Introduction: With so many possible scenarios, it is easy to miss important steps when you are preparing to send a case to DIS. Since we cannot begin processing a case until we have all the necessary items, here are a few tips to help you send complete cases every time and avoid frustrating delays.

**GENERAL CASE PROCESSING**

- **Checklists** – To avoid missing documents, bookmark the DIS Checklists page to have the most up-to-date checklist for each case you process: [http://www.ors.od.nih.gov/pes/dis/AdministrativeStaff/Pages/Checklists.aspx](http://www.ors.od.nih.gov/pes/dis/AdministrativeStaff/Pages/Checklists.aspx)

- **Completion** – Make sure each form is completely filled out

- **Signatures** – Confirm that all forms are signed and that all signers have the correct signature authority for the case type

- **Eligibility** – Evaluate a foreign national’s eligibility for a certain designation before you begin assembling a case, consult the NIH Sourcebook and Manual Chapters as needed: [https://oir.nih.gov/sourcebook/personnel](https://oir.nih.gov/sourcebook/personnel)

- **No Extras** – Do not submit extra documents beyond what is included on the checklist unless they provide essential case information

- **Pre-case Discussions** – Include any pre-case email correspondence with DIS regarding the case, DIS does not have a way to retain and reference pre-case discussions

- **Helpful Information** – Note helpful details that may not be included in the forms or supporting documents (ex: dependents joining later, family expecting a baby soon, etc.)

- **Processing Times** – Reference the DIS Processing Times Chart when establishing start dates and planning case submission timelines: [http://www.ors.od.nih.gov/pes/dis/AdministrativeStaff/Pages/DISProcessingTimeChart.aspx](http://www.ors.od.nih.gov/pes/dis/AdministrativeStaff/Pages/DISProcessingTimeChart.aspx)

**FTE CASES**

- **Checks** – Do not include checks when sending a case to DIS, the Immigration Specialist processing the case will contact the foreign national when they are ready for the checks

- **Credential Evaluation** – For all new FTE cases, a credential evaluation for foreign doctoral degrees is required

**NON-FTE CASES**

- **English Proficiency** – After confirming the foreign national’s English proficiency, check the appropriate box in Section K of the Form 829-1 or the Form 590 English Proficiency Supplement

- **Minimum Funding** – Make sure foreign nationals in unpaid designations have funding that at least meets the minimum stipend levels for NIH pre-doctoral fellowship positions, see Appendix 2 of the IRTA Program Automated Fellowship Payment System manual chapter: [https://policymanual.nih.gov/2300-320-7](https://policymanual.nih.gov/2300-320-7)

- **Degree Evidence** – For Fellows, provide degree evidence that meets DIS standards: [http://www.ors.od.nih.gov/pes/dis/AdministrativeStaff/documents/AcceptableEvidenceofDoctoralDegree.pdf](http://www.ors.od.nih.gov/pes/dis/AdministrativeStaff/documents/AcceptableEvidenceofDoctoralDegree.pdf)

- **Area of Study & Proposed Duties** – Always complete both the general area of study and the description of proposed duties sections on the Form 829-1 and Form 590

- **Plan Ahead** – DIS can receive Non-FTE renewal cases up to six months before a foreign national’s end date

- **Dependents** – When planning J-1 or J-2 renewal case submissions, keep in mind that J-2 dependents need at least 120 days lead time to renew their J-2 work authorization

- **Leave of Absence or Sabbatical** – Special Volunteers with an outside employer must be on formal Leave of Absence or Sabbatical during their time at NIH

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Contact DIS at (301) 496-6166 or DIS@mail.nih.gov if you have questions

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