UAB The University of Alabama at Birmingham

International Student and Scholar Services

O-1A FACTSHEET: ROADMAP TO A SUCCESSFUL PETITION

Please read this **ENTIRE** document carefully and collect the evidence in the manner, order, and format described below. We know it is long, but you are not the first person to be sponsored for O-1 status at UAB. This Factsheet answers *many, many* frequently-asked questions (FAQs) and is designed to make processing the O-1 petition as **efficient** as possible. Please do not respond to this email with questions that are answered in this document. IFSIS needs the information **exactly** as described below. Any deviation from the below will result in a delay in processing the O- 1 petition. If you have questions, please attend Office Hours any Tuesday or Friday afternoon on Zoom. Links are provided in the weekly e-newsletter from IFSIS or via iifsis@uab.edu.

O-1A immigration status is available to individuals with "extraordinary ability or achievement" in their field. USCIS review of O-1A petitions is highly subjective and requires a substantial amount of supporting evidence. You must collect this evidence, since all of it concerns your personal achievements. The general workflow/process is as follows:

1) You read this Factsheet and the IFSIS website thoroughly
2) You revise your CV to reflect every relevant evidentiary category below and email it to ifsis@uab.edu for review
3) You attend an IFSIS "Office Hours" session on Zoom any Tuesday or Friday afternoon at a link we will provide via email, where you can ask any follow-up questions after reviewing the Factsheet and the IFSIS website in detail
4) You upload the evidence described below, as relevant to your specific situation
5) You provide basic background information via our web portal, Edge/Welcome Client
6) IFSIS reviews and analyzes all provided evidence and contacts you with follow-up questions
7) IFSIS organizes all evidence and drafts a 6-8 page cover letter establishing which evidentiary criteria you meet for USCIS review
8) IFSIS drafts USCIS forms for signature and obtains filing fee checks
9) IFSIS files the petition with the USCIS Texas Service Center via UPS or FedEx with premium processing for adjudication within 15 calendar days
10) USCIS approves the O-1 petition (after potentially issuing an RFE, request for evidence)
11) If you are *dually-appointed clinical faculty*, IFSIS will file the second, concurrent (usually UAB) O-1 petition on your behalf after either a) we receive the approval notice for the HSF petition if you are currently in the US, or b) after you re-enter the US on an O-1 visa if you are still waiting on a J-1 waiver or are currently outside the US.

IFSIS prepares all O-1 petitions in-house and has a nearly 100% approval rate. However, we rely *heavily* on you to provide and upload all relevant evidence establishing your eligibility for O-1 status. You are in the best position to know the most about your achievements and about what evidence may be available. An outside attorney is not required, but it is perfectly fine if you wish to retain your own attorney to assist with letter drafting and evidence collection for the O-1A process. An attorney will require you to provide all of the same information IFSIS requests.

USE OF OUTSIDE ATTORNEY

Your attorney ***cannot*** prepare USCIS forms I-129 or I-907, ***cannot*** file an O-1 petition on behalf of UAB, HSF, or affiliates, and ***cannot*** submit a Form G-28 as a representative of the institution. All letters and evidence assembled or prepared by your attorney **must** be delivered to IFSIS in hard copy for mandatory IFSIS review and signature. Your attorney must also email a Word version of the evidentiary support letter to ifsis@uab.edu for review and finalization by IFSIS staff.

Your attorney should mail the printed, hard copy evidence via USPS to: UAB IFSIS, Attn: Executive Director Catherine Crowe, 1720 2nd Avenue South, AB 420, Birmingham, AL 35294-0110. If your attorney wishes to ship the evidence via courier (UPS or FedEx), they should ship it to: UAB IFSIS, Attn: Executive Director Catherine Crowe, 701 20th Street South, AB 420, Birmingham, AL 35233.

Your attorney must coordinate all requests through the IFSIS office. We routinely work with several law firms around the country and are happy to coordinate with the attorney of your choosing, but they **must** respect and follow IFSIS processes. We will ***immediately withdraw*** any O-1 petition filed by an outside attorney without IFSIS review and final preparation.

IFSIS will prepare USCIS Forms I-129 and I-907, collect checks, and obtain the appropriate signatures. Your attorney should **not** request these forms directly from your department or ask your department to sign forms they have prepared.

Be aware that an outside attorney will require to provide the same, if not more, evidence described below in this Factsheet. An attorney's main "value added" is to help obtain the support letters needed from other professionals in the field. Otherwise, you will have to provide essentially the same information to an attorney as you would to IFSIS.

MINIMUM REQUIREMENTS FOR O-1A SPONSORSHIP

To be eligible for O-1A status, you must meet at least ***three*** of the following criteria:

- Original scientific, scholarly, or business-related contributions of major significance in the field
- Authorship of scholarly articles in professional journals or other major media in the field
- Participation on a panel, or individually, as a judge of the work of others in the field
- Receipt of nationally or internationally recognized prizes or awards for excellence in the field
- Membership in associations in the field which require outstanding achievements, as judged by recognized national or international experts in the field
- Published material in professional or major trade publications, newspapers or other major media about you and your work in the field
- Employment in a critical or essential capacity for organizations with a distinguished reputation
- A high salary or other remuneration for services (rarely used)

You can read more about the O-1A category directly from USCIS.

The most common criteria met at UAB are: original scientific or scholarly contributions, authorship of scholarly books/articles, participation as a judge of the work of others via journal review, receipt of major prizes (conference best paper awards, prestigious grants, etc.), and critical roles.

Please read this **ENTIRE** section carefully and collect the evidence in the manner, order, and format described below. It covers *many, many* FAQs and is designed to make processing the EB-1B as **efficient** as possible. Please do not respond to this email with questions that are answered in this document or on the website. IFSIS needs the information **exactly** as described below. Any deviation from the below will result in a delay in processing the EB-1B petition.

GATHERING SUPPORTING EVIDENCE NECESSARY FOR A SUCCESSFUL O-1 PETITION

Please upload pdfs of **ALL** of the following documents into a Dropbox, Box, or Microsoft OneDrive file and grant "editor" level access to the IFSIS staff member who will be working on your petition. Create subfolders for each type of relevant evidence below. If you use Box, please allow access at a ***collaboration level higher than "Viewer Uploader"*** so that IFSIS can print directly from Box without having to download each individual file first. This will save significant time processing the paperwork.

Do not upload pictures or screen shots of the documents. Upload native pdfs or Word documents whenever possible. All O-1 evidence must be provided to USCIS in legible, printed, hard copy. Tiny font and/or documents that don't show a header or footer indicating the source are not helpful, and we will reply by asking you to re-upload more legible or better-identified documents.

IFSIS needs every single piece of evidence described below that is relevant to your particular situation. **Every single one.** IFSIS cannot assemble an O-1A petition without **ALL** necessary documents. It is extremely inefficient to continue to upload documents haphazardly after IFSIS begins the initial review. IFSIS will begin review after being notifying that **ALL** documents have been uploaded. Please label the documents clearly for ease of review. IFSIS will contact you with additional questions if necessary. When in doubt, upload it!

1. Evidence of original scientific, scholarly, or business contributions to the field

Please upload relevant documentation in a folder labeled "Original Contributions." There is a template recommendation letter at the end of this Factsheet to help guide this process.

This is an extremely specific and carefully-tailored criterion. ***Please read the following information and the template recommendation letter at the end of this Factsheet extremely carefully.***

A template letter for this criterion is provided to you at the end of this document. It is helpful if you take the time to modify the "re" line and opening paragraph slightly for each recommender and use different fonts to give the letters a distinct sound and appearance. A template is designed to give you direction about the content, style, organization, and appropriate length of the letter. You are responsible for providing the description of the specific publication, presentation, abstract, case report, etc. that the recommender will highlight as significant and original. It is fine if more than one letter covers the same publication if it was a particularly high-impact discovery or contribution, but try to have 3-4 of your contributions discussed in total across the five letters so that every letter isn't talking about the same one or two achievements. IFSIS selects the most useful/high-impact quotations from each letter to include in UAB's overall support letter.

These are not "typical" recommendation letters!! Upload no more than five letters from other researchers or practitioners in the field that clearly and completely demonstrate how your achievements (*i.e.,* publications, conference presentations, awards, etc.) establish you as having "extraordinary

ability" in your field. Whenever a percentage can be supplied (only 5% of applications for this fellowship were accepted, only 7% of papers submitted to this journal are accepted, only three out of 150 conference papers received a "Best Paper" award, etc.), please make sure to do so. Again, for an O-1, simply publishing an original paper or presenting original research is *not enough.* USCIS expects you to go one step further and demonstrate that your work or achievement was significant and original enough to be considered "at the very top of the field" and that other practitioners and researchers in your field implement or utilize your findings in their everyday practice.

Choose your recommender(s) very carefully, perhaps in consultation with your current program director or supervisor, or a long-time mentor. It is also helpful to contact practitioners who have cited your work and ask if they would be willing to sign a letter as an objective recommender based on their familiarity with your publications.

There is no magic number of recommendation letters required. **IFSIS recommends that you collect no more than five letters.** We do not include more than five letters unless there is something *extremely* compelling or unique in a sixth letter that is not covered in any of the other letters. USCIS does not want to read the same information over and over again. USCIS has never pushed back on the qualifications of a particular recommender or the ranking of their current institution. Just find the people who can speak best about the significance and originality of your work. If they happen to be from extremely prestigious institutions, all the better, but they do not *have* to be.

At least three to four letters must be from practitioners with whom you have never collaborated (*i.e.,* objective recommender(s)), and at least two to three should be from practitioners based outside the US. This combination will allow USCIS to see a) the objective excellence of your contributions and b) the international scope of your reputation. It is *extremely important* that at least 2-3 letters are international.

As many of the five letters as possible should be from ***objective*** recommender(s). The letters should be *addressed* to USCIS, **but do not mail them to USCIS!** Ask your recommender(s) to provide the letters directly to you and upload a clean scanned copy with the rest of the supporting evidence provided to IFSIS. Do not include more than one letter from someone employed by UAB, as this is highly subjective and of little weight with USCIS. The letters need to be as objective and internationally-based as possible. **IFSIS will not include more than one recommendation letter from UAB in the petition, and IFSIS will not include more than one recommendation letter from a former residency, fellowship, or thesis advisor,** as these letters are incredibly subjective and carry extremely little weight with USCIS. You need letters that will show your national/international reputation for your achievements in the field, not generic support letters.

"Hierarchy" of letters =

- Best: letter from someone based outside the US with whom you have never collaborated
- Second best: letter from someone based outside the US with whom you have collaborated
- Third best: letter from someone based inside the US with whom you have never collaborated
- Fourth best: letter from someone based inside the US with whom you have collaborated
- Still helpful, but very subjective: letter from former supervisor or residency/fellowship director

USCIS very much expects to see **quality over quantity.** The more objective and international letters you can provide the better. Please do not upload your recommenders' CVs—we do not include these with the petition. The best letters show your national/international reputation for your achievements in the field and are not generic support letters. The letters should speak directly to the impact and importance of specific research contributions/discoveries you have made, including direct references

to how a particular journal article or conference presentation you made changed their outlook or their own practices, or otherwise influenced the field.

The letters should include information about the writer's qualifications for commenting on your achievements, including how long and in what capacity the writer has known you (or, more importantly, stating that they have never worked with you). Writers should NOT simply regurgitate your CV, and writers should NOT make general statements that you are "ethical," a "pleasure to work with," or an "up and coming young physician" or "rising star." Writers should NOT repeat that you have published X papers in Y journals—USCIS will have your CV and other supporting evidence about your publication record. This information is provided in the template at the end of this Factsheet.

NOTE: These are not "recommendation letters" like you would solicit for a job opportunity. USCIS is not interested in your bedside manner or work ethic. The template letter is designed for one purpose only: *to meet this one specific criterion concerning significant, original contributions.* That is all it is designed to do. If you wish to collect a letter from a residency or fellowship director for a *separate* criterion (*i.e.,* to demonstrate the prestige of an award or other recognition, like an extremely competitive fellowship, best resident/fellow award, chief resident appointment, etc.), that is perfectly fine. However, that letter will not be presented to USCIS as a letter supporting a significant original contribution. Instead, we will present that letter separately under the more relevant criterion of nationally-recognized prizes or awards.

Please upload copies of any pending or approved patents as well, as this is direct evidence of a significant and original contribution. Furthermore, if you have invented a biomedical tool or surgical implement that has been purchased or marketed by a national or international company, upload evidence of that as well (this is a "significant business contribution").

2. Evidence of scholarly books or articles in scholarly journals with international circulation

Please upload relevant documentation in a folder labeled "Publications." We need both proof of publication and proof of the ranking of the journal in which it was published.

Upload the cover page of each paper, book chapter, or book (with certified English translations as appropriate) and the first page where the conclusion and end notes/references of the paper begins. IFSIS does not need copies of every single one of your publications—please upload only the pages described above, and only for your **top 10** papers/publications. If you have fewer than ten publications, upload the 4-5 that are in the most prestigious journals, have the most citations, on which you were first author, or which are mentioned in the significant original contribution letters described above. Use your judgment as to the publications that best demonstrate your contributions to the field.

Please do not email IFSIS asking if a certain publication "counts" or if you should upload X publication. **When in doubt, upload it.** IFSIS will consider all evidence provided and provide it to USCIS in the best light possible. If we have additional questions or need a specific publication, we will contact you.

Again, this is **quality over quantity.** There is no magic number of publications. USCIS only needs to see evidence that you have published in scholarly journals, *period.* Including copies of 20-30 papers will not necessarily make the petition any stronger, especially if they have no citations, you were sixth author, or they were published in open access/unranked/unindexed journals with low impact factors.

USCIS is interested in highly cited publications in high-impact journals. IFSIS generally only includes publications in journals that are either a) ranked in the top 20 by Google Scholar and/or b) are ranked in the first quartile (Q1) by Scimago (these also usually have a three-digit H index). As with

recommendation letters, USCIS is looking for quality over quantity. Publications in obscure, unranked, or unindexed journals or ones that require payment to be considered are not helpful to an O-1 petition.

Please also upload native pdfs of **both** the Google Scholar journal ranking and the Scimago ranking of each of the journals in which your top ten (or 4-5) papers have been published, including the page of the Scimago ranking indicating the quartile of the journal. Again, for O-1 status, simply publishing *is not enough.* USCIS will expect to see evidence that your publications were in top-ranked journals and actually received citations, indicating the significance and impact of your work.
A note about abstracts/case reports: abstracts and case reports from national/ international conference presentations or poster sessions that are published in a supplement to a highly-ranked journal can be useful, though not overwhelming, evidence of a "publication record." IFSIS prefers to discuss such documents separately from full-length scholarly journals published as manuscripts. The best/better evidence for such items is the page from the national/international conference program listing you as an author on the poster/case report/presentation, or an email sent to your email address confirming that your poster/case report was selected for presentation at a participation on a panel or individually as a judge of the work of others in the same or a related field.

Please upload relevant documentation in a folder labeled "Judge of the work of others."

Upload emails confirming that you reviewed papers submitted to peer-reviewed journals (or a Publons report or certificate of review from the journal). This is the most standard and best type of evidence we see that fits this criterion.

Do not "pad" the evidence by uploading both the email asking you to review a paper and the email thanking you for reviewing that same paper. *The email thanking you/confirming that you reviewed the paper is sufficient.* If the journal(s) you review for don't send confirmation emails, please log in to whatever tracking system the journal uses and print a legible, pdf screenshot of whatever shows how many reviews you have completed for the journal. IFSIS just needs documentary evidence of your participation.

Alternatively or additionally, you can upload letters from journal editorial review boards or native pdfs of a website where you are listed as a member of the editorial board, letters from a department chair attesting that you served on university dissertation or thesis committees (and how many, for what period of time), and/or letters or emails attesting that you judged a scientific competition or reviewed submissions for conference presentations.

You can also upload evidence of your participation on committees of national or international organizations dedicated to curriculum review, resident/fellow training, etc. indicating that your expertise was required to judge the value of the content of the training/education materials for the next generation of practitioners in the field or the readiness of a trainee to progress to the next level in their career. Evidence that you serve on resident/fellow review panels is OK, but it's not *as good* as evidence of journal and conference review (which garners much more attention at the national and international levels).

4. Receipt of **nationally or internationally recognized** prizes/awards for excellence in the field

Please upload relevant documentation in a folder labeled "Awards." The *best* evidence is an actual certificate or other official acknowledgment of the award. The second-best evidence is an email

confirming your receipt of a prize or a native pdf of the website of the organization that awarded you the prize stating that you were a recipient in a certain year/for a specific conference.

Examples include but are not limited to: receipt of a travel grant to a national/international conference, best paper/podium presentation awards from conferences, best resident/fellow, chief resident, external (*e.g.,* NIH, AHA, etc.) grant funding (*not* small one-off, internal grant awards from the institution(s) where you completed your residency or fellowship), nationally/internationally-recognized scholarships from your home country government, Fulbright, etc. If you have received an NIH or other nationally-recognized grant, please upload the actual, official federal grant award papers (not merely an email notification of award) listing your name specifically as PI, co-PI, or a contributing researcher.

Also upload documentation from an authoritative source explaining the selection criteria for the awards/ prizes and indicating the significance of the awards/prizes on a national or international level. For example, how many residents/fellows are selected for X award each year? How many residents/fellows are accepted into a particular training program each year? How many "Best Young Researcher" awards were presented at the conference? How many travel grants were distributed? How many best paper awards were given at the conference (out of how many total submissions received)? This may require you to contact the conference organizers for a short letter summarizing the selection process.

For an O-1 petition, it is not enough simply to demonstrate that an award was *received.* You must go one step further and be able to demonstrate the prestige of the selection process to establish yourself as one of the top 5% (for example) in the field. The O-1 is about exclusivity and excellence.

If in doubt, upload copies of all awards you have received. Please do not email IFSIS asking if X award "counts" or "is good enough." IFSIS will review all evidence in the totality and craft a narrative around the best evidence available. We will make a subjective judgment call about the value of any given award in the context of the overall petition. No one award will "make or break" an O-1 petition.

5. Membership in associations in the academic field that require outstanding achievements

Please upload relevant documentation in a folder labeled "Memberships."

USCIS wants to know if you have been ***nominated for or elected to*** membership in professional associations based on your achievements in the field. USCIS wants evidence of membership in associations, plural. Upload evidence of such memberships, including a link to the membership section of the organization's website indicating that someone had to nominate you based on achievement or excellence.

USCIS expects to see membership in multiple association**s** (*i.e.,* at least two). Upload proof of membership in the form of a membership card or letter from the organization. Upload the criteria for membership, including whether nominations and/or a certain number of publications or years of experience are required. Again, USCIS is looking for *nominated/recommended membership in academic associations based on your achievements*—not simply professional memberships that anyone in the field can hold. When it doubt, upload it!

Do NOT provide evidence of membership in organizations open to the general public simply by paying an annual membership fee, memberships at the student/trainee level, etc. Membership in the AMA or American Association of X which anyone can join out of interest or by paying dues do not "count." USCIS wants to see **nominated/merit-based membership** in multiple association**s** (*i.e.,* at least two). If you are FACP, that "counts." Upload proof of membership in the form of a membership card, certificate, letter from the organization, etc. IFSIS will file the petition only with evidence of nominated

or elected memberships based on your achievements in the field.

Again, for an O-1 petition, proving membership alone is not enough. You must go one step further and upload the **criteria for membership,** including whether nominations and/or certain number of publications or years of experience are required, and the total number of members of each association from relevant websites. USCIS expects you to be able to demonstrate that you have risen to the very top of the field and have achieved milestones that make you eligible for membership in such organizations *at a level higher than the general public or than just having a degree or board certification in the field.*

Alternatively, if you are a "regular" member of a professional organization but have been nominated to participate in specific committees *based on your achievements, reputation, or nomination letters*, USCIS will sometimes accept this as evidence of a membership requiring outstanding achievement. Again, we will need evidence of the selection criteria for the committee appointment to be able to demonstrate that you were selected because you are at the top of the field, *not merely because you volunteered to serve.*

6. Published material in professional or major trade publications or major media written by others about you relating to your work in the academic field

Please upload relevant documentation in a folder labeled "Publications about my work." Three types are required.

Upload a native pdf copy of your Google Scholar citation index expanded to show all publications. Make sure the information at the top of the screen reflects your current role/appointment and not an old affiliation.

Upload native pdfs (printed using the "header/footer" option if necessary so that the source/website/ date of publication is easily identifiable) of print or online media coverage referencing your publications or discoveries. For example, these can be from healio, Science News, EurekAlert!, the *New York Times,* etc. It is fine if the source discusses a paper or presentation on which you were a co-author (instead of first author) as long as we can tell from the publication that they are talking about your work. When uploading this information, make sure that the news source is identified directly on the face of the document. You may need to add headers/footers before printing to pdf so that the name of the news outlet or website appears on the face of the document. If we can't prove the source in a legible manner, we can't include the coverage.

Do *not* upload copies of general release press articles published by the media/communications department of institutions where you completed your residency/fellowship/postdoc, etc. These are too subjective and do not evidence objective national or international coverage of your work. The coverage needs to be from sources *outside* the institution where you worked or trained.

Finally, upload pdfs of a) the cover page and b) the page where your paper is cited of 7-10 publications that have cited your work (this is also a good way to identify individuals who would potentially sign a support letter for you, described below). We want to be able to list 7-10 different countries where your work has been cited. The citations should be a) by researchers/physicians located OUTSIDE the US and b) published in journals that are the official publication of a recognized national or international professional association, *e.g.,* official journal of the American College of Pediatrics, official journal of the American Heart Association, official journal of the Korean Society for Astrophysics, official journal of the Indian Society of Engineers, etc. Evidence of citations from practitioners located inside the US and/or in unranked or open-source journals are *not sufficient.*

7. Evidence of critical/essential roles for organizations with distinguished reputations

Like all of the above categories, this category may not apply to everyone. IFSIS will let you know if we plan to argue this point in the petition and will gather information and a letter *from UAB* to meet this criterion as needed, generally for incoming clinical faculty joining directly after a fellowship who have received a J-1 waiver. However, you will also need to draft a letter as described below.

If IFSIS informs you that we will be using this criterion, please be prepared to obtain a letter from a supervisor or program director at your current or previous institution attesting to the *specific value you and your skills/expertise added to your employment or training at their institution.* Again, we do not argue this point in every O-1 petition. If IFSIS feels that this additional criterion may be necessary to tip the balance in favor of approval, we will let you know. Again, for O-1 status, *it is not enough* merely that you worked at a prestigious research institute or were chosen for a highly-selective fellowship program. The letter must go one step further and articulate specifically *why your presence was critical or essential to that organization*, *e.g.,* you contributed as first author on a publication funded by a six-figure NIH grant, without you no treatment could have been provided in a particular area, you were the only one who knew how to perform X procedure that was vital to the success of an experiment or lab, etc.

ADDITIONAL/ALTERNATIVE EVIDENCE

You may have certain achievements that do not fit precisely into the evidentiary categories above. Feel free to upload additional evidence in a folder marked “Extra Documents” so that IFSIS can assess whether it will strengthen the petition. Examples include, but are not limited to:

- Proof of patents
- Online videos/case studies (IF these have actually been watched/downloaded and IF they were done for reputable organizations and not random blogs)
- Curricula developed for training modules (IF you can also obtain a letter confirming that a particular institution, program, or organization actively implements the training)

Please do **NOT** upload evidence irrelevant to the O-1 category. IFSIS does *not* need evidence of your work in a shortage area or information about how your work is in the national interest. **None of those types of evidence are directly relevant to or required for an O-1 petition.** Such evidence is generally relevant only to *non*-employer-sponsored immigration categories like the EB-2 physician national interest waiver and the EB-1A. If IFSIS needs any information about the shortage area/national interest, we will obtain it separately from the sponsoring department at UAB and use it as appropriate to establish the “critical or essential role” criterion if appropriate and necessary.

ADDITIONAL DOCUMENTATION REQUIRED:

You will receive an invitation to the Edge immigration database to upload relevant documents listed below related to your education and immigration history. Please follow the instructions in the email and label the documents clearly for ease of review. IFSIS will contact you with additional questions if necessary.

Biographical pages of your current, valid passport and all expired passports
Most recent Form I-94, printed
Current CV, revised to include every relevant category of evidence described above

Diplomas and transcripts for **ALL** degrees (*e.g.*, bachelor's, master's, PhD, MD, etc.) (with certified English translations, as appropriate)
All prior immigration documents covering entire period of stay in US in any immigration status (*e.g.*, Forms I-20, DS-2019, J-2 EAD cards, Form I-797 notice for hardship or J-1 waiver, etc.)
Three most recent pay slips from current employer (if currently employed in the US). Include pay slips from BOTH UAB and HSF or Valley if you are dually-appointed clinical faculty.
ECFMG Certificate (if clinical faculty)
Step 1, 2, and 3 USMLE Score Reports (OR USMLE Transcript of Scores) (if clinical faculty)
Alabama medical license, or letter from ABME stating that you have applied for a license (if clinical faculty)
Certificates of completion of your residency and any fellowships (if clinical faculty)

COST

IFSIS will provide a Check Request Memo to your department administrator for the required USCIS filing fees. The Check Request Memo describes the fees, and your department administrator can contact Financial Affairs directly with any questions.

The UAB Heersink School of Medicine will pay the $2,500 premium processing fee for both, concurrent O-1 petitions for dually-appointed clinical faculty. The HSF-sponsored petition will generally be filed first, and the UAB one will be filed after the HSF petition is approved.

Premium processing outside of the UAB Heersink School of Medicine will be decided on a case-by-case basis depending on the anticipated start date and departmental preferences. O-1 petitions generally take only a couple of months for USCIS approval even without premium processing.

TIMING

The *earliest* an O-1 petition can be filed is six months prior to your anticipated start date (*e.g.,* February 1 if your start date will be August 1). As long as the petition is filed about three months before your start date, there will be plenty of time to respond to a request for evidence (RFE), if USCIS issues one.

IFSIS will not begin assembling an O-1 petition until you notify us that **all evidence has been uploaded.** It is extremely disruptive and inefficient to continue to have to print and re-print documents from the Box file such as constantly revised CVs or constantly updated Google Scholar citation indices. Once **all evidence (including recommendation letters) has been uploaded,** IFSIS strives to file the O-1 petition within **six weeks.** This timeline depends entirely on a) how much follow-up is needed after we review the evidence you uploaded (which depends largely on how closely you read and follow the instructions above), b) how long it takes to receive checks from the department, and c) the current IFSIS workflow at the time all of the evidence is received.

With premium processing, USCIS will adjudicate (meaning approve, deny, or issue a Request for Evidence) the petition within 15 calendar days, excluding federal holidays. It will still take another 5-7 business days for the official approval notice to arrive at our office via the US Postal Service, and you cannot begin work until you have the official approval notice (and/or valid Form I-94) establishing your O-1 work authorization for I-9 purposes. You will receive an automated email from our system when the approval notice arrives outlining very important next steps to actually begin working at UAB/HSF.

J-1 Waiver Physicians/Changing Status to H-1B

O-1 status is initially available for a three-year period and is renewable in one-year increments afterward, as long as you continue to meet the criteria. If you are being offered O-1 sponsorship this year because you are waiting on an approved physician waiver through the Conrad, ARC, or other waiver program, UAB/HSF will absolutely file a petition with USCIS to change your status from O-1 to H-1B as soon as the USCIS Vermont Service Center approves your pending waiver application. We are completely aware of the urgency of timing and starting your three years of J-1 waiver service in H-1B status as soon as the waiver is approved and will take every measure to file the H-1B change-of-status petition ASAP.

TEMPLATE RECOMMENDATION LETTER FOR SIGNIFICANT-ORIGINAL CONTRIBUTIONS FOLLOWS BELOW

TEMPLATE RECOMMENDATION LETTER
(print on employer/department/institution letterhead, sign, and return a clean scanned copy to the requestor)

Dear recommender: Thank you for supporting this O-1 petition. USCIS reserves the O-1 category for individuals who have "a level of expertise indicating that the person is one of the small percentage who has risen to the very top of the field of endeavor." You can add the most value to the petition by speaking directly to the beneficiary's specific achievements, publications, breakthroughs, etc. rather than repeating information from a CV or providing character references. UAB submits copies of manuscripts, degrees, CV, etc. with the petition. USCIS is most interested in your comments about the original, significant impact of the beneficiary's work on the field and that the beneficiary's discoveries/contributions are being implemented in practice/research around the world.

[Date]

USCIS Texas Service Center
Attn: I-129 O-1
6046 N Belt Line Rd.
Suite 907
Irving, TX 75038-0001

RE: O-1A Petition (Extraordinary Ability in the Sciences) of the University of Alabama at Birmingham submitted on behalf of [BENEFICIARY]

Dear Immigration Services Officer:

I write to support The University of Alabama at Birmingham (UAB)'s petition for Dr. _____ to receive work authorization in O-1 status. As this letter will show, Dr. _____ is an outstanding researcher/physician-scientist/professor in the field of _____, and UAB has been fortunate to recruit him/her.

I am Professor/Director of the _____of the_____ in [CITY, COUNTRY]. I am Professor of _____ at the School of _____ of the _____. I am a member of [national/international professional societies in the field]. I am a reviewer for prominent peer-reviewed journals in the field, such as [name them]. I am board certified in the field(s) of _____. If you know the beneficiary from being a residency or fellowship director or supervisor, or through collaboration on a publication or conference presentation, say so here.

I do not know Dr. _____ personally, but am competent to discuss his/her outstanding abilities and enviable international reputation based on my experience outlined above.

If the letter will be provided by a former residency or fellowship director/supervisor: He/she earned his/her medical degree in [YEAR] from [INSTITUTION] and completed residency/fellowship training in [FIELDS] at [INSTITUTIONS] _____ in [YEAR]. The residency/fellowship program accepts only X% of applicants each year, testifying to Dr. _____'s rank at the very top of the field. Additionally, Dr. _____ received the Best Resident/Chief Resident/other training award during his/her time with us. This distinction is awarded annually based on the criteria of _____, _____, and _____ to only one of __ trainees, again demonstrating the level of excellence shown by Dr. _____ even among an already highly-selective pool of physicians. Throughout this time, he/she began garnering national and international attention in the field in which he/she is best known: [NAME FIELD].

THE MOST IMPORTANT INFORMATION THAT CAN BE PROVIDED IN THESE LETTERS IS SPECIFIC, DIRECT, CONCRETE STATEMENTS THAT THE BENEFICIARY WAS THE FIRST TO PUBLISH ABOUT A CERTAIN TECHNIQUE OR DISCOVERY AND THAT TECHNIQUE OR DISCOVERY IS BEING IMPLEMENTED AT YOUR INSTITUTION TO IMPROVE PATIENT OUTCOMES. USCIS does not care merely that the beneficiary has been published, or even that they have been published in high-ranking journals. For O-1 success, USCIS cares only about specific, direct evidence that the beneficiary's publications/poster/podium presentations were "original," "significant," and/or are being utilized/implemented in current practice.

One of Dr. ___'s most important contributions was his/her publication in [*ITALICIZE THE NAME OF JOURNAL*] about [topic]. This research changed the field/ caused me to rethink X/received international acclaim for/was heavily cited/improved patient outcomes because . . . *e.g.,* For the first time, because some phosphate metabolites were found to predominant in malignant tumors and others in benign tumors, it was possible to determine the biomedical characteristics of intraocular tumors. Based on Dr. _____'s paper/presentation, I (or my institution/practice group) now implements X best practice or protocol to achieve the goal of better patient outcomes/lower mortality or infection/faster recovery time/lower cost healthcare with same efficacy, etc.)

In another publication, Dr. _____ was the first to show that X. This breakthrough was published in [*ITALICIZE THE NAME OF JOURNAL*], the official journal of the [name the organization/association/society].

[IF RELEVANT, BUT DO NOT REGURGITATE CV] In addition to his/her superb basic research, Dr. _____ is recognized to be an outstanding clinician in the field of _____. He/she is routinely consulted on the diagnosis and management of _____. His/her clinical research includes major papers on _____. Dr. _____is also a co-investigator on (or has been named as a contributing researcher or has personally received as PI) _____, a national study funded by the National Institutes of Health.

Because of his/her outstanding research achievements and international reputation, I strongly support UAB's petition for O-1 work authorization for Dr. _____. If I can help in any other way, please, do not hesitate to contact me. Thank you very much for your attention and consideration.

Sincerely yours,

[NAME, TITLE, DEPARTMENT/INSTITUTION]