



University at Buffalo  
*The State University of New York*

Office of International Education  
International Student and Scholar Services

## **The SEVIS Fee Requirement:** **What J-1 Exchange Visitors Need to Know**

### **What is the SEVIS fee?**

The SEVIS fee is a one-time fee of \$180 to cover the costs of the Student and Exchange Visitor Information System (SEVIS).

### **Who must pay the SEVIS fee?**

- **Prospective Exchange Visitors with “Begin new program” DS-2019s issued on or after September 1, 2004 who are applying for an initial J-1 visa outside the U.S.**  
*Note: The fee cannot be paid at a U.S. Embassy or Consulate.*
  - Since **Canadian citizens** are not required to get a U.S. visa stamp, they are required to pay the fee before going to the port of entry.  
*Note: The fee cannot be paid at a port of entry.*
- **Prospective Exchange Visitors with “Begin new program” DS-2019s issued on or after September 1, 2004 who are applying within the U.S. for a change of status to J-1 from another visa category**  
*Note: The fee cannot be paid at a USCIS Service Center or District Office.*
- **Continuing Exchange Visitors\* who were on a J-1 program sponsored by the U.S. government (e.g. with a program designation number of G-1, G-2 or G-3) and who are now transferring to a J-1 program that is not sponsored by the U.S. government**
- **Continuing Exchange Visitors\* who are applying for a change of category within the U.S.** (unless they are changing to a program sponsored by the U.S. government)
- **Continuing J-1 Exchange Visitors\* who are applying for reinstatement after a substantive violation, or who have been out of program status for more than 120 days but fewer than 270 days during the course of their program**

*Note: \*A J-1 Exchange Visitor who has completed an Exchange Visitor Program and wants to participate in another Exchange Visitor Program is NOT considered to be a continuing Exchange Visitor.*

### **Who does NOT have to pay the fee?**

Continuing J-1 Exchange Visitors do not have to pay the fee unless circumstances change so that they fit one of the categories mentioned above.

### **What about my J-2 dependents?**

J-2 dependents do not have to pay the fee, even if the “dependent DS-2019” was issued on or after September 1, 2004.

### **Do I have to pay the SEVIS fee if I transfer to another program or request a program extension?**

The SEVIS fee is not required when continuing J-1 Exchange Visitors transfer to another J-1 program, change to another degree program or level or request a program extension.

### **Do I have to pay the SEVIS fee if I travel outside the U.S. or renew my visa?**

The SEVIS fee is not required when renewing a J-1 visa or traveling outside the U.S. (as long as you are still in J-1 status).

### **Do I have to pay the SEVIS fee if I apply for J-1 benefits such as Academic Training?**

The SEVIS fee is not required when applying for J-1 benefits such as Academic Training.

### **When do I pay the fee?**

- **If you are applying for an initial J-1 visa at a U.S. Consulate outside the U.S., you must pay the fee prior to applying for your J-1 visa.** *You can pay the fee online, by mail or at a Western Union agent location using the “Quick Pay” service. If you do not pay the fee online, we encourage you to pay it a few weeks in advance.*  
*Note: The fee cannot be paid at a U.S. Embassy or Consulate.*
- **If you are a Canadian citizen and, therefore, do not need a J-1 visa, you must pay the fee prior to entering the U.S.** *You can pay the fee online, by mail or at a Western Union agent location using the “Quick Pay” service. If you do not pay the fee online, we encourage you to pay it a few weeks in advance.*

Note: The fee cannot be paid at a port-of-entry.

- If you are applying for a **change of status to J-1**, you must pay the fee prior to submitting a change of status.

Note: The fee cannot be paid at a USCIS Service Center or District Office.

## **How do I pay the fee?**

The fee can be paid either **online** with a credit or debit card, or **by mail**. It can be **paid by you or by a third party, inside or outside the U.S.**

- **To Pay Online**

1. **Find Form I-901** at [www.FMJfee.com](http://www.FMJfee.com).
2. **Complete the form online.**
3. **Pay the fee** by supplying the necessary Visa, MasterCard or American Express information.
4. **Print** a copy of the online receipt.
5. **Keep a copy of the receipt** for your records.

- **To Pay By Mail**

1. **Obtain Form I-901** by downloading the form in pdf format from [www.ice.gov/doclib/sevis/pdf/I-901.pdf](http://www.ice.gov/doclib/sevis/pdf/I-901.pdf)
2. **Complete Form I-901.**
3. **Prepare a check, international money order or foreign draft** (drawn on U.S. banks only) in the **amount of \$180 USD**, made payable to **“I-901 Student / Exchange Visitor Processing Fee”**\*  
*\* Many foreign banks are able to issue checks or money orders drawn on a U.S. bank. You may therefore obtain a check from: a) a bank chartered or operated in the United States; b) a foreign subsidiary of a U.S. bank, or c) a foreign bank that has an arrangement with a U.S. bank to issue a check, money order or foreign draft that is drawn on a U.S. bank.*

Note: It is also possible for someone else to pay the fee on your behalf.

4. **Mail the completed Form I-901 and payment** to the address listed on Form I-901.
5. **Wait for a Receipt.** A receipt will be mailed to you within 3 days – 2 weeks of processing the fee.
6. **Keep a copy of the receipt** for your records.

- **To Pay by Western Union Quick Pay**

1. **Print out a copy of the “Western Union Quick Pay instructions for J Visas”** from the SEVIS Fee website:  
[www.ice.gov/sevis/i901/wu\\_instr.htm](http://www.ice.gov/sevis/i901/wu_instr.htm)
2. **Go to a local participating Western Union Agent location. Be sure to bring the “Western Union Quick Pay Instructions for J Visas” with you.** To find the nearest Western Union Agent location, go to [www.payment-solutions.com/agent.asp](http://www.payment-solutions.com/agent.asp) or call the telephone number of the Western Union Commercial Services Network Agent in your country as listed in your phone book.
3. **Request and fill out the blue form at the Western Union Agent location.** Follow the “Western Union Quick Pay Instructions for J Visas” when filling out the blue form.
4. **Get a receipt for your payment.**
5. **Keep a copy of the receipt** for your records.

### **Can I pay the SEVIS fee at a university, U.S. Embassy or Consulate or U.S. port of entry?**

No. At this time the SEVIS fee can only be paid via mail, Western Union or the Internet.

### **What do I need to do to apply for a J-1 visa or change of status to J-1 student or scholar status?**

1. Obtain the appropriate Form DS-2019 from your school.
2. Pay the SEVIS fee online, by mail or at a Western Union agent location.
3. Print your receipt or wait for it to arrive by mail.
4. Submit a copy of your receipt with your visa or change of status application. If you are exempt from U.S. visa requirements (i.e. Canadians), take a copy of the SEVIS fee receipt and present it with your DS-2019 at the port of entry. *(Please remember: It will not be possible to pay the fee at the port of entry).*

### **What happens if I pay the SEVIS fee for one program and then decide to transfer to another program? Is my paid SEVIS fee transferable?**

Yes, the SEVIS fee is transferable as long as it is in the same Exchange Visitor category.

### **What if my J-1 visa application is denied?**

The SEVIS fee will not be refunded. However, if you reapply for a new J-1 visa within 12 months of the denial, you will not have to pay the fee again.

**Will the Department of Homeland Security keep a record of my SEVIS fee payment on file?**

Fee payments should be entered into your permanent immigration (SEVIS) record, but it is strongly recommended that you retain a copy of your receipt.

For more information on the SEVIS fee, please see:  
[www.ice.gov/sevis/i901/index.htm](http://www.ice.gov/sevis/i901/index.htm)

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