



Section I: Permanent Resident Applications

Non-immigrant visa holders may seek to immigrate to the United States by family relationship and/or employment based. Immigrating to the U.S. is dependent on category, country of birth and visa number availability. While U.S. permanent residence may be obtained through several pathways in a number of different categories, the information in this page concentrates on the employment-based categories most commonly used in the academic environment.

Whenever an international visitor employed with The University of Texas Health Science Center at Houston (UTHSC) will be sponsored for the permanent visa based on full-time permanent employment with the UTHSC all institutional policies must be met, which include:

- A Preliminary Initial meeting between the Director of International Affairs and the international visitor to discuss individual options as well as minimum eligibility requirements and criteria of applicable options.
- A second preliminary meeting with Director of the Office of International Affairs, international visitor and international visitor's immediate supervisor who will support the permanent visa application must be held. During the meeting, the OIA Director will review with all present the current non-immigration status; administrative approval process; restrictions of non-immigrant visa; subjectivity of two-year home residency requirement (if applicable); permanent visa categories; visa number availability; time frame in processing permanent visa application; travel ability during permanent visa process; and, ability to continue employment authorization.
- Written administrative approval is mandatory before any application may be filed with the U.S. Department of Homeland Security. Since the Office of International Affairs has been designated as the sole designee for signing all immigration applications filed on behalf of the institution, any permanent visa application filed by the institution must be signed by the Director of the Office of International Affairs. Failure to obtain such administrative approval will result in the withdrawal of the permanent visa application.

Regardless of the method that an individual seeks [employment-based permanent residence](#) and whether or not an attorney is hired to process the application, if the application is based on a permanent employment opportunity with The University of Texas Health Science Center at Houston, the institutional policies must be met and the Immigration petition document must be signed by the Director of the Office of International Affairs. Under no circumstances should an attorney be retained until the Director of the Office of International Affairs has secured appropriate administrative written approval to sponsor an immigrant application. To schedule an appointment to meet with the Office of International Affairs Director, Ms. Maria Arevalo-Sanchez, please [e-mail](#) or call 713/500-3176

Section II: Employment Based Permanent Visa Application Categories:

Several employment-based categories may be an option for purposes of sponsoring a nonimmigrant foreign national for U.S. permanent residence based on full time long term employment with The University of Texas Health Science Center at Houston. At UTHSC-H, the Office of International Affairs is the solely designee for signing all immigration applications on behalf of the institution.

Extraordinary Ability in the Sciences - This classification is reserved for aliens who have sustained national or international acclaim in the sciences, arts, education, business, or athletics. Congress intended this classification to be for "that small percentage that has risen to the very top of their field of endeavor." Petition must be accompanied by evidence to prove national or international recognition and acclaim. A major, internationally recognized award such as an Academy Award or a Nobel Prize is sufficient to prove extraordinary ability.

Outstanding Professor and/or Researcher - This classification is for professors and researchers who are recognized internationally as outstanding in a specific academic area, have at least 3 years of teaching and/or research experience in the academic area and will be employed in a tenured or tenure-track teaching position or permanent research position. Petition must include evidence international he/she is recognized as internationally outstanding in their specific academic area.

Labor Certification – Test of the U.S. labor market proving there is no U.S. citizen or U.S. Permanent Resident who meets the minimum education, training and experience requirements to perform the job duty. Job cannot be tailored to the international visitor.

National Interest – The alien must be seeking employment in an area of “substantial intrinsic merit,” “The proposed benefit of the alien’s employment will be national in scope; and the national interest would be adversely affected if a labor certification were required. To show this, the petitioner must prove that the alien’s work presents a national benefit, “so great as to outweigh the national inherent in the labor certification process.” The alien’s service will “serve the national interest to a substantially greater degree than would an available U.S. worker having the same minimum qualifications.”

In general, depending on the pathways and the category selected, the process involved in becoming a U.S. permanent resident through an employment-based category involved several entities, include several phases, and might take from months to years.

Find more about these and other pathways to permanent residence from the [U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services](#) and from the [U.S. Department of State](#).

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Questions regarding permanent visa application should be directed to 713/500-3176 or email: utoiahouston@uth.tmc.edu