What is an H-1B visa?
The H-1B visa is a document that is placed in your passport and is required for entry to the United States. The visa allows you to present yourself at a U.S. Port of Entry for inspection and entry to the United States in the visa classification specified on the visa. A visa may only be issued by a U.S. Embassy or Consulate outside of the United States. Note: Canadians citizens are exempt from the visa requirement.

If you are currently in the United States, your I-797 H-1B Approval Notice and I-94 Arrival/Departure Record are the active documents that indicate your H-1B immigration status and permit you to remain lawfully in the United States until the end of your status, as indicated on the I-94 and I-797. The first time that you travel internationally after changing to H-1B status from within the United States, you will need to visit a U.S. Embassy or Consulate to apply for an H-1B visa.

What documents will I need to apply for an H-1B visa?

- **Passport**: You must present a passport that is valid at least six months into the future to the U.S. Embassy or Consulate for visa issuance. During your visa appointment, you may need to leave your passport with the U.S. Embassy or Consulate for visa processing for one day to several weeks, depending on the current processing times at the U.S. Embassy or Consulate in which you applied.

- **Original I-797 H-1B Approval Notice**: This is the form issued by U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services upon approval of your H-1B petition.

- **Copy of H-1B petition**: This includes Form I-129 and the certified Labor Condition Application (LCA).

- **Employment Verification Letter**: On department letterhead, your department should write a brief letter that includes your name, position, employment dates and a brief job description. We also recommend that you bring your three most recent earnings statements from UT Austin as evidence of your continuing employment.

- **Visa Fees**: The H-1B visa application fee is $190. Depending on your country of citizenship, you may be subject to an additional Visa Reciprocity fee. To determine if you must pay the Visa Reciprocity fee and to see the maximum length of time that your visa can be issued based on your country of citizenship, see: travel.state.gov/visa/fees/fees_3272.html.

- **DS-160 - Visa Application Form**: A link to the online DS-160 application form and Frequently Asked Questions are available at: travel.state.gov/visa/forms/forms_4401.html.

- **Passport-style Photographs**: While completing the Form DS-160, you may be asked to upload a digital photograph. Certain U.S. Embassies or Consulates will instead require you to bring two passport-style photographs to your visa appointment or will take your photograph at your visa appointment. Your photographs must comply with U.S. Department of State photo specifications: travel.state.gov/visa/visaphotoreg/visaphotoreg_5334.html.

If you require passport-style photos for your visa appointment, you may choose to have them taken at the International Office’s Passport and ID Services, see: world.utexas.edu/passport.
H-4 Dependents
If your spouse and/or children will accompany you to the United States, each will require an H-4 dependent visa to enter the United States \textit{(unless they are citizens of the United States or Canada)}. Your H-4 dependents can be included on your DS-160 application form if you will apply for your visas together; or they can complete the application form separately.

Each of your H-4 dependents will need to present a valid passport, pay the visa fee(s), submit passport-style photographs and show evidence that he/she is related to you (such as a marriage certificate or birth certificate). If your dependents apply for their visas separately, they should also bring a copy of your passport, visa, I-94 record, I-797 H-1B Approval Notice and verification of your employment.

\textit{Note: Visa application procedures vary between U.S. Embassies and Consulates, as do the wait times for a visa appointment and issuance. Therefore, it is important to visit your particular U.S. Embassy or Consulate website for further instructions.}

List of U.S. Embassies and Consulates worldwide: www.usembassy.gov/
Visa Wait Times: travel.state.gov/visa/temp/wait/wait_4638.html

Visa Interview
Most visa applications require a personal interview with a U.S. Consular Officer, as well as collection of biometric identifiers, such as fingerprints and a digital photograph. While The U.S. Embassy or Consulate may waive the visa interview in certain instances, you should be prepared for an in-person interview each time that you apply for a U.S. visa.

Background and Security Checks
U.S. Embassies and Consulates routinely conduct background checks on visa applicants, which could result in delays in visa issuance. Some possible reasons for delays in visa issuance can include prior arrests in the United States and “sensitive” fields of research or expertise. In some cases, background and security checks can take up to several months to be completed. Though UT Austin cannot expedite this process, please inform International Student & Scholar Services and your employing department at UT Austin if you experience significant delays in visa issuance.

Where should I apply for my H visa?
The U.S. Department of State recommends that you apply for your visa at the U.S. Embassy or Consulate in your home country. If you choose to apply elsewhere – including Canada and Mexico – and the new visa is denied by the U.S. Embassy or Consulate, you will not be allowed to re-enter the United States. This means that you would need to return directly to your home country before you could re-apply for a visa to enter the United States. Additionally, if visa issuance is delayed due to background or security checks, you would need to remain in that country until the background or security check is completed and the visa is granted.

Only certain U.S. Embassies and Consulates will accept U.S. visa applications from an individual who is not a citizen of the country where the U.S. Consulate is located (called “third-country nationals”). Please check the website of the specific U.S. Embassy or Consulate that you are considering for further information. You should also check the entry visa requirements for any third country that you plan to visit.