

Carnegie Mellon University

Office of International Education

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Technology Alert List - Information for Scholars/Students

Due to heightened concern for national security, international faculty, scholars, and students seeking US visas face visa delays/security clearance checks for many reasons:

- Because someone's name (or part of a name) may be on a US government watch list
- Due to citizenship or residence in a country designated as a "state sponsor of terrorism" (Cuba, Iran, Sudan, Syria);
- Due to concerns about technology transfer—particularly for citizens from countries considered to possess nuclear capability (China, India, Israel, Pakistan, and Russia); or
- When the individual will be engaged in activities designated on or related to the [Sensitive/Critical Fields List*](#) (or [Technology Alert List - TAL](#))

While some clearances can be processed quickly, visa applicants may often encounter lengthy delays for clearances related to the (TAL). The purpose of these security checks are to protect national security by preventing the export of "goods, technology, or sensitive information" through activities such as "graduate-level studies, teaching, conducting research, participating in exchange programs, receiving training or employment, or engaging in commercial transactions", and to protect the US from visitors who may wish to cause harm.

Regarding the TAL, when a student or scholar applies for a visa, the Consular Official must make a decision about whether the research area fits within one of the sensitive/critical fields listed in the TAL. If the Consular Official is unsure about whether the research area fits into the category or has concerns, he/she may send the visa application to the Department of State (DoS) in Washington D.C. for advisory assistance. Foreign nationals may be denied a visa if their proposed activity is subject to US technology transfer laws. General TAL information can be found on the DoS website at <http://www.state.gov/>.

Visa renewal

Individuals in F-1 and J-1 status should carefully assess whether or not visa renewal is necessary as you may remain in the US with an expired visa if you are still pursuing the same objectives and all other immigration documents are valid (e.g., passport, I-20 or DS-2019). Please note however that individuals with expired visas would not be eligible to travel outside the US and gain re-entry unless the travel was to Canada, Mexico, or an adjacent Island and they were eligible for automatic visa revalidation.

If you believe you may be subject to the security check ("administrative processing") and need to renew your visa, you should be prepared to provide the Consular Official with as much information as possible regarding your academic or research endeavors in addition to required visa application materials and any other materials required by the US embassy.

Support Materials to Bring to your Visa Appointment

From Academic Department

- An advisor or supervisor of a current or prospective student or scholar who must apply for a US visa should consider providing additional support as noted below including a letter addressing the TAL issue (as related to an individual's course of study and research) in support of the foreign national's visa application. Additional support includes:
- Letter from the academic advisor/department indicating the degree program with a detailed explanation of the content of the courses that could be considered related to the TAL. If no course work is related, please note and explain this. The letter should also indicate:
- Goals of student's research and any practical applications;
- Sources and amounts of any US government money (or funding from US corporations assisting the US government) to be used to support that research; and description of any export-controlled technology and/or information that will be shared with applicant.

Visa Applicant Materials

Review Consulate's website for specific guidance. In general, when applying for a US visa you should provide the following:

- Copy of departmental description of the degree program
- Specifics of program of study (students) or research (scholars)
- Current official transcript (students only)
- Complete resume
- List of publications and presentations (including samples)
- Letters of recommendation (current and any previous institutions- foreign or domestic)
- Sources of funding for education (students) or exchange visit (scholars)
- If student has an assistantship, obtain a description of the employment from your research advisor or department. Also include your appointment letter.
- Once your visa application is sent to the DoS for review, there is little that can be done. However, if your application is selected for a security review, please inform OIE by sending an email to oiie@andrew.cmu.edu with the following information:
 - Place of application
 - Date of application
 - Passport number
 - Case number (if known)
 - OIE tracks visa delays and records show that most are resolved within 30 to 45 days.

Sensitive/Critical Fields List

It is possible that even loose associations with the critical fields indicated below (e.g., student studying in physics) will result in additional security clearances and delayed visa processing. Accordingly, visa applicants should be prepared to provide additional documentation regarding their area of study and research when applying for a visa.

- Conventional Munitions;
- Nuclear Technology, Physics, and Engineering;
- Rocket Systems and Unmanned Air Vehicle;
- Navigation, Avionics and Flight Control;
- Chemical, Biotechnology and Biomedical Engineering;
- Remote Sensing, Imaging and Reconnaissance;
- Advanced Computer/Microelectronic Technology;
- Materials Technology;
- Information Security;
- Laser and Directed Energy Systems Technology;
- Sensors and Sensor Technology;
- Marine Technology; and
- Robotics Urban Planning.