



***Memo to the Canadian Members Council:
Checklist for visa applications at the Canadian High
Commission in Delhi***

Checklist for submitting a visa application for an Indian scholar to come to Canada

1. The basics

Ensure that the application form is carefully and fully completed and signed, with photos to specification. This sounds very elementary, but some applications get rejected because the application form is incomplete.

Before submitting a visa application asks someone to look over the application form.

2. Letter of invitation on an official letterhead

Include a letter of invitation from the inviting institution that provides the following information:

- Identify the person who is invited (the visa applicant), using the name/s and surname of the person as it is printed in his/her passport
- Indicate the event the applicant is invited to, where it will take place and when
- Indicate what the applicant will be doing at the event e.g. Present a paper, (include the title) or moderate a session (include the topic)
- Explain why this specific person is invited and not some other person. Do they have an international reputation, a particular expertise that is readily verified online or elsewhere? If so, this is very useful information. If the applicant is part of a group e.g. a group of musicians or dancer, explain what their role is within the group especially if they are not the lead.
- If the inviting institution is paying for the applicant's expenses e.g. accommodation, meals and transportation, state it clearly.
- Mention that the inviting institution is a member of the "Shastri Indo-Canadian Institute", use the full name

If the following web pages are available provide clear links to them or instructions as to how to access the pages:

- Conference or event program and information
- Personal webpage of the applicant
- Institution where the applicant is permanently employed
- Staff page of the institution where the applicant is employed with biographical information on the applicant

3. Letter verifying that the applicant is who he/she claims to be and that he/she is employed

Letter on letterhead from the Institution where the applicant is permanently employed confirming the identity of the applicant. The person who signs the letter must be easy to contact. If possible, provide a direct number to that person other than the number on the letterhead if the number on the letterhead is a general number. When a visa officer phones to verify the applicant's identity and cannot speak to the person who signed the letter, the approval process is delayed.

The letter should include the following information:

"This is to verify the identity of X [full name as on passport], date of birth, who is permanently employed at Institution Y in the position of...."

"You are welcome to contact me at the above phone number or on my mobile or direct number at 99999999."

The purpose of this letter is not to provide references about the applicant's character or quality of their work, but is to verify the identity of the applicant as it is presented on his/her visa application form.

4. Never travelled internationally

If the applicant has never traveled internationally or if there is something out of the ordinary with his/her visa application that may present challenges in assessing the visa application, email the Executive Director of the Shastri Indo-Canadian Institute ahead of time with the applicant's information. The information must reach the Calgary office at least 3 days before the applicant submits his/her application. This information will then be forwarded to the Immigration Program Manager at the High Commission in Delhi who will ensure all relevant information is taken into account.

5. Lead time for submitting a visa application

Visa applications are usually processed within five working days if the visa form is complete and all the supporting documents are provided. Nonetheless it would be prudent and relieve anxieties to submit all visa applications 10 working days before the date of travel in case an interview is required or verification prove complicated. When there is a group invited for the same purpose, applications submitted as a group facilitates rapid and consistent processing, so is strongly encouraged whenever possible.

6. Strange but true

Once a completed application form is submitted, the fastest way to receive the visa is to do nothing, except wait. Contacting the staff at the High Commission enquiring about the status of an application actually slows the process down. The visa section processes hundreds of applications per day; pulling a case out of processing sequence is normally not done, to be fair to all applicants, who naturally consider their reason for visiting Canada to be important! The High Commission will contact the applicant if they need more information or clarification. The High Commission has agreed to deal directly with me at the program manager level on cases of genuine urgency or complexity. They ask that Shastri members refrain from sending multiple messages to multiple HC staff.

7. Understanding the process

The visa officer who evaluates an application is by law an independent decision-maker tasked with determining whether they are satisfied that an applicant will depart Canada at the end of the period authorized for their stay. Section managers can provide information and advice, but cannot fetter the decision-making authority of a visa officer.

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