

International Student Financial Certification Requirement

IMPORTANT: It is critical to complete the financial certification process by the mandatory deadlines noted below. If the process is not complete by the stated deadlines, we cannot guarantee you a seat in the fall 2017 incoming class and may have to cancel your enrollment. Given of the strict nature of the financial certification deadline, please review this document carefully and set up a plan so that you will be able to complete the process and not lose your seat in the incoming class.

Financial Certification Deadlines

- Mid-Career MPA Mason: April 18, 2017
- Mid-Career MPA: May 15, 2017
- MPA/ID, MPP, MPA2, and Non-Degree: June 15, 2017

All international students must complete the Financial Certification requirement per HKS policy. This includes international students who will have sponsoring agencies other than Harvard University arrange their student visas (e.g. the Fulbright Commission, International Research & Exchanges Board (IREX), USAID, etc.)

You will have access to the online *Financial Certification Form for International Students* and *External Resource Verification Form* by April 2017.

Due to increased delays in obtaining a J-1 or F-1 student visa, please complete the financial certification process as soon as possible. The student visa process can take 1 to 4 months for some students.

For complete details on the financial certification process, it is imperative that you carefully read the corresponding information found below.

Student Visas: J-1 or F-1?

If you are receiving less than 50% of your **tuition and fees** funding from a source other than personal savings, you must apply for an F-1 visa. If Harvard University, HKS, a government agency, a foundation, an international organization or your employer is funding at least 50% of your tuition, you may **choose** either an F-1 or a J-1 student visa.

Some sponsors require that you choose a J-1 student visa. However, if your sponsor does not, you may want to review the advantages and disadvantages of both before making a final decision. Detailed information regarding the F-1 and J-1 student visas can be found on the [Harvard International Office](#) website.

F-1 Student Visa - The corresponding travel document is called an I-20.

- On-campus employment is permitted up to 20 hours per week during the academic year if it does not interfere with your academic program. You may work full-time during vacations. Off-campus employment is restricted.
- Accompanying dependents (in F-2 status) are not allowed to work in the United States.
- Optional Practical Training, defined as employment related to your field of study, may be authorized for up to 12 months following graduation. You are not required to have confirmed employment at the time that you apply for a practical training status extension.

J-1 Student Visa - The corresponding travel document is called a DS-2019.

- On-campus employment is permitted for up to 20 hours per week during the academic year and full time during vacations. Part-time employment off-campus is permitted if an unforeseen financial need arises and work does not interfere with your academic program.
- Accompanying dependents may apply for work permission in the US. Be advised that it can take several months to obtain work permission. Also, be aware that finding a reasonably high-paying job in his or her field may be difficult.
- Academic Training, defined as employment related to your field of study, may be authorized for up to 18 months following graduation depending on the length of your degree program. A job offer in hand is required within 30 days of graduation before a work permit can be issued.
- Depending upon your country and funding source, a two-year home residency requirement may be required after completion of your studies. This means that you may be required to return home for two years before being eligible to apply for an H-1, L-1 or immigrant visa.

How to Obtain a Student Visa for Travel to Study in the United States

Step I. Collect documentation from all funding sources.

At this time, you are required to certify funding for your **first year only** of your intended program. Please refer to the [Financial Certification Budget](#) for the estimated cost for your degree program (tuition, mandatory fees, and all personal expenses) and estimated maintenance and health fees for accompanying dependent(s). Please note that budgets will vary by length of program. MPA2, MPP & MPA/ID is 9 months; Mason Program is 11 months; and the Mid-Career Program is 10 months.

The Financial Certification documentation should include only confirmed sources of funding which may require that admitted students wait until decisions regarding scholarships are made. In the meantime, you should collect all supporting financial documentation.

You should confirm **all** funding for the duration of your studies **before** arriving in the United States as you will be required to submit adequate financial certification documentation for the second year of your academic program during the spring semester of your first year.

If your funding originates from more than one source, you must have documentation from each source. Please note that the funds presented for financial certification are to be committed and should remain available for the sole purpose of paying tuition, fees and living expenses related to your academic program at the Harvard Kennedy School during the entire academic year.

Students should not rely upon additional funding becoming available during their studies.

ALL documentation must be submitted in English or accompanied with a certified translation.

Sources of Funding:

I. A fellowship, grant or scholarship: please upload a copy of the official award letter that states the value of the award in the home currency and US dollars, as well as the period of time for which it is valid.

II. Employer or agency sponsorship: please upload an official letter from your employer or agency **on letterhead** that states the amount of funding in the home currency and its US dollar equivalent, as well as the period of time for which the funding is valid.

III. Personal savings: please upload a copy of a formal monthly **bank statement**. The bank statement **MUST** comply with the following criteria:

- The student's name must be listed as the account holder or joint account holder. All bank accounts used for financial certification must be in the name of the student. This includes any family, friend or personal sponsor funding.
- The account(s) must be in US dollar currency. US dollar equivalent is not acceptable.
- The account(s) must be held in a bank that has retail/consumer banking operations in the United States. Non-US banks with a branch in the United States or overseas branches of US banks will satisfy this requirement. Bank Offices, or private bank branches do not meet the requirement. For a list of some commonly used banks, please refer to the section on Banks and Financial Planning at the end of this document.
- The funds must be held in cash accounts. Any funding presented for financial certification must be immediately available to the student without restrictions, penalties or requirements for withdrawal. Stock, mutual fund or other investment accounts do not meet this criterion.
- These funds must remain in the documented bank account and committed for use toward expenses listed in the [Financial Certification Budget](#). These funds may not be re-purposed or used only to satisfy visa requirements.
- A formal monthly statement is required. Bank letters and references are not sufficient.

IV. Loan: please upload a copy of the promissory note or approval letter from the lending institution that states the amount of the loan(s) in the home currency and US dollars, the interest rate, and the period of time for which the loan is valid and the repayment terms.

V. Copy of passport photo page: please upload a copy of the main photo page of your passport. If you intend to bring your dependents with you, please also upload the main photo page of their respective passports.

PLEASE REMEMBER TO KEEP COPIES OF ALL OF YOUR DOCUMENTS!

Step II. Complete the financial certification process.

Once the financial certification process has been completed by the admitted applicant, Harvard University will issue travel documents (I-20 or DS-2019).

In order to complete the Financial Certification process, you must do the following:

1. Submit the completed online [Financial Certification for International Students](#) form. You will have access to the form **ONLY AFTER you have officially accepted your offer of admission** with the Office of Admissions.
2. Upload or forward supporting financial documentation (See Step I).
3. Submit the online External Resource Verification Form (Students with external/sponsor funding only).

4. Forward supporting external resource documentation.

Appropriate supporting financial documentation of your funding source(s) is explained in Step I. Since the earliest that incoming students can enter the United States with a student visa is 30 days before the start of the academic program per United States Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) policy, it is not necessary for the travel document (I-20 or DS-2019) for any HKS student to be issued any earlier than April.

Step IIa. Student Visa Transfer into Harvard University.

In order to enter the United States for the purposes of a non-HKS summer program, you must obtain your student visa using the travel document (I-20 or DS-2019) from the institution where you will be studying since the summer program will be the purpose of your early or initial entry into the United States.

Please note students can only have one valid travel document at a time. The summer institution and Harvard University cannot both issue travel documents for the same student. Once you have arrived in the US, you will need to transfer your immigration status over to HKS.

The student visa transfer process will not require you to leave the United States before the start of your HKS degree program. However, if you prefer and/or plan to travel outside of the United States in between your summer program and the HKS degree program, you will need the Transfer I-20 or Transfer DS-2019 issued by Harvard University so that you can apply for your new student visa in your home country.

The transfer process for your immigration paperwork must be completed before you may register and enroll in classes at HKS.

In order to proceed with the transfer into Harvard University student visa process, you must:

1. Submit the completed on-line [*Financial Certification for International Students*](#) form
2. Upload or forward all supporting financial documentation to HKS
3. Submit the online *External Resource Verification Form*
4. Forward supporting External Resource documentation to HKS
5. Submit the completed [*Transfer In To Harvard*](#) form along with your certification documents

PLEASE REMEMBER TO KEEP COPIES OF ALL OF YOUR DOCUMENTS!

Step III. Wait.

Please allow us 2-3 weeks (once we have received your completed documents) to process and send your I-20 or DS-2019 travel document. The travel document will be sent to the mailing address that you provide as part of the financial certification form. Please be sure to identify a street address and a corresponding telephone number as we send all travel documents via DHL Express or Federal Express.

Due to the restrictions and procedures that have been implemented by the US government as of January 31, 2003 in response to the 9/11 attacks, the visa process can take much longer than it has in the past and the process can be different from individual to individual. To assess the average visa processing time for your country, please visit the [US Visas website](#).

While you wait for your documents to be processed and issued, you will be able to check their status by logging back into the Financial Certification Form for International Students. Once you have accessed the form, at the top left hand corner there is a text box with a line called "Current Status". This will be the current status that the process of your documentation is in.

Step IV. Make an appointment with your local US Embassy/Consulate.

Submit your passport, travel document along with copies of the corresponding financial certification documentation, and your letter of admission to a United States Embassy or Consulate in order to receive a visa stamp.

Please be aware that some Embassies and Consulates will grant visa stamps while you wait, and others will take several days or even weeks.

Step V. Travel to the United States.

When you are traveling to the United States, please carry the following on your person:

- DS-2019 or I-20
- Passport with valid visa stamp
- Letter of admission to HKS
- Copies of the financial certification documentation

Financial Certification FAQs

What is the deadline for Financial Certification?

- Mid-Career MPA Mason: April 18, 2017
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How do I apply for and receive my travel document?

Please review the Financial Certification Process section above for complete details. Financial certification must be completed before any travel documents can be issued.

I have accepted my offer of admission but I cannot access the online certification form. Is there something else I need to do?

No. Our office will need about 5-7 business days to process your acceptance and grant access to the online certification form. After a week, please retry accessing the form. If you have any further issues please contact us.

How do I calculate the amount of funds I will need to obtain a student visa?

Please review the [Tuition & Expenses](#) section of our website. This will list the budget information for all programs, and has the total amount needed for certification already calculated for you.

I want to bring my family with me. How much more do I need to certify for?

The amounts for dependent costs can be found on the [Tuition & Expenses](#) section of our website.

When will I receive my travel document after completing financial certification?

After receiving all required documents and Financial Certification form, please allow 2-3 weeks for us to process and issue your travel document (I-20 for the F-1 or DS-2019 for the J-1 student visa).

I have applied for a scholarship but have not been confirmed as a recipient. Can I list this scholarship on the Financial Certification Form?

The Financial Certification documentation should include only confirmed sources of funding which may require that you wait until decisions regarding scholarships for which you applied are made. The changes in your funding detail can be made at a later date if you should acquire a scholarship after the submission of your Financial Certification. You must report any changes immediately after the information becomes available to you. Please note: Alternative funds must be available should you not be successful in obtaining an intended scholarship or fellowship.

I have questions regarding the Financial Certification process. Who should I contact?

- Mid-Career MPA Mason & MPA/ID: Katherine Spyropoulos at Katherine.Spyropoulos@hks.harvard.edu
- Mid-Career MPA, MPA2, and MPP: Elkin Arroyo at Elkin.Arroyo@hks.harvard.edu

**Before You Arrive:
Important Banks and Financial Planning Information**

Banking Considerations

Before you travel to the United States, contact a major bank in your home city, preferably a bank with a foreign exchange department, to learn the current exchange rate. Ask the banker to estimate the degree of fluctuation; that is, what did it average in the past year? This will help you to determine more effectively your financial requirements while in the United States. If your bank does not have a foreign exchange department, consider opening an account with a bank that does.

Accessing Money while in the United States

Find out how you can have money sent to you while you are in the United States. It is usually safest to have money sent electronically from your home country bank to your U.S. bank once you have opened a U.S. account. Ask what the fees will be for transferring money and how long it might take for the money to reach you. If you need fax, telexes, or account numbers from your home country bank to request the transfer of funds, make sure you bring that information with you.

Government Requirements for Transferring Money

The U.S. government does not restrict the amount of U.S. currency a nonresident, non-citizen can take or send to the United States for educational expenses. The U.S. government does require, however, that individuals - whether U.S. citizens or not - report the transfer (into or out of the country) of cash or other financial instruments valued at \$10,000 or more. Consult with the U.S. embassy or consulate in your country for more information about this requirement.

Many countries do have currency exchange restrictions. If your country has such

restrictions, you may have to submit certain documents allowing you to take currency out of the country. For more information, contact the government office that issues passports in your country.

Opening a U.S. Bank Account

You can open a bank account if you are a non-resident and live outside of the United States if the laws of your locality permit it. You can be a U.S. citizen or a citizen of another country.

Please note: All bank accounts used for certification of funding must be in the name of the student. This includes any family, friend, or personal sponsor funding. These funds **MUST** remain committed for the duration of your studies in the upcoming academic year and are for use toward your cost of attendance expenses. Any funds used for financial certification must be in a US dollar account in a bank with branches in the United States.

Commonly Used Banks

- [HSBC](#)
- [Citibank](#)
- [Chase](#)
- [Deutsche Bank](#)
- [Bank of China](#)
- [Cambridge Trust Company](#)
- [Harvard University Employees Credit Union](#)

Financial Planning and Budgeting Suggestions

If your funding sources are limited, it is essential that you plan accordingly and prepare a budget of expenses for each academic year, including the summer (if applicable).

The conservative estimated costs listed on the Financial Certification Budget represent the **MINIMUM** amount required to live in Cambridge for an academic year. Please note the following suggestions and possible additional expenses in order to budget appropriately:

- **Arrival/Settling in Costs:** You can spend \$1,000-\$5,000 on buying items needed in a new apartment (furnishings, kitchenware, linens etc.). This does not include the common requirement of first and last months rent in addition to a security deposit and realtor's fee (each can be up to a month of rent) in advance. Be careful – it adds up. You can save money if you shop carefully, minimally, and at discount stores (outside of Harvard Square).
- **Restaurants:** It is convenient and social to eat out, but it is also expensive. A non-expensive lunch can cost \$10-\$15; dinner will cost at least \$20-\$30. Cooking at home or bringing a bag lunch can save money.
- **Computer:** While owning a computer is required, it is not in the certification amount. If you need to purchase a computer, this will add \$1,500-\$2,500 to your budget.
- **Car:** Boston is easily accessible without a car. However, if you decide to purchase one, it is a large additional expense (including mandatory insurance, maintenance, and parking).

- **Childcare:** If you have children under the age of five who will need childcare, it will cost \$800-\$2,200 per month per child, depending upon the specific situation.
- **Travel:** Please be aware that the Financial Certification Budget only includes the cost of one round trip ticket, for travel back home during winter break.
- **Emergency:** It is wise to have some funds set aside in the event of necessary unexpected expenses.
- **Family or home obligations:** While you are attending HKS, we realize that many international students have financial obligations back in their home country. Please make sure to incorporate these expenses into your cost of attendance budget.

It is strongly encouraged for all students to create an annual budget or income and expenses. SFS has created an online financial planning tool for students to track their projected expenses. [Click here](#) to access to the HKS Student Budget Calculator.