What is iStart?

iStart is a web browser based interface that allows users to electronically submit data to the International Students & Scholars Office’s iOffice database. iStart eliminates the need for paper forms and ensures only accurate, relevant information is added to the iOffice database.

iStart allows departments to submit applications for J-1 scholars and perform functions regarding H-1B employees, and it provides scholars the ability to access and update their information as needed.

Using iStart is easy and straightforward and uses the Iowa State University email system to submit eForms for review by ISSO staff.
How to Get Started: Requesting Department Level Access

For ISU departmental users, the first step in using iStart is to request department level access. If you are already an authorized iStart user, skip to page 4, Adding a Scholar to iOffice.

1. Navigate to http://iStart.its.iastate.edu
2. Click on “Administrative Services for University Departments” (See Figure 1). This will bring up the familiar ITS log-in screen.
3. Enter your iastate username and password and select “log-in”.

4. Complete this request screen using your iastate log-in information, selecting Iowa State University as the campus, and fill in the name of your department. If your submission is
successful, you will see a line declaring “Departmental Access is Pending Review” at the top of the page.

5. Select the “logout of iStart” button. Your request is being processed by ISSO and you will receive an email when access is granted.

[Tip] If access is not granted within one business day, contact dvance@iastate.edu

Figure 2: iStart Departmental Access Request
Adding a Scholar to iOffice

Once you receive departmental access to iStart you are ready to request an H-1B petition in iStart. If the visitor has never been to ISU before, you first add the scholar/applicant that you wish to invite into the iOffice database.

1. Expand the Departmental Services menu if it is not already expanded.
2. Select “Add New Person” (See Figure 3).
3. Complete the information.
   - The email address does not have to be an official university address.
   - If you do not know the birth date of the individual you are adding, enter an obviously fake birth date, such as January 1, 2000. You will be able to adjust this information at a later time, or allow the applicant access to make changes on his/her own. Be certain to tell the visitor what birth date you have entered as he/she must use that date to access iStart and make changes.
   - The “institutional university ID” refers to an ISU ID number. If the individual has been issued one, you will be asked to enter that number. If you select “no”, iStart will assign a temporary ID number starting with “TEMP” to the record.
   - The “network ID” refers to the ISU Net-ID.
After adding a new person to the iOffice database, the system will display your “Administrative and Departmental Services Overview” menu that lists the names of all the individuals for whom you have previously submitted cases to the ISSO. You can access your Departmental Services Overview every time you log-in to iOffice. To begin an H-1B application, select the name of the individual and then select “H-1B Application for a New Employee” (See Figure 4). The “Current Cases” menu contains applications submitted in the last 90 days. Click on the “Past Cases” bar to display older applications. The “Case Information Display” shows the person you have just added.

Figure 4: Departmental Services Overview
H-1B Application for a New Employee

At this point you will be on the main page for the H-1B application, similar to the one in Figure 5. The seven links on the middle of the page (“Applicant Information”, etc.) will walk you through the application process. Proceed through each section, providing the information as prompted. The last two sections will become available upon the completion of the preceding sections. Continue on to the “Completing the Application” instructions in this manual to receive further directions for each segment of the H-1B application.

Figure 5: Main Page
Completing the Application

The following section will give you further instruction and helpful tips regarding the completion of each section of the H-1B application. Click here for a complete list of the information you will be asked to provide.

Forms/Documents
You will be asked to submit a copy of the following documents and forms using iStart’s built-in document upload capabilities. The department or international applicant will need to upload:

- Applicant’s CV (Curriculum Vitae)
- Diploma for the highest degree earned by the applicant
- Passport Demographic Page
- If the applicant or any of their dependents has ever been in the U.S. as a J-1 or J-2, provide evidence of this status (Either a DS-2019, Certificate of Eligibility for Exchange Visitor status, Form IAP-66, or copy of the passport that includes the J visa stamp)
- If the applicant has been in the U.S. in either H or L classification in the last six years, attach copies of Forms I-94 (original or print out of electronic I-94), I-797 and/or other USCIS issued documents noting these periods of stay in the H or L classification
- If the applicant is applying from inside the U.S.:
  - I-94 card (original or print out of electronic I-94)
  - Most recent U.S. visa stamp
  - Current Form I-20 (if applicable)
  - Current Form DS-2019 (if applicable)
  - Any approval notices or receipts
  - Employment Authorization Document (if applicable)
- If the applicant’s family members are included in this application:
  - Form I-539
  - Each family member’s most recent Form I-94 (front and back of original or print out of electronic I-94)
  - Each family member’s passport demographic pages
  - Each family member’s most recent U.S. entry visa
  - Marriage certificate for a spouse
  - Each birth certificate for any children
  - If family members are currently in F-2 status, each family member’s Form I-20
  - If family members are currently in J-2 status, each family member’s Form DS-2019

The department will need to upload:

- ISU Letter of Intent
Giving the Client Access

- You have the option of allowing the applicant to view and make changes to certain sections of the application. To do this, click the underlined portion of the section entitled “H-1B Applicant Information.” The section will open and display a link at the top of the page entitled “Give the client access to complete this section”. You will be prompted to enter the applicant’s email address and click on the “Send e-mail” box. The applicant will receive an e-mail message with a link to the section, instructing him/her to enter his/her applicant information, immigration history, and information regarding dependents. You will be notified via email of all changes made by the applicant and will be able to monitor their responses.
- Click on the “Main Page” link to navigate back to the application.

H-1B Applicant Information

- **[Tip]** We recommend sending this section to the applicant to complete.
- You must complete all sections marked with an asterisk (*) in order to submit the section.
- Provide a copy of the applicant’s CV (curriculum vitae) and diploma for the highest degree earned using iStart’s built-in document upload capabilities.
- When you are finished with this section (as with each of the others), click “Submit Section” at the bottom of the page. This will save your answers and place the section in a queue to be reviewed by ISSO upon the completion of the entire application. After submitting each section, you will still be able to go back and make changes to information entered. If you navigate away from the page without clicking “Submit Section”, all the information you have entered will be lost.
Information about the University Position

- This section must be completed by the ISU department.
- Basis for H-1B Classification: If this is a new applicant, they will most likely be entering as (a), a new employer. Additional terms are described below.

  - Check (a) “new employment” if the individual is outside the U.S. and holds no classification or is inside the U.S. but in a different non-immigrant status (such as F1, J1, TN, etc).
  - Check (b) “continuation of previously approved employment without change with the same employer” if the individual is applying to continue employment in the same non-immigrant classification (H-1B) and there has been no change to the employment.
  - Check (c) “change in previously approved employment” if there is a non-material change to the previously approved employment, such as a change in job title without a material change in job duties.
  - Check (d) “new concurrent employment” if the individual is going to begin new employment with an additional employer in the same non-immigrant classification the individual currently holds (H-1B) while continuing to work for his/her current employer in the same classification.
  - Check (e) “change of employer” if the individual already working on an H-1B for another employer and will not work for that employer once they begin working at ISU.
  - Check (f) “amended petition” if there is a material change in the terms or conditions of employment or training or the individual’s eligibility as specified in the original approved petition.

- The “Requested Employee End Date” should be no more than 3 years from the start date.

Actual Wage List Information

- In this section you will enter information for “comparable” employees. “Comparable” employees are those who now hold the same job title and have similar education and experience as the applicant to be hired. This information will help determine the actual wage for the position.
- Do not write the names of the employees, as the information will be public.
- If there are no similarly employed workers, please indicate “No Comparable Employees” in the “Job Title” field. The following is valid criteria for stating that an employee is not comparable:
  - The current employee has more relevant work experience than does the applicant
  - The current employee has more responsibility than the applicant will have
• When hired, the current employee had better education credentials for the position than does the applicant or had higher level of education than was required for the position.
• The current employee does not work the same number of hours as will the applicant.

### Immigration History
- **[Tip]** We recommend sending this section to the applicant to complete.
- If the applicant has been in the U.S. as a J-1 or J-2, you will be asked to complete an additional set of questions/instructions.
  - The 212(e) two year home residency requirement, or foreign residence requirement, refers to Section 212(e) of the Immigration and Nationality Act (INA). The J-1 exchange visitor subject to this requirement may not change their status to that of H, L, or K, or to immigrant or legal permanent status until they have fulfilled the two-year foreign residence requirement by going back to their home country (being physically present there for two years) or receiving a waiver of this requirement. The State Department offers more information about the requirement and recommendations about who may be subject to it.
  - A J-1 exchange visitor who is subject to but does not wish to comply with the two-year foreign residence requirement may apply for a waiver of that requirement under any one of the five applicable grounds for a waiver set forth in the INA 212(e). Click here to learn about the grounds for waivers and instructions on how to apply for waiver.
- If the applicant has been in the U.S. with either H or L non-immigrant status, you will be asked to complete an additional set of questions/instructions detailing that history.
  - Provide the applicant’s name and dates for each period of stay consecutively, starting with the most recent and working back.
  - A “period of stay” means the uninterrupted period of time in the U.S.

### Dependent Information
- **[Tip]** We recommend sending this section to the applicant to complete.
- There are additional steps to be taken if the H-1B employee’s family members are included on the application. A link to the required USCIS Form I-539 is embedded in this section. The oldest family member applying for H-4 (dependent) status completes and signs Form I-539. All other family members applying for H-4 status are to be listed on Supplement 1 of Form I-539. The completed form should be returned to 3248 Memorial Union, along with a personal check or money order of $290 payable to “Department of Homeland Security.”
- You will be asked to upload several documents for the dependents. For each of these, please compile one for each family member onto a single PDF or JPEG file; for example, a single PDF or JPEG containing the passport demographic pages of each family member.
Export License Worksheet
- The U.S. Government requires employers to submit this worksheet. Click on the link, complete the Worksheet and forward it to the Office for Responsible Research (ORR) or to the Ames Lab Export Control Office as appropriate. ORR or Ames Lab will upload the approved Worksheet into this section of iStart for you, then notify you by e-mail so you can complete the rest of the H-1 application and forward it to ISSO for production.

Information about the Department
- For more information on the scholar support fee, see the Questions and Answers document.
- The hiring department must pay a processing fee to the Department of Homeland Security. Please process an ISU voucher through Accounting for a check payable to “Department of Homeland Security” in the amount of $325 and forward it to the ISSO, 3248 Memorial Union, so that it may be mailed with the H-1B extension application.
- Indicate if this is a “Premium Processing” application. For an additional fee of $1,225, USCIS will process the application in 15 days rather than several months. Premium processing is generally not necessary on an H-1B extension application unless the applicant has international travel plans in the near future. Request a second check for $1,225 through ISU Accounting for premium processing applications.

Departmental H-1B Compliance Certification
- The information provided in this section corresponds to the Chair of the department that employs the H-1B. Once you enter and submit their contact information, they will receive an email asking them to review the submitted information and approve it. If they disagree with any of the submitted information, the individual completing the eForm must log back in to iStart and make corrections.
- This is the final step in completing the application. When the Department Chair approves and submits the H-1B Compliance Certification, ISSO receives an alert and begins preparing an H-1B extension petition.
Glossary of Terms

**Dependent:** A spouse or unmarried child (under the age of 21). Dependents are eligible to apply for visas so that they may reside in the United States with the scholar or H-1B employee.

**Deportation:** The formal removal of an alien from the United States when the alien has been found removable for violating the immigration laws.

**DS-2019:** The Form DS-2019 or “Certificate of Eligibility for Exchange Visitor (J-1) Status” is the basic document used in the administration of the exchange visitor program. This form permits a prospective exchange visitor to seek an interview at a U.S. embassy or consulate in order to obtain a J visa to enter the United States. The Form DS-2019 identifies the exchange visitor and their designated sponsor and provides a brief description of the exchange visitor’s program, including the start and end date, category of exchange, and an estimate of the cost of the exchange program. Read the detailed description of the Form DS-2019.

**EAD:** An Employment Authorization Document is a driver’s-license-like card issued by USCIS for off-campus employment authorization. The most common EAD is issued to F-1 students who have completed their program of study and have been approved for optional practical training or “OPT.”

**Exclusion:** The formal term for denial of an alien’s entry into the United States.

**H-1B:** The H-1B classification is an employment status for individuals who will perform services in a specialty occupation for a U.S. employer. Specialty occupations are those that require at least a bachelor’s degree to perform. Individuals cannot self-petition; Iowa State University must file the H-1B petition. See the ISSO website or the Bureau of Consular Affairs for more information.

**H-4:** The H-4 visa is a nonimmigrant visa which allows the dependents (spouses and unmarried children under 21) of H-1B employee visa holders to enter into the US.

**iOffice:** The online database on which the International Students and Scholars Office maintains records of all past and present international applicants, students, scholars, and employees.
**J-1:** The Exchange Visitor (J) non-immigrant category is for individuals approved to participate in work and study based exchange visitor programs, which enable foreign nationals to visit the United States in order to experience life in the US. Before individuals can apply at a US embassy or consulate for a J visa, they must first apply, meet the requirements, and be accepted to an exchange visitor program through a designated sponsor organization. The Bureau of Consular Affairs has additional information about the Exchange Visitor (J) visa. The International Students and Scholars Office manages Iowa State University’s J-1 exchange visitor program.

**J-2:** The J-2 is a nonimmigrant status which allows the dependents (spouses and unmarried children under 21) of J-1 student visa holders to enter into the US.

**Non-immigrant status:** Non-immigrant status is granted by USCIS when a foreign national arrives in the United States. The status matches the classification of visa the bearer has been granted by the US Department of State, categorized according to the principal purpose for the visit. With few exceptions, while in the US, non-immigrants are restricted to the activity for which their visa was issued. Examples of non-immigrant statuses include J-1 (exchange student or scholar), F-1 (student), H-1B (temporary worker), etc. For more information, see Temporary Visitors to the U.S.

**SEVIS:** SEVIS (Student and Exchange Visitor Information System) is an Internet-based system that provides tracking and monitoring functionality, with access to accurate and current information on nonimmigrant students (F and M visa) and exchange visitors (J visa), and their dependents (F-2, M-2, and J-2). SEVIS enables schools and program sponsors to transmit required information and event notifications, via the Internet, to the U.S. Department of Homeland Security and Department of State throughout a student’s or exchange visitor’s stay in the United States. Read a detailed description of SEVIS.