



Travel Advisory
United States Embassy and Consulates Abroad
Emissary Operations and Non-Immigrant Visa Processing
Last Updated: November 2022

U.S. Embassies and Consulates worldwide are diligently working to resume operations at full capacity. They have successfully lowered wait times by waiving certain in-person interviews and doubling U.S. Foreign Service personnel. The Department of State (DOS) reports that processing of non-immigrant visa applications is at 94 percent of pre-pandemic monthly averages.

Despite these efforts and improvements, there continues to be unpredictability and delays in non-immigrant visa processing. As a result, International Employees may find it tough to schedule interview appointments and secure non-immigrant visas. This is disruptive to their travel and employment in the United States, as well as University of Massachusetts business operations.

This Advisory is based on the best available knowledge at the time of writing. As travel restrictions and consular processing are constantly evolving, the Office of General Counsel (OGC) strongly recommends that travelers review the DOS's website for updated safety guidance, as well as the website of the embassy/consulate of choice to best understand their processes and timelines. As mentioned above, in certain situations, consular officers have been authorized to waive non-immigrant visa appointments. This can be further verified by visiting the embassy/consulate website.

General Recommendations:

1. Where possible, International Employees should only travel abroad if they have a valid non-immigrant visa in their passports. Note that the visa should be for the correct classification.
2. If an International Employee is currently in the United States and needs to process a new non-immigrant visa before they can return, they should attempt to secure a visa appointment *before* departing the United States. Consider booking the visa appointment before even purchasing flights. Please also be sure to check whether any dependents will need visa processing. Individuals may check Visa Appointment Wait Times [here](#).
3. If an International Employee or Student is currently abroad and needs to process a new non-immigrant visa before they can enter the United States, they should continuously monitor the embassy/consulate websites for new interview slots. The embassies/consulates will update these periodically.
4. Regularly check the status of your Visa Application [here](#).
5. Consider traveling to another embassy/consulate with shorter wait times. There is no penalty for applying anywhere appointments are available, even outside your home country. However, it is recommended that you confirm the process for third country nationals (TCN) with the selected embassy/consulate.
6. When traveling internationally with a university device or data, Employees should consult with their supervisor and/or IT security office to ensure appropriate data security and controls are implemented prior to travel.

Emergency/Expediated Visa Appointment Requests:

In rare circumstances, an embassy/consulate may entertain an emergency visa appointment. International Employees may request an expedited appointment through the [Department of State's online appointment system](#). Expedited appointment slots are very limited. Due to the high volume of requests, embassies/consulates cannot accommodate all travelers prior to their planned travel dates, even if the purpose of travel is time sensitive.

To qualify for an expedited appointment, the Applicant must [demonstrate the urgency](#). Examples, include the need for urgent medical care, the death or funeral of an immediate family member, and certain urgent business travel. Consulates will also consider expedite requests from students or exchange visitors who must travel to begin or resume a valid program of study in the US generally within 60 days. ***Please know that approval rates for emergency/expediated appointment requests are very low.***

Administrative Processing Delays:

Administrative Processing occurs after a visa interview has completed and the consular officer determines that additional processing and/or information is required to determine visa eligibility. In some cases, more information is required from the Applicant. Most Administrative Processing delays are resolved within 60 days of the interview, but the time may vary depending on the individual circumstances of each case. There have been reports of some security related Administrative Processing delays lasting three (3) to nine (9) months or more. There is virtually nothing that can be done to expediate a case placed in Administrative Processing. Administrative Processing delays can impact a full range of visa applicants, including those whose prior visas were issued without Administrative Processing, dependents, and applicants across nationalities and occupational fields.

COVID-19:

While many formal COVID-19 travel restrictions have been lifted, these can be easily implemented should there be changes in the global health crisis. Consider monitoring local COVID-19 travel restrictions [here](#).

Things to Remember:

1. If an International Employee does not have a valid non-immigrant visa in their passport, they will not be able to return to the United States until a new one is issued.
2. If an International Employee has an unexpired non-immigrant visa in their passport under a different classification, they may not use the same to enter the country and resume their prior status. For example, if someone has an unexpired F-1 visa in their passport, but has changed to H-1B status, they cannot use the unexpired F-1 visa to enter the US and resume their H-1B employment. They must process a new H-1B visa before returning to the US in H-1B status.
3. **India and China:** India and China continue to have some of the longest wait times. Individuals have reported extreme delays. Please take this into account when planning any travel to India and China.
4. **BE FLEXIBLE!** Expect delays and build in additional travel time to accommodate for any potential obstacles.

Should you have any questions on concerns about any International Travel Plans, please contact the Office of General Counsel [here](#).