

Frequently Asked Questions
Global Support Strategy for Mission UAE
For Emirati Nationals and U.A.E. Residents

What is changing?

The US Embassy in Abu Dhabi and the U.S. Consulate General in Dubai will soon transition to a new appointment service for non-immigrant visas. This new system is being implemented worldwide and will affect all local applicants, both Emirati nationals, UAE expatriate residents, and Iranian applicants resident in Iran. The new process is easier, more convenient, and less expensive than before.

When will the change happen?

January 6, 2013.

Why is this change happening?

The Embassy and Consulate General want to provide the best service possible to our visa applicants, so we are pleased to implement this new worldwide appointment system. The new system makes appointment and application requirements more user-friendly by streamlining our process, making it more convenient, and eliminating certain fees.

Why are there currently no appointments available after December 31?

In order to change from our current visa processing system to the new system, it is necessary to stop offering appointments via our current online booking system as of December 31. We will then have a few days to process pending cases, before we inaugurate the new system on January 6. As of January 6, appointments will be available for several months into the future.

How is the process changing?

As of January 6, 2013, services, including calling for information, scheduling an appointment, and delivery of documents and passports, will be provided at no additional cost. Applicants can visit a single website from where they can complete each step in the process, or they can contact a call center to obtain useful information and schedule an appointment. Information regarding the website and call center phone numbers will be released at a later date.

How is the new process better?

The new process is cheaper, faster, and available 24 hours a day. It is convenient, because the applicant can arrange everything online from home, if using the online system, or can choose to speak to a call center agent, who will walk the applicant through the process. Call center operators can assist in English, Arabic and Farsi. Applicants will have increased flexibility in picking the date and time of the visa interview. Applicants can also arrange passport pickup through Empost ahead of time. Applicants can check the status of their pending application online. If unsure of how to proceed, the call center is available to answer questions.

How is the new process different from the existing process?

Under the existing process, an applicant has to pay the visa application fee in person at a bank and then use an online system for booking a visa appointment. If their visa is approved, they must pay a fee to have the passport delivered to them by a courier service.

Under the new process, an applicant can go online and in a few minutes can complete the visa application, pay the application fee, schedule an appointment, and arrange to have their passport delivered to an Empost office. This can be done 24 hours a day from the comfort of home using the online system. Applicants can also contact a call center for assistance or to schedule an appointment if they have already paid the visa application fee. Then, all the applicant must do is attend the scheduled interview at the Embassy or Consulate General.

Is anything changing for student visa applicants?

We remain committed to assisting qualified student visa applicants to complete the visa process in time for the start of classes. Under the new process, student visa applicants will no longer be able to walk-in for an interview without an appointment. All applicants must make an appointment. There will be appointment slots available for student visa applicants each interviewing day. A student who receives his documents late and cannot obtain an appointment on time, may request an expedited appointment from the call center.

How can I schedule an appointment to travel for urgent medical care?

The Embassy and Consulate General will continue to assist those individuals who need to travel to the U.S. to receive urgent medical treatment. Medical treatment is considered to be urgent if it cannot be delayed without endangering the life of the patient. Patients who cannot obtain a regular appointment in time for their intended travel schedule may contact the call center for assistance in obtaining an expedited appointment. Additional information on this process will be available on the service provider's website on January 6.

What about people who can't pay online with credit cards?

A person who wants to pay cash can do so at any Emirates Post location. The applicant first has to create an account online and print out an individualized payment slip. Then, after making the application fee payment, the applicant can log back in to their account and, using the fee receipt, finish making the appointment and arranging delivery options with their preferred Empost office.

How will the change impact people who are already scheduled?

If an applicant has not already made an appointment, they may choose to wait for the new system to be available on January 6. But if an applicant pays the visa application fee and makes an appointment before December 31, their appointment will be honored. They should arrive at the Embassy or Consulate as instructed in their appointment confirmation and bring their National Bank of Abu Dhabi visa-application-fee payment receipt. Because the process for paying the fee will be very different under the new system, we recommend that applicants not pay the fee unless they are sure they will receive an appointment prior to December 31.

What if someone does not have online access?

The current process requires all applicants to complete the online visa application, the DS-160. That part of the process is not changing. Under the new system, if an applicant is paying with a credit card, they can call the call center or a voice response system and do everything else over the phone. Applicants who want to pay cash will still need to access an online account to at least print a payment slip to take to Emirates Post for payment. Applicants who do not have online access often obtain assistance from family or friends to complete this process.

Will the new process affect the wait time to get an appointment?

No. The wait time fluctuates based on demand for visas. However, under the new system, appointments will be released several months in advance at both the Embassy and the Consulate General. This will provide applicants much greater flexibility in choosing an appointment date and time, and we believe this longer schedule of availability will help to reduce wait times.

Are there any drawbacks to the new system?

We believe that the new process offers many advantages to applicants and will be easier and more convenient for most applicants. Some applicants who currently are not required to make an appointment, such as those applying for student visas, will have to obtain an appointment under the new system. However, we are putting measures in place to ensure that compelling and time-sensitive cases will continue to be handled as expeditiously as possible.

What if I already have an appointment scheduled, how will I arrange to receive my passport?

For those who have their visa interviews under the current process, delivery options for those approved for issuance will be explained at the time of the interview.

Is anything changing for immigrant visa applicants?

The new process will change some things for individuals applying for immigrant visas. Information will be available on the Embassy and CSC websites in the coming weeks. The biggest change is that all immigrant visa applicants will need to designate an Empost location for the pick-up of their processed documents before they attend their visa interview.