

1 What is a **passport**? How do I obtain a passport?

A passport is an official government-issued document that serves as both identification and a travel permit, allowing individuals to cross international borders by verifying their identity, nationality, and entry permissions. You can learn how to apply for a U.S. passport by clicking on the following link: [Need a Passport \(state.gov\)](#).

2 I need to renew my passport; how do I do that?

Your passport needs to be valid for at least 3-6 months after the end of the program date. (Double-check the correct amount on the consulate website). To learn how to renew your passport, please check the following link: [Already Have a Passport \(state.gov\)](#).

3 What are my options if I need my passport to be issued faster than the normal or expedited processes?

If you need an expedited passport process, please click on the following link to learn how to apply: [Get My Passport Fast \(state.gov\)](#). Additionally, Northeastern can provide an Expedite passport letter to ensure your passport is issued by a specific date.

4 What is a **visa**? How do I apply for a visa? Where do I apply for a visa?

A visa is an endorsement placed within a passport that grants the holder official permission to enter, leave or stay in a country for a specified time period. Each consulate sets its own policies on how to submit your application, how you will receive your visa, and what supporting documents are required.

5 What is a **consulate**?

A consulate is an official representative office of a government located in a foreign country. Consulates are responsible for processing visas for foreigners and providing services to citizens of that country in the local area among other responsibilities.

6 Why do I need a visa?

A visa is typically required to enter a foreign country as it provides official authorization from that country's government for your specific purpose of visit, ensuring that you meet their entry requirements and legal regulations.

7 | What type of visa do I need for my program?

The type of visa that students will need to apply for will vary based on the program length. Please refer to the consulate's page in your region for the most updated visa requirements and processes as policies can change at any time and without prior notice.

8 | I have a passport from [country X], do I still need a visa?

For specific information on whether you will need a visa based on your country of citizenship please check the consulate website in your region.

9 | I have more than one passport/citizenship. How should I decide which one to use during my program abroad?

- a. If one of your passports/citizenship allows you to travel to the country where your program is visa-free, then you should use that.
- b. If all of your passports/citizenships require a visa then you should make a decision based on the visa processing times and application process of the different consulates. Please refer to the individual consulate website to determine which application process is best suited and can be conducted with minimal roadblocks. (U.S. citizens will have to apply with their U.S. passport).

10 | I'm an international student holding an F-1 visa. What do I need to do in order to study abroad?

- a. Contact [OGS](#).
- b. Additional supporting documentation is needed as part of the visa application process.
- c. There are limitations to the support or information GEO can provide.

11 | What documents do I need to apply for my visa?

Each consulate sets its own policies on how to submit your application, how you will receive your visa, and what supporting documents are required. Please check your consulate's website for the exact documents required as part of your visa application.

12 | What information do I add online X of the visa form?

Please contact your advisor or check the completed visa form provided by your host institution to see what information needs to be included in your application.

13 | **What is a consulate, and what is consular jurisdiction?**

A consulate is an official government office or diplomatic mission established by one country in another country to provide various services to its citizens who are living or traveling in the host country. Consular jurisdiction is important because it helps determine which consulate you should contact for assistance.

14 | **How do I determine where I need to submit my visa application? Should I submit it to the consulate with jurisdiction over Boston/Northeastern or my home jurisdiction?**

Any students who are matriculated at the University can apply at the consulate that falls within the Boston jurisdiction. Additionally, students have the possibility to apply at the consulate with jurisdiction over their permanent address.

When selecting a consulate for your visa application, consider two key factors: the location where you will reside while your application is being processed, and the consulate with the fastest processing times. *(This information can be found by visiting the consulate's website).*

15 | **The consulate website does not have any appointments available. What do I do?**

If you do not see any appointments available, please continue to monitor the calendar daily. Consulates add more appointments on a daily basis, so it is important to keep a close eye on the calendar. If you continue to be unable to schedule an appointment, you can contact the consulate directly for additional assistance.

16 | **The consulate in my jurisdiction does not have any availability but I found an appointment at a different location. Is that okay?**

Students can only apply at the consulate with legal jurisdiction over them *(refer to question 14 above)*. If you submit your application to an incorrect consulate, it will not be processed and will be sent back to you.

17 | **How do I obtain an FBI background check?**

You have different options on how to obtain your FBI background check. One of the fastest options is the [electronic request](#) directly through the FBI. Otherwise, you can choose to obtain your FBI background check through a list of [approved channelers](#).

18 What is an **apostille**? Where do I get my document apostilled?

An apostille is a type of authentication or certification that is used to verify the authenticity of a document for international use. It is often required when you need to use official documents in a foreign country. The apostille is attached to the document by a government authority, confirming its legitimacy and making it legally valid.

To get your document apostilled, you will need to identify the competent authority in your state/country responsible for issuing apostilles. In many cases, this is the Ministry of Foreign Affairs or a related government department.

19 Where do I get my document notarized?

- a. A list of notaries can be found on the [Northeastern Library website](#).
- b. You can get documents notarized at various locations, including your bank, a financial planner's office, an attorney's office, an accountant's office, a real estate firm, your local post office, and package delivery stores (e.g., UPS or FedEx).

20 What is a **money order**? Where can I get one?

A money order is a financial instrument that serves as a prepaid, guaranteed form of payment. It is similar to a check but is considered more secure because it is prepaid and usually issued by a bank, post office, or other financial institution. Money orders are commonly used for transactions where the recipient might not accept personal checks or when a more secure form of payment is required.

You can obtain a money order from various locations, including a post office, Western Unions, supermarkets, and banks.

21 Can I pay the visa fee in cash?

How you pay your visa application fee and the amount is set by the consulate and/or the government of that country. Some consulates only accept money orders, others only accept cash, while others will allow for credit card payments or permit applicants to choose between payment options. Please follow the guidance provided by the consulate where you are applying for up-to-date details on your visa fee and the accepted methods of payment. Please note that paying more or less than the specific amount required or via an unsupported method may result in your application being rejected or delayed.

22 What if I want to arrive early or stay after my program dates?

Consulates usually grant visas with roughly 2 weeks of additional travel time both before and after your program dates. These timeframes are dependent upon the dates that the consulate will print on your visa. If, for some reason, your visa expires before your return to the U.S., you will need to re-arrange your travel plans. Longer visa periods are permitted exclusively by the consulate, and Northeastern can not assist with extending visa dates.

23 I have my visa. Is there anything else I need to do to maintain immigration compliance while I am abroad on my program?

Program/country-specific

- a. Applying for a residence permit, declaring presence to the local police/immigration office or renewing your visa in-country may be required.
- b. Your sponsoring institution should provide you with guidance and support once you arrive on-site.
- c. It is **your** responsibility to ensure that you remain in immigration compliance and do not violate your visa terms or overstay its duration.

24 What if I am going to more than one country as part of my program?

- a. When completing your visa form application, you will also have the option to select “multi-entrance” as an option. This will allow you, the visa holder, to enter a country multiple times within a specified period.
- b. If more than one country that you will be going to have visa requirements, then you will need to make sure you have applied for and received the visa for all of the necessary countries.

25 What if I am participating in back-to-back programs in different countries? What do I have to do for my visa(s)?

Participating in back-to-back programs can often be challenging, mainly because of the short window that students have to apply for their visas. Before committing to your programs, you will need to check with your program and study abroad advisor to make sure that you will have enough time to apply for the visa in between programs.

26 | **What are my options if I need to travel internationally while my visa is being processed?**

Depending on the consulate you are applying to sometimes, you can submit a notarized photocopy instead of your physical passport if you have international travel coming up during the weeks when your visa would be processed. In this case, the consulate will require you to provide a booked flight with the dates confirmed. However, not all consulates allow students to submit a notarized document instead of a real passport. You will need to check the consulate website or email the consulate directly to confirm.

27 | **How can Northeastern/GEO assist me with my visa application process? How can my host institution/program abroad assist me?**

Your Northeastern Advisor can assist with:

- a. Questions about courses at your host institution abroad
- b. Questions about documentation issued by your host institution abroad
- c. Details of your program abroad

The Northeastern Visa Team can assist with:

- a. Questions about supporting documents for your visa application process
- b. More information on how to apply
- c. Concerns about your specific situation

Your university abroad can assist with:

- a. Additional advisement on your visa application process

28 | **I'm going abroad on a Dialogue of Civilizations (DOC) program. What type of visa do I need?**

For most situations, a tourist or visitor visa will suffice. You hold student status at Northeastern but generally do not need to apply for a student visa for your DOC program because you are not formally enrolled at or affiliated with an educational institution outside the US.

29 | **I currently hold two passports. One is a U.S. passport and the other is from a foreign country. Can I use the non-U.S. passport to attend my study abroad program?**

Unfortunately, you won't be able to apply for your visa using your non-U.S. passport. Students who provide a non-U.S. passport need to additionally prove that they are residing in the U.S. legally by submitting a copy of their F-1 visa, I-20 document, or Green Card. These are all documents that you, as a U.S. citizen, do not have. So, you'll need to use your U.S. passport to apply for your visa.

30 | I was planning to stay abroad for a couple more weeks after my program ended. Is that allowed?

When consulates process visas, they always include a couple of weeks in addition to your total program stay. In most cases, you will already have incorporated time for traveling after the end of your program. However, once you have your visa back, it is your responsibility to double-check and ensure that your travel dates are compliant with your visa dates. If your visa expires before or during your intended travel dates, you will have to contact the consulate that processed your visa to see if they can make any updates.

31 | I cannot find an appointment on the consulate website. Can I travel to my program site without a visa?

Northeastern cannot advise and does not recommend students who are enrolled in a program for longer than 90 days to travel without holding a study visa. All students whose host country and/or university requires them to obtain a visa prior to their arrival must obtain a visa as required. Northeastern cannot advise on a visa-free process. If you are facing a situation where you might be unable to obtain a visa prior to the start of your program, you are encouraged to contact your GEO advisor as soon as possible.

32 | I need to translate my documents. Does Northeastern do that?

Unfortunately, Northeastern does not provide translation services. To translate the necessary documents, as requested by your consulate, you will need to go to a certified translator. If you need assistance finding a translator, please contact the consulate directly, as they can provide you with more information about certified translators in your area.

What are some common problems that may prevent you from receiving your visa in a timely manner?

Submitting incorrect or incomplete documentation

- Read all requirements carefully and follow them exactly. Note that each consulate can set its own procedures and protocols, so two consulates from the same country in the US may have slightly different application procedures or requirements.
- Be sure to carefully check all of the application documentation requirements and submission protocols. If you have questions, email the consulate directly (when applying for your visa individually) or get in touch with your GEO advisor.

Not allowing enough processing time

- Be sure to start the process as soon as possible. Consulates will often state their estimated processing time, but this can be longer or shorter depending on your particular application.
- Some consulates or visa application types offer priority processing for an additional charge, but this is not the case with all processes.

Submitting the wrong type of visa application

You must submit the appropriate visa application type for the length and purpose of your program abroad. Applying for another visa type because the application cost is lower, processing time is shorter, or there are submission appointments available sooner all may result in you being unable to participate in your program.

Not having sufficient passport validity

Consulates and application processes will specify how long your passport will need to be active following the proposed end of your visa. Students in the past have had their applications either rejected or deferred if they have not met these guidelines.

Submitting your visa application before you have all of your supporting documentation available

It is important that you wait to submit your visa application until you have all of the required supporting documentation available. This includes letters from Northeastern, your host institution abroad, and/or your program provider. Submitting your application before you have your documents will lead to delays or a possible denial for an incomplete application.

Important Reminders

Northeastern University has no influence on the outcome of immigration applications, including the decisions and policies of different consulates, VFS centers or other immigration authorities. Northeastern has no ability to inquire about an individual immigration application, or to expedite the process for an individual student. In addition, Northeastern employees are unable to provide legal advice to students or families concerning country-specific immigration requirements and/or application processes.

Students are responsible for completing all required applications for immigration permissions or registrations correctly and in a timely manner, and for obtaining any required permissions prior to the program start date. If the student cannot obtain valid permission in time for the program start date, please reach out to your study abroad advisor and contact the GEO office to discuss the next steps.