The J-1 classification (exchange visitors) is authorized for those who intend to participate in an approved program for the purpose of teaching, instructing or lecturing, studying, observing, conducting research, consulting, demonstrating special skills, receiving training, or to receive graduate medical education or training.

In carrying out the responsibilities of the Exchange Visitor Program, the Department of State designates public and private entities to act as exchange sponsors. J-1 nonimmigrants are therefore sponsored by an exchange program that is designated as such by the U.S. Department of State. These programs are designed to promote the interchange of persons, knowledge, and skills, in the fields of education, arts, and science.

In January 2022, DOS announced measures to increase the flow of talent in science, technology, engineering, and math (STEM) fields. The Early Career STEM Research Initiative connects certain J-1 program sponsors with STEM-relevant sponsors, including businesses.

Information on the education, experience, and skills required to qualify is available at the DOS website.

Examples of exchange visitors include, but are not limited to:

* Professors or scholars
* Research assistants
* Students
* Trainees
* Teachers
* Specialists
* Au pairs
* Camp counselors

The U.S. Department of State plays the primary role in administering the J-1 exchange visitor program, so the first step in obtaining a J-1 visa is to submit a Form DS-2019, Certificate of Eligibility for Exchange Visitor Status, (formerly known as an IAP-66). Your sponsoring agency will provide you this form. You should work closely with the officials at your sponsoring agency who will be assisting you through this process. An official who is authorized to issue Form DS-2019 is known as a responsible officer (RO) or alternate responsible officer (ARO). Your RO or ARO will explain to you what documents are needed in order to be issued a DS-2019.

After you have obtained a Form DS-2019, you may then apply for a J-1 visa through the U.S. Department of State at a U.S. Embassy or Consulate. The waiting time for an interview appointment for applicants can vary, so submitting your visa application as early as possible is strongly encouraged (though you may not enter the United States in J-1 status more than 30 days before your program begins).

Some J-1 nonimmigrants enter the United States specifically to work while others do not. Employment is authorized for J-1 nonimmigrants only under the terms of the exchange program. Please check with your sponsoring agency for more information on any restrictions that may apply to you working in the United States.

Your spouse and unmarried children under 21 years of age, regardless of nationality, are entitled to J-2 classification. Your spouse and children are entitled to employment authorization; however, their income may not be used to support you. To apply for employment authorization as a J-2 nonimmigrant, your spouse or child would file Form I-765, Application for Employment Authorization. For more information on the application procedures, see the “Employment Authorization” page.

Form

* I-612, Application for Waiver of the Foreign Residence Requirement

Other USCIS Links

* Changing to a Nonimmigrant F or M Student Status

Non-USCIS Links

* DOL Wage and Hour Division
* DOS J Visa Waiver
* Student and Exchange Visitor Program, Immigration & Customs Enforcement
* IRS: Foreign Students and Scholars
* DHS: STEM OPT Hub
* DHS: Training Opportunities in the United States