
Basics

Passport – a document issued by a government that certifies your identity and your citizenship. It allows you to travel as a citizen of a country. If you have a country's passport, you are a citizen of that country.

Visa – usually a sticker or a stamp placed on a page in your passport. A visa allows you to enter a different country. You show it to border agents as proof that you've been approved to enter.

Documents

Visa Application – the paper visa application form found on consulate websites. This is where you enter your personal information and details about your study abroad program (name, birthdate, the dates you'll be studying abroad, etc.); also refers to the entire visa application: the visa application form AND supporting documents.

Enrollment Verification Letter – required by some consulates; it proves that you are fully enrolled at your college/university. You can get this letter from your university's registrar office.

Notary (Public) – a person who verifies your identity when you are signing a document. A Notary Public will stamp or impress an official seal on the document(s) you bring to them to signify their validity. A document is *notarized* by a Notary (Public) – documents that need to be notarized must only be signed IN FRONT OF a Notary Public to be valid.

- You can find notaries at your university's Registrar or ID Office; post offices; libraries; law firms; or, banks.

Money Order/Cashier's Check – A Money Order and Cashier's Check are a pre-specified amount of money. Money Orders can be obtained at a post office, bank or credit union, and at the customer service desks at grocery stores or pharmacies (such as Walgreens or CVS). Cashier's Checks can only be obtained at a bank, credit union, or other financial institution. Most consulates require you to pay the visa fee with this.

- Do NOT ENDORSE/SIGN a money order or cashier's check on the back or else it will be invalid!

Applying for a Visa

Consulate – A consulate focuses on processing visas and helping individuals (such as tourists or migrants). Different from an embassy, which also processes visas, but participates in major diplomatic and international relations activities as well.

Consular Official – someone who works at a consulate. For example, workers at a Spain consulate are Spanish citizens.

Jurisdiction – the geographic area that a consulate services. A consulate will only take applications from people who live or go to university in their jurisdiction. For example, a New York Consulate could service people who live in the Northeast part of America, but not people who live in the Western part (like California).

- A jurisdiction is determined by your address(es): your home address, your university address, etc.
- You can apply to multiple consulates based on your addresses.

Appointment – a time you reserve at the consulate to go and submit your visa application and pay the visa fee. Some consulates may require an appointment. You reserve an appointment on a consulate's website.

Batch (processing) – when multiple people's visa applications are sent at the same time in one batch to a consulate. Usually study abroad companies or universities batch process visas and serve as the go-between between the visa applicants and the consulate. The consulate processes the batch all at once so that visas are returned at the same time. The visa applicants have limited interaction with the consulate.

Independent – when a person goes to the consulate on their own and deals directly with the consulate to obtain a visa.