The hosting department must provide the prospective scholar with an invitation or offer letter. Invitation letters generally follow a similar structure as an offer letter. The scholar will need this letter as part of their materials to request a DS-2019 from ISSS, apply for their visa at a U.S. consulate, and other stages in their immigration process.

At minimum, a letter should contain the following:

- **Department letterhead.** The letter must be printed with the hosting department’s letterhead.

- **Program dates.** Include the dates during which you expect the scholar to be active in your department. These dates must match what you request in the ISSS Prospective J-1 Scholar Application (which are the dates that will be printed on the DS-2019). Refer to the [inviting a J-1 Scholar timeline](https://www.isss.umn.edu) on our website to assist in choosing realistic dates for the scholar’s program.

- **Status.** Include that you are inviting the individual as a J-1 scholar (additional iterations: J-1 research scholar, J-1 visiting scholar).

- **Purpose.** Include the scholar’s purpose of visiting the University and what their primary activities will be (i.e. research in...).

- **Scholar vs. student** Do not refer to the individual as a student. Students are assumed to be admitted to the U of M to take classes and are held to different requirements than scholars. Scholars’ primary purpose must be for research, observation, and/or teaching.

- **Faculty mentor.** Include the name and title of the U of M faculty mentor who will supervise and collaborate with the scholar during their program here.

- **Funding.** Include whether or not your department is providing funding support for the scholar.

- **Health insurance.** Include information about the [U of M health insurance requirement](https://www.isss.umn.edu).

* If the program dates change, remember to update the offer/invitation letter for the scholar to match the dates with those on the DS-2019.

** There are specific student visas for individuals seeking to take classes at the University. Taking or auditing classes cannot be the full-time focus for a scholar. Scholars are limited to the equivalent of 5 credits or less per semester when auditing or taking classes. They must maintain full-time focus on their research/teaching activities. Consult with ISSS regarding the proper visa for individuals seeking to take classes at the University.