THE CHINA HELPER

FREE STUDENT RESOURCE



China Student Visa Checklist

Every document you need before you fly, and every deadline you must hit after you land — built around the two papers the whole process depends on.

X1 OR X2
Pick the right category first — the rest of the process follows from it

TWO PAPERS
The admission notice and the JW201/JW202 form drive everything else

24 HOURS
Police registration deadline once you reach your accommodation

30 DAYS
Window to convert an X1 visa into a residence permit inside China

START HERE

X1 or X2 — which one is yours?

	X1	X2
Length of study	More than 180 days	180 days or fewer
Entries	Single entry, valid 30 days after arrival	Usually single or double
Residence permit	**Required** within 30 days of entry	Not needed — you leave before the visa expires
Typical holder	Degree students, year-long language students	Short exchanges, summer schools, short courses

If your programme sits near the six-month line, ask your university's international office rather than guessing. Your admission letter normally states the category, and applying for the wrong one is among the most common — and most avoidable — problems.

BEFORE YOU APPLY

The documents to gather

- [ ] **Admission Notice**
  From your university. Must be the original or a clear colour scan, stating your programme dates.
- [ ] **JW201 or JW202 form**
  JW201 for Chinese government scholarship holders, JW202 for everyone else.
- [ ] **Valid passport**
  At least six months validity left, and two blank visa pages.
- [ ] **Recent passport photos**
  Check size and background colour on your embassy's site — photos are a frequent rejection reason.
- [ ] **Physical Examination Record**
  Required by some embassies, usually on their own form, from a recognised clinic.
- [ ] **Proof of funds**
  Bank statements, scholarship award letter or sponsor letter. Some consulates set a minimum balance.
- [ ] **Completed application form**
  Most regions use an online form you fill in, print and sign before your appointment.
- [ ] **Application fee**
  Varies by country and processing speed; express service costs more.

Do nothing until you physically hold both the Admission Notice and the JW201/JW202 form. Keep paper and digital copies of everything — you will need the same set again for the residence permit, and replacing a lost JW202 form can cost weeks.

APPLYING FROM ABROAD

The seven steps

1. Receive your admission package — both the notice and the JW form
2. Identify the embassy or consulate covering your consular district
3. Complete the online form, print it, sign it, check every field
4. Book the appointment or submit online, depending on your region
5. Attend in person if required — hand in documents, biometrics, fee
6. Collect your passport with the visa inside
7. Check validity, number of entries and the spelling of your name **before you fly**

Peak season is real: appointments during July to September can be several weeks out. Your name must be spelled identically on the application, passport, admission notice and JW202 form — mismatches are a classic reason files stall.

TIMING AND COST

How long each stage takes

STAGE	TYPICAL TIMING
University issues Admission Notice and JW201/JW202	4–8 weeks after admission
Booking an appointment	1–4 weeks out, longer in peak season
Visa processing	4–10 working days
Travelling to China	Before the visa's "enter before" date
Residence permit, for X1 holders	Within 30 days of entry

Budget for the whole chain, not just the visa: add the medical examination and any courier fees. The residence permit itself is charged on a national tariff — commonly quoted as ¥400 for under one year, ¥800 for one to three years and ¥1,000 for three to five years — with issuing usually taking 8–15 working days. Both figures are applied locally, so confirm them with the exit-entry office that will handle your case.

Work backwards from your start date: two months before your programme begins is a comfortable target. One month is workable but leaves no room for a missing document — and a single missing paper can add weeks.

AFTER YOU LAND

Your first 30 days on an X1

Day 0–1 — **Register your address with the police**

Within 24 hours in urban areas, 72 hours in rural areas. Hotels register you automatically. Bring your passport, visa page, entry stamp and your address written in Chinese — the officer cannot take an English one. Moving later means re-registering within 24 hours.

Week 1 — **Complete the medical check in China**

A health certificate from home is not accepted — it must come from a designated hospital in China. Your university normally organises a group appointment. Physical, chest X-ray, blood tests and ECG; fasting may be required.

Week 1–2 — **Assemble and copy the full set**

Passport with visa page and entry stamp, original admission letter on university letterhead, the JW201/JW202 form, the sealed local health certificate, your accommodation registration slip, and passport photos to the local specification. Photocopy everything before handing anything over.

Week 2–4 — **Submit at the Exit-Entry Administration**

In person, usually as a university group. Forms, passport, photos, health certificate, registration slip and JW form, then biometrics on site. Your address must match an existing registration or part of the paperwork has to be redone.

Week 3–4 — **Collect the permit and check the dates**

It arrives as a sticker in your passport, normally valid for one academic year. Photograph it, note the expiry, and diarise the renewal — most universities begin two to four weeks ahead.

You cannot leave China while it is processing. The bureau holds your passport, so no travel at all — not even a weekend trip — until you collect it. Ask for the collection date and keep the receipt.

After this, it gets quiet. Renewal is a routine yearly job, usually started two to four weeks ahead by your university — nothing else until you finish.

WHAT IT CHANGES

After the permit is in your passport

You can

- [ ] Enter and leave China freely for the validity period
- [ ] Stay legally for the duration printed, no exit and return needed
- [ ] Use it for bank accounts, phone contracts and some housing contracts

It does not by itself

- [ ] Give you the right to work — internships and part-time jobs sit under separate rules
- [ ] Extend automatically — renew it annually before the printed date
- [ ] Replace your passport obligations — keep your passport valid well beyond your stay

DOCUMENTS IN CHINA

What you hand over at the bureau

DOCUMENT	WHERE IT COMES FROM	WATCH OUT FOR
Passport, visa page, entry stamp	You	Must be valid well beyond your intended stay
Original admission letter	Your university	On university letterhead, not a copy
JW201 / JW202 form	Issued with your admission, before you fly	Slow to replace — keep paper and digital copies
Local health certificate	Designated hospital in China	Must be the sealed version; don't open it
Accommodation registration slip	Police station or your university	Address must match your application
Passport photos	Photo shop or campus service	Ask for the exact size and background colour

AVOID THESE

The five things that derail applications

MISTAKE	HOW TO AVOID IT
Wrong visa category	Read the admission letter, then confirm the category with your university
Name mismatch across documents	Spell your name identically, in the same order, on every single document
Late police registration	The address on your application must match an existing registration
Health certificate from home	Only the sealed certificate issued by a designated hospital in China counts
Short passport validity	A passport expiring within a year can shorten the permit, or get it refused

NOTES — OFFICER NAMES, OFFICE ADDRESSES, QUESTIONS FOR YOUR INTERNATIONAL OFFICE

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MASTER CHECKLIST

Everything, in order

- [ ] Admission Notice received, scanned and printed
- [ ] JW201 / JW202 form received, scanned and printed
- [ ] Passport valid six months past intended stay
- [ ] Photos taken to your embassy's exact specification
- [ ] Physical Examination Record, if your embassy asks
- [ ] Proof of funds assembled
- [ ] Online form filled, printed, signed
- [ ] Appointment booked at the right consulate
- [ ] Visa collected, dates and name spelling checked
- [ ] Flight booked before the visa's enter-before date
- [ ] Address registered with police within 24 hours
- [ ] Medical check done at a designated hospital
- [ ] Full document set photocopied and scanned
- [ ] Exit-Entry appointment attended, passport handed in
- [ ] Residence permit collected and photographed
- [ ] Renewal date diarised before it expires

Continue your China journey

Scan for the full library of free China downloads — visa checklists, application timelines, budget templates and study tools.

China Student Visa Guide — *the full walkthrough behind this checklist*

X1 Visa to Residence Permit — *your first 30 days in China*

How to Apply to Chinese Universities — *where the admission notice comes from*

Chinese Scholarships Guide — *CSC awards and their own JW201 route*

NOTES — CONSULATE DETAILS, APPOINTMENT DATES, DEADLINES

Official sources: confirm every requirement with the Chinese embassy or consulate covering your country, the National Immigration Administration, or your university's international office before you act.

Disclaimer: this checklist is general guidance, not legal advice. Visa rules, fees and processing times change and are applied differently by city and by office.

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