



University at Buffalo
The State University of New York

Office of International Education
Immigration Services

Introduction to the Exchange Visitor Program: J-1 Scholars

What is the Exchange Visitor Program?

The Exchange Visitor Program is designed to bring, among others, scholars, researchers, professors and specialists to the United States for a variety of educational and cultural exchange purposes. These individuals are under the sponsorship of an agency or organization that has been designated as an exchange visitor sponsor by the U.S. government. The University at Buffalo has been granted this designation and, accordingly, is authorized to issue the DS-2019 used to obtain the J-1 visa. The J-1 visa, which is issued to individuals who come to the U.S. on the Exchange Visitor Program, is set apart from all other non-immigrant visa classes by its underlying philosophy of educational and cultural exchange.

How does a department or faculty member invite a J-1 scholar?

To invite a J-1 scholar, the **inviting department or faculty member** needs to prepare the DS-2019 Request Form. Please contact Immigration Services for a request form or download one from www.buffalo.edu/intlservices/pdf_files/DS2019.pdf.

What are the steps in bringing a J-1 scholar to the U.S?

Step 1: The department or faculty member fills out the DS-2019 Request Form, and returns it and required supporting documentation to MaryJean Zajac, Immigration Services, 210 Talbert Hall, North Campus. **Note:** The Medical Insurance Attestation must be included (available at www.buffalo.edu/intlservices/pdf_files/MedicalAttestation.pdf).

Step 2: After Immigration Services receives the DS-2019 Request Form, the DS-2019 will be prepared and sent to the prospective J-1 scholar according to the mailing instructions on the DS-2019 Request Form. The booklet, "New J-1 Scholar Guide" will also be sent to the prospective J-1 scholar.

Step 3: The prospective J-1 scholar pays the SEVIS fee and uses the DS-2019 to obtain a J-1 visa at a U.S. Consulate or Embassy abroad. For information about the SEVIS fee, please visit www.buffalo.edu/intlservices/pdf_files/SEVISFee2.pdf.

Step 4: The J-1 scholar enters the U.S. using a valid passport, J-1 visa stamp and DS-2019. Newly arrived J-1 scholars are required to make an appointment with MaryJean Zajac (Tel. 645-2355), who will review the scholar's documents and discuss pertinent information concerning the University and the community.

How do J-1 scholars extend their stay?

To extend the J-1 scholar's stay, the **inviting department or faculty member** must request a program extension at least 45 days before the current DS-2019 expires. Please contact Immigration Services for an extension form or download one from www.buffalo.edu/intlservices/pdf_files/extension.pdf.

Note: Other documentation such as a bank statement may be needed. Contact Immigration Services, 210 Talbert Hall, North Campus for information.

How do J-1 scholars change their immigration status or J-1 category?

Individuals in J-1 status who are subject to the two-year home country residence requirement (stamped on the J-1 visa and noted at the bottom of the DS-2019) may not change their immigration status inside the U.S. without first applying for and receiving a waiver of the two-year home residence requirement. Moreover, J-1 Exchange Visitors who enter the U.S. in one exchange category, such as "research scholar," are rarely permitted to change to another category, such as "student."

How do J-1 scholars transfer to another institution (J-1 program)?

A J-1 scholar who wishes to transfer to another J-1 program must have his/her current program sponsor's permission. Permission to transfer is granted only if the transfer is in the same field or category as the J-1 scholar's original purpose for coming to the U.S. J-1 scholars who intend to transfer to another program should submit a Transfer-Out Form to Immigration Services, 210 Talbert Hall, North Campus. The form can be downloaded from www.buffalo.edu/intlservices/pdf_files/TransferOutForm.pdf.

What about incidental employment for J-1 scholars?

Researchers and scholars in J-1 status may be authorized to accept employment with an employer other than their program sponsor, provided that employment is directly related to the J-1 scholar's program objectives. Such employment is called "Incidental Employment", cannot be full-time and must be approved by Immigration Services before the work takes place. For more information, please visit www.buffalo.edu/intlservices/pdf_files/incidental_ds2019.pdf.

Can J-1 scholars bring their dependents to the U.S.?

J-1 regulations permit J-1 scholars to bring their dependents. A J-1 scholar's spouse or child will need a J-2 DS-2019 to enter the U.S. in J-2 status and may stay as long as the J-1 scholar is authorized to remain in the U.S. Other family members, such as parents, are not J-2 dependents and must come as visitors on a visitor visa.

Can J-2 dependents work?

An individual in J-2 status may apply to the U.S. Citizenship & Immigration Services (Vermont Service Center) for permission to accept employment. Permission will be granted only if the employment is intended to support the J-2 spouse and child/children, and not the J-1 scholar. The processing time for work authorization at the Vermont Service Center is approximately 4-12 weeks. A J-2 cannot begin working until s/he has received the Employment Authorization Document (EAD card) from the USCIS. For further information and an application packet, please contact Immigration Services, 210 Talbert Hall, North Campus.

What about the two-year home residence requirement?

The intent of the Exchange Visitor Program is for the home country to benefit from the J-1 scholar's experiences in the U.S. Accordingly, J-1 Exchange Visitors and their accompanying J-2 dependents may be subject to a two-year home residence requirement. This means that they must spend two years in their home country or country of last residence after they complete their stay as J-1/J-2 Exchange Visitors in the U.S. Further information about the two-year home residence requirement is available at www.buffalo.edu/intlservices/pdf_files/residence.pdf.

