth
8. If you are changing your visa status, complete question #8. If you are not changing your visa status, skip this question
9. Enter your Telephone Number associated with your mailing address.
10. Enter your US Mailing Address: Line 1 - Questions 10-14 only apply to people who are currently residing in the United States and are applying for a student visa. If you do not currently live in the United States, leave these sections blank.
11. Enter your US Mailing Address: Line 2
12. Enter your US Mailing Address: City
13. Enter US Mailing Address: State
14. Enter US Mailing Address: Zip Code or Postal Code
15. Enter Foreign Home Address: Line 1 (Street Name and Number)
16. Enter Foreign Home Address: Line 2
17. Enter Foreign Home Address: City
18. Enter Foreign Home Address: State or Province
19. Enter Foreign Home Address: Zip Code or Postal Code
20. Enter Foreign Home Address: Country
21. You can leave additional comments or special mailing information there if needed.
22. Enter No
23. Enter No
24. Enter whether you graduated from a U.S. secondary school
25. Enter if you have graduated from Medical School

Intake Form – Student (F) – Dependent Information

1. Enter your Marital Status
2. Enter whether you have children. **If you do not have any dependents (spouse or children), do not complete the remainder of the form**

Note: Only unmarried children under 21 may be included as dependent family members.

3. Enter whether your dependents need visa documents
4. Enter whether your dependents will have a position in the U.S. that will give them their own visa.
 - a. Most likely, the answer is “No”. If yes, explain in the box that appears and identify their current visa status.
5. Enter whether your dependent was previously in the U.S. in the J visa category (either J-1 or J-2)
6. Enter whether your dependent already in the U.S. and will request a change of visa category to F-2
 - a. If yes, include a written explanation and documentation of the dependent’s current via category.

Questions 7 – 21: Dependent 1

Questions 22 – 36: Dependent 2, if applicable

Questions 37 – 51: Dependent 3, if applicable

Questions 52 – 66: Dependent 4, if applicable

Intake Form – Student (F) – US Immigration History

1. Enter the Number on your 1-94 Card, if applicable
2. Enter the last date of arrival in the US, if applicable
3. Enter the expiration date of your current immigration status, if applicable
4. Enter the A# on your Employment Authorization Card, if you have ever had one. Include a copy of all Employment Authorization cards with the documents you submit
5. Enter the A# expiration date, if applicable
6. Enter whether you have been in the U.S. in any visa class other than tourist in the last 7 years.
7. Enter if you have ever enrolled in or have been employed by any of the institutions listed in #8 **(required question)**
8. Select the institutions in which you have been enrolled **(required question)**. Hold the CTRL button while clicking to make multiple selections.
9. Enter the last year you attended or were employed at one of the selected institutions from #8. **(required question)**

Required Documentation for I-20

Note: DVS will not begin processing your I-20 until they have received your correctly submitted academic objective and the required supporting documents. Once they have received the documents, please allow 3-6 weeks for processing.

Biographical Information

For You:

Everyone is required to send us legible, electronic copies of the biographic and expiration pages of your passport. If possible, please send color scans of these pages. Make sure that your full name, the passport number, date of birth, and photograph are clearly visible. If you are currently applying for a passport, please let us know. Once you have received the passport, you may send us the scans at that time.

If you have previously lived in the United States within the last seven years, or are currently here, we will also need copies of your visa documentation.

- For F-1 or F-2 visa holders, send copies of your I-20 and passport stamp.
- For J-1 or J-2 visa holders, send copies of your DS-2019 and passport stamp.
- For H-1 visa holders, send copies of your I-794 Approval Notice.

For Your Spouse:

If your spouse will be joining you, we will need legible, electronic copies of the biographic and expiration pages of his or her passport. If possible, please send color scans of these pages. Make sure that the full name, passport number, date of birth, and photograph are clearly visible.

If he or she has previously lived in the United States within the last seven years, or he or she is currently here, we will also need copies of his or her visa documentation.

- For F-1 or F-2 visa holders, send copies of the I-20 and passport stamp.
- For J-1 or J-2 visa holders, send copies of the DS-2019 and passport stamp.
- For H-1 visa holders, send copies of the I-794 Approval Notice.

We will also need a copy of your marriage certificate. This certificate should be **in English** or include a **certified English translation**. We cannot accept English translations done by you. A friend can translate it. The translator must provide a written statement that he/she is fluent in both languages. If a translation company translates it, they must provide a written statement showing what they translated.

For Your Children:

If your children will be joining you, we will need legible, electronic copies of the biographic and expiration pages of their passports. If possible, please send color scans of these pages. Make sure that the full name, passport number, date of birth, and photograph are clearly visible.

If your children have previously lived in the United States within the last seven years, or they are currently here, we will also need copies of their visa documentation.

- For F-2 visa holders, send copies of the I-20 and passport stamp.
- For J-2 visa holders, send copies of the DS-2019 and passport stamp.

We will also need a copy of their birth certificates. These certificates should be **in English** or include a **certified English translation**. We cannot accept English translations done by you. A friend can translate it. The translator must provide a written statement that he/she is fluent in both languages. If a translation company translates it, they must provide a written statement showing what they translated.

Proof of Funding

You must collect proof of appropriate financial support for your semester in the US. You should obtain at least **two** original copies of your proof of funding. The originals will need to be shown at the US Embassy or Consulate when applying for the visa stamp. You may also be asked to show proof of funding when you enter the United States at the port of entry (airport).

Minimum Funding Requirements

The minimum funding requirements for the issuance of visa documents have been established by Duke. You must prove funding for the **total estimated cost** of the semester you will be at Duke: **\$18,227**. This includes health insurance, student fees, books & supplies, and living expenses. You can find the current costs of the semester below. Additional proof of funding is required if you have a spouse and/or children.

Cost of Attendance (COA) for iMEP at Duke Spring 2023		
Tuition		Paid to DKU
Health Insurance		\$1,230
Student Fees (\$741)	Transcript Fee	\$120
	Health Fee	\$468
	Activity Fee	\$18
	Graduate Student Serv Fee	\$12
	Recreation Fee	\$179
Books & Supplies		\$310
Total - Living Expense (\$13,513)	Residence	\$7,240
	Board	\$2,270
	Domestic/Int'l Travel	\$3,000
	Local Transportation	\$1,090
	Personal & Misc.	\$2,290
Total Estimated COA		\$18,227
<i>Note: fees and rates provided at this time are estimates and subject to change.</i>		

If your family will be coming to the United States with you, you must also prove that you have the required additional amount of funding. The amount of funding that must be demonstrated for a spouse is \$1,289 per month and the amount for each child is \$655 per month.

Forms of Funding

Acceptable forms of funding include, but are not limited to, the following:

- Official personal checking/savings account statements
- Official family checking/savings account statements
- Scholarship award letters from DKU (original on letterhead)
- Government grant award letters (original on letterhead)
- Employer sponsorship letters (original on letterhead)

Forms of funding must reflect liquid assets. The following are **not** acceptable forms of funding:

- Real estate
- Stocks and bonds
- Credit cards

All documentation for forms of funding must include the following information:

- Must be in English or have a certified English translation. We cannot accept English translations done by you. A friend can translate it. The translator must provide a written statement that he/she is fluent in both languages. If a translation company translates it, they must provide a written statement showing what they translated.
- Must clearly identify the source (name of bank, etc.)
- Must show the funding amount or amount in account for bank statements
- Must show the type of currency (USD, Renminbi, etc.)
- Must show the dates of coverage. For example, "January 2024 – May 2024".
- Documentation must be less than one year old.
- For scholarships, grants, etc., letter must state that funding is for studying at Duke University.

Bank Account Statements

If the bank account is in your name only, a copy of your most recent bank account statement is sufficient. If the statement is not in English, you will need to provide **an English translation**. We cannot accept English translations done by you. A friend can translate it. The translator must provide a written statement that he/she is fluent in both languages. If a translation company translates it, they must provide a written statement showing what they translated. The statement will need to show the amount of funds currently in the bank account. We cannot accept statements or bank letters that state "average amount of funds for the past six months" etc.

If you will be funded with family funds, or you have a joint account with your spouse or a family member, in addition to the bank statement you will **also** need to provide a **sponsorship letter**. This sponsorship letter needs to be provided by **each** person named as an owner of the bank account. The name(s) on the support letter must match the name(s) on the bank statement.

The sponsorship letter should include the following information.

- Their **relation** to you
- Their **intent** to sponsor your stay in the United States specifying the **amount** and **duration** of their support.

Example of a sponsorship letter:

<p>Sponsorship Letter</p>
<p>To whom it may concern,</p>
<p>I (names of sponsor(s)) will financially support the educational program of (name of student, and relation to sponsor) in the amount of US\$_____ (exchange rate: 1 US\$ = other currency) for his/her program at Duke University in the (spring 2023) semester. Please see the attached bank statement for proof of funding.</p>
<p>Sincerely,</p>
<p>Signature of Sponsor(s): (sign in alphabet/Pinyin for Chinese names)</p>
<p>Name of Sponsor(s): _____</p>
<p>Date: __ (MM-DD-YYYY) __</p>

Grants and Scholarship Letters

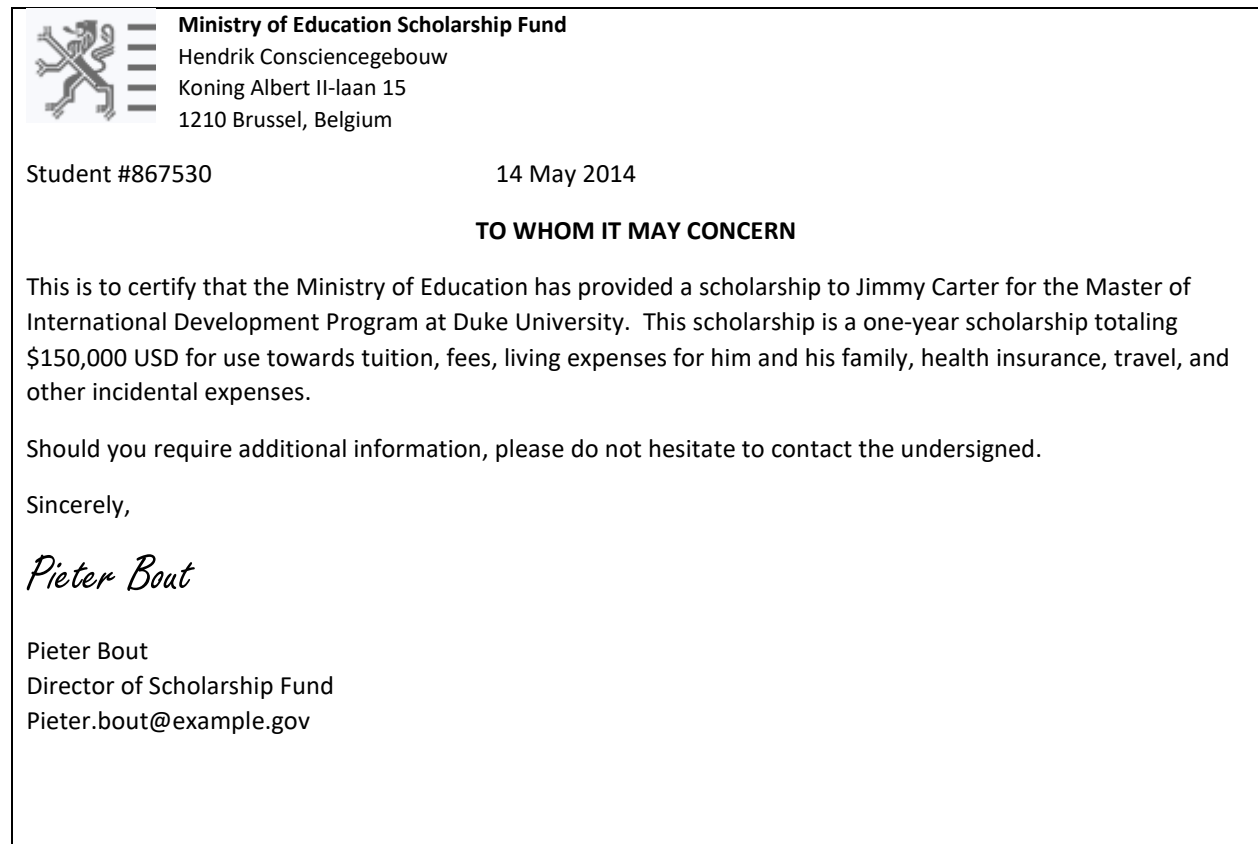
If you will be funded by your employer, home government, DKU, etc., you will need to provide a sponsorship letter on **OFFICIAL LETTERHEAD** from the funding source. The letter should confirm the following three items:

- The total amount of funding being provided to you, specifying the amount and currency
- The dates that funding will be provided
- The signature of the person in the organization who is authorized to guarantee those funds

Be sure that if the sponsorship letter includes funding for items such as health insurance, the letter includes the exact amount of money being funded for the health insurance.

Example 1:

Jimmy Carter is a one-year MIDP fellow. He has received a generous scholarship from the Ministry of Education in Belgium. The Ministry has provided the following letter as Jimmy's proof of funding.



This letter proves \$150,000 in funding for one year of study at Duke University.


Letters of Sponsorship from Non-Family Members

If someone who is not a family member is funding your studies and/or living expenses, you will need to have him or her complete an I-34 document. This is used to verify that the person who is sponsoring does not have other family members that they must support. This form can be found here:

<https://www.uscis.gov/i-134>

Example 2:

Jen Kao is a two-year MIDP fellow. She is receiving sponsorship from her government agency. The agency has provided the following letter for Jen.



No 12 An Jia Lou Road
Chaoyang District
Beijing, China

Doc #114466 30 April 2018

To Whom It May Concern:

This letter is to certify that Deputy Director Jen Kao has been awarded education sponsorship under the Domestic Funding of Foreign Training program. This funding will be provided from August 2018 to July 2020 for her studies at Duke University. The funding will pay for the following expenditures:

1. Travel costs from Beijing to RDU \$2,000 USD
2. Tuition \$38,701 USD
3. University fees \$8,410.5 USD
4. Annual health insurance fees \$3,535 USD
5. Monthly living stipend \$2,000 USD
6. One time book and supply allowance \$1,000 USD

Any additional costs will be paid by Ms. Kao.

With regards,

汪曦

Xi Wang
Chief Officer
xi.wang@example.gov

This letter proves funding for \$77,646.5 in her first year of study at Duke University.

F-1 Visa Application

Pay I-901 SEVIS fee

Pay your I-901 SEVIS fee of US\$350 online as the US DHS requires. It is recommended to pay it off at least 7 US business days before your visa interview appointment date. Read the instructions on [DHS](#) before paying the I-901 SEVIS fee [here](#). The [video](#) provides a guide to the I-901 SEVIS fee's payment process, including the information you must submit at www.fmjfee.com.

Complete the Form DS-160

Form DS-160 is used to request a US nonimmigrant visa. You must fill out the form truthfully and accurately. Missing documents or information, as well as false claims in your Form DS-160, can lead to a delay or even visa denial. Check country-specific instructions on <https://www.ustraveldocs.com/> of where you are applying for your US visa about completing the Form DS-160; generally, you can find it by clicking *Nonimmigrant Visa Information - DS-160 Information*.

Before you start a Form DS-160 application, have your passport, electronic visa photo (taken within the last six months, see [photo requirements](#)), SEVIS ID, and Form I-20 available. It takes approximately 90 minutes to do this. The DS-160 "times out" after 20 minutes without user activity, and your data will be lost. To safeguard against data loss, click the "Save" button frequently and download the file to your local computer.

- All answers must be in English using the English alphabet only, except when asked to provide your full name in your native alphabet. Applications submitted in any language other than English will be denied, and you may be required to submit a new application.
- If you have questions about completing the DS-160, review the FAQs on the US Department of State website.
- List the Responsible Officer's information on your Form I-20 as your US point of contact when filling the Form DS-160. The organization name is Duke University. The contacts required in your country of residence can be anyone other than your family, such as friends or teachers. It is not likely, but the US Embassy or Consulate might contact those who are listed.
- After you have completed the Form DS-160, you must print and keep the Form DS-160 barcode page. There is no need to print the entire application.
- You must submit your Form DS-160 application online before making an appointment for an interview at a US Embassy or Consulate. Once your appointment is confirmed, the Form DS-160 cannot be changed anymore.

Pay visa fee

Pay the US\$185 F-1 visa application processing fee and keep your visa fee receipt for scheduling a visa interview appointment. Check country-specific instructions relating to visa fee payment on the [US Visa Information Service](#) by clicking *Nonimmigrant Visa Information – Bank and Payment Options/Pay My Visa Fee*. The fee must be paid before scheduling your interview appointment.

Schedule an F-1 visa interview appointment

Schedule an F-1 student visa interview appointment with the US Embassy or Consulate of your choice as soon as your visa fee is paid. Interview scheduling entirely depends on the US Embassy or Consulate interview appointment availability. Estimated wait times to receive an appointment vary. The US Embassy or Consulate typically issues an F-1 visa no more than 120 days before the program start date listed on your Form I-20. However, you are encouraged to schedule an appointment as soon as possible; the US Embassy or Consulate will decide whether to accept the appointment. Note that you can only reschedule your appointment a limited number of times; plan accordingly so that you are not required to pay another visa application fee.

- Choose your region on the [US Visa Information Service](#) and create an account for scheduling appointments. Check the website often, as new appointments can be released anytime. You can also try making an appointment with the US Embassy or Consulate in another city within your country instead of the selected one on Form DS-160. The US Embassy or Consulate you apply should be able to access your form using the barcode on your Form DS-160 confirmation page, which you must bring to the visa interview.
- Once your interview appointment is confirmed, the US Embassy or Consulate will inform you of the interview venue, date, and time. Read the message carefully to understand the documents you will need for your interview and prepare yourself in advance.
- Thoroughly review all the application items and supporting documents of Student Visa on the specific visa section of the US Embassy or Consulate and the US Visa Information Service for local procedures and instructions.

Apply for an expedited appointment

If your program of study in the US will start within 60 days and there are no regular visa appointments available, you can apply for an expedited appointment. Generally, you can find the steps you need to complete for an expedited appointment on the US Visa Information Service or the US Embassy or Consulate.

I-20 Required Documentation FAQs

My passport has expired. Do you still need a copy of it?

If your passport has expired and you are applying for a new one, it is still helpful for us to have the expired passport copy on file. Once you have received the new passport, we will update our records with the copy of your new passport. Please be sure to share the scan of the new passport on Duke Box as soon as possible.

I have studied in the United States before but did not need to obtain a student visa at that time. Do I need to submit information on my tourist visa?

No. You only need to submit visa documentation for previous travel to the United States if you obtained an F-1 or F-2, J-1 or J-2, or H-1 visa.

I'm not sure my proof of funding document is correct. Can you check them for me?

Yes! Please share clear scan copies of your documents (signature page, biographical information, proof of funding, and a sponsorship letter if you are not self-funded) on Duke Box ASAP. We can review your documents and check for accuracy.

My bank will only provide bank account statements in Chinese. Can I send you these statements?

If your bank does not provide bank account statements in English, you will need to provide a certified English translation of the bank account statement from an outside source. We cannot accept translations done by you. A friend can translate it. The translator must provide a written statement that he/she is fluent in both languages. If a translation company translates it, they must provide a written statement showing what they translated.

My parents will be sponsoring my funding from their joint bank account. Can I submit a sponsorship letter from just my father?

If both your mother and father's names appear as owners of the bank account, they will both need to sign the sponsorship letter. Please be sure they include both of their names on the letter and they both sign the letter. Also please be sure that the bank account statement or letter is in English or is accompanied by a certified English translation.

My scholarship letter from my government says it covers my education costs in full but does not include an exact dollar amount. Is that okay?

All funding letters must at least include a total funding amount and the type of currency to be accepted by DVS. A statement such as "this scholarship covers the total educational costs of the program" with no monetary amount will not be accepted. If your scholarship letter is missing this information, please ask your funding organization to provide you with an addendum, on official letterhead, stating the total monetary amount of the scholarship. This letter should be signed by the same individual that provided the original scholarship letter.

Do I need to submit a birth certificate for myself?

No. DVS only requires a birth certificate for each of your children if you are requesting a visa for them.

May I submit a copy of my family registry in lieu of birth certificates?

If you are in a country that uses a family registry system (for example, Japan), you may submit the family registry paperwork, in English or with a certified English translation, as a substitution for your children's birth certificate.

My baby does not yet have a passport. What should I do?

Let us know by email that you are applying for a passport for your child. Once the passport arrives, you can share the copy of the passport on Duke Box at that time.

After Submitting Your Documentation FAQs

I've submitted my documents through Duke Box. Now what?

Once we receive your documents, we will review the documents to check for completion and then forward them to DVS. Once DVS has received permission from the federal government to issue your paperwork, they will email you your I-20.

Can I schedule my visa interview after sharing the documents on Duke Box?

No. You must wait until DVS provides you with your I-20 which has the SEVIS number before you can schedule your visa interview.

How long does it take for my I-20 to be processed? How do I check my status after submission?

The processing time depends on DVS's workload when your documents are submitted. Generally, you should hear from DVS within 6 weeks after your documents are submitted to DVS.

Log in to the Terra Dotta with your username received to learn the processing status. Here are the meanings of the academic objective statuses.

- "Pending" means you need to complete your Academic Objective and submit it.
- "Ready for Dept Review" means your request is awaiting review by the iMEP Program Coordinator
- "Ready for DVS" means your request passed the iMEP Program Coordinator review and is submitted to DVS.
- "DVS- Under Review" means your request is awaiting review by DVS.
- "Pending" Your status will be changed back to pending when your record is being created within the US government's SEVIS database.
- "Initial" The DVS advisor has finished and your I-20 will be sent soon.

Can DVS send me an electronic I-20 and a paper I-20? I want both as soon as possible.

Due to the large volume of students that DVS is issuing new I-20s, DVS is only sending electric I-20s. US consulates are still accepting electronic I-20s. If the US consulate in your area requests a paper I-20, let us know and we will ask DVS to process one for you as soon as possible.

Can you tell me my SEVIS number?

DVS does not provide us with your SEVIS number. Once they have the documentation ready for you, they will email it to you directly right away. If you have not received your information after six weeks of submitting your documents, please contact us.

Do I pay the SEVIS I-901 fee or does Duke University pay the fee?

You are responsible for paying the SEVIS I-901 fee.

There is incorrect information in my visa documents. What should I do?

Please notify us as soon as possible if you find an error in your visa documents.

Once I receive my visa stamp, how soon can I enter the United States?

You are allowed to enter the United States up to 30 days before the start date of your visa. For example, if your visa start date is August 20, 2018, you can enter the United States any time **after** July 20, 2018.

May I book my travel to the United States before I receive my visa stamp?

You are advised to confirm your travel arrangements to the United States **only after** receiving a visa stamp in your passport from the US embassy or consulate. If you confirm any travel plans prior to the receipt of documents, you do so at your own risk. We cannot guarantee that you will receive your visa stamp prior to a particular departure date.

Arriving in the United States

You must report to Duke's Visa Services office within the first three days after you arrive in the United States to register your arrival with them. Failure to register at the Visa Services office in a timely manner may result in your visa being revoked.