



The Exchange Visitor Program ***WELCOME BROCHURE***

Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs
United States Department of State

The Department of State welcomes you to the United States. We are pleased to receive you as an exchange visitor. As an Exchange Visitor Program participant, you will acquire an experience in the United States, and as an ambassador of your country you will help educate the American people about your home country and culture.

This brochure will help you understand the purpose of the Exchange Visitor Program, provide you with information on contacting the Department of State, and introduce you to some of the major requirements of the Exchange Visitor Program regulations.

THE EXCHANGE VISITOR PROGRAM

THE U.S. DEPARTMENT OF STATE administers the Exchange Visitor Program under the provisions of the Mutual Educational and Cultural Exchange Act of 1961, as amended. The Act promotes mutual understanding between the people of the United States and other countries by means of educational and cultural exchange. The Exchange Visitor Program provides foreign nationals opportunities to participate in exchange programs in the United States with the expectation that on completion of their exchange program, they will return home to share their experiences.

Sponsors – The U.S. Department of State designates U.S. organizations such as government agencies, academic institutions, educational and cultural organizations, and corporations to administer exchange visitor programs. These organizations are known as sponsors. Sponsors screen and select exchange visitors to participate in their programs based on the regulations governing the exchange activity and stated in 22 CFR Part 62. Sponsors provide exchange visitors pre-arrival information, an orientation, and monitor activities throughout their exchange program. Sponsors offer or identify cross-cultural activities that will expose exchange visitors to American society, culture, and institutions. You are encouraged to participate in activities that provide them with an opportunity to share their language, culture, and history with Americans.

Responsible Officers – Sponsors appoint individuals as responsible officers and alternate responsible officers to advise and assist exchange visitors. These officers issue the Certificate of Eligibility (Form DS-2019), and conduct official communications with the Department of State and the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) on your behalf. Your sponsor's role is to help you manage your program. If problems arise or you have questions, your sponsor is there to help you. Should you have any questions about the regulations or any aspect of your exchange program, your initial and primary contact is your sponsor. Unless provided specific contact information by your sponsor you should contact the person whose name and telephone number can be found on your Form DS-2019.

Exchange Visitor – An exchange visitor is a foreign national selected by a sponsor to participate in an exchange visitor program and who is seeking to enter or has entered the United States temporarily on a J-1 visa.

Spouse and dependents - Some categories of the Exchange Visitor Program permit a spouse and/or unmarried children, under 21 years of age, to accompany an exchange visitor to the United States. These individuals may apply for J-2 visas with the permission of your sponsor.

REGULATIONS – RULES

IT IS IMPORTANT THAT YOU understand and abide by the Exchange Visitor Program regulations, U.S. laws and sponsor rules. Regular contact with your sponsor will help you keep current with any change which may affect your J-1 visa status. Some requirements of the Federal regulations and where to find them are indicated below.

Register with your sponsor – Your Form DS-2019 was created in a computerized system known as the Student and Exchange Visitor Information System (SEVIS). This System is administered by the Department of Homeland Security and is used to collect and maintain information on the current status of non-immigrants and their dependents in the sponsor's program during their stay in the United States.

When you arrive in the United States, you must contact your sponsor to ensure that your data in SEVIS is accurate and updated. Failing to maintain your status could result in serious consequences and may affect your ability to remain in or return to the United States.

Activities and Program Provisions – You entered the United States in a specific program category, and are required to engage in that category and the activity listed on your Form DS-2019. You must comply with the specific program provisions of the regulations relating to your exchange category.

Insurance – You are required to have medical insurance in effect for yourself (J-1), your spouse and any dependents (J-2) for the duration of your program. Some sponsors provide the required insurance for their exchange visitors. Other sponsors may allow you to make your own arrangements or may help to identify insurance carriers. Consult with your responsible officer before the start of your program.

(a) Minimum Insurance Coverage – Insurance shall cover: (1) medical benefits of at least \$100,000 per person per accident or illness; (2) repatriation of remains in the amount of \$25,000; and (3) expenses associated with medical evacuation in the amount of \$50,000.

(b) Additional Terms – A policy secured to fulfill the insurance requirements shall not have a deductible that exceeds \$500 per accident or illness, and must meet other standards specified in the regulations.

(c) Maintenance of Insurance – **Willful failure on your part to maintain the required insurance throughout your stay in the United States will result in the termination of your exchange program.**

Maintenance of Valid Program Status – You are required to have a valid and unexpired Form DS-2019. Sponsors may terminate an exchange visitor's program for violating U.S. laws, Exchange Visitor Program regulations, or the sponsor's rules governing their particular program.

Required Notifications to Sponsors – You must immediately inform your sponsor if you change your address (residence) or telephone number, or complete or withdraw from your exchange visitor program early. Doing so assists your sponsor in complying with their notification and reporting requirements to the U.S. Department of State and the Department of Homeland Security. Failure to keep your sponsor informed could result in the termination of your program status.

Current Regulations – The Exchange Visitor Program regulations are located in the Code of Federal Regulations, (22 CFR, Part 62) and can be found at the J-1 Visa website: <http://j1visa.state.gov/sponsors/current/regulations-compliance/>.

Contacting the Department of State – The Exchange Visitor Program is administered under the oversight of the Deputy Assistant Secretary for Private Sector Exchange, Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs (ECA).

Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs
U.S. Department of State
State Annex SA-5, Fifth Floor
Washington, DC 20522-0505

Report Abuse or Exploitation – If you are mistreated and/or your rights are violated, and your sponsor is not providing the help you need, contact the Department of State for assistance:

J-1 Visa Emergency Hotline: 1-866-283-9090.*

This line is for use by exchange visitors and third parties in the case of urgent situations. *A Department of State representative is available 24 hours a day.

Regular Communications or questions: jvisas@state.gov.

This e-mail address is to communicate non-emergency issues, questions, and concerns.

THE SEVIS FEE

The U.S. Department of Homeland Security's Federal SEVIS Fee took effect on September 1, 2004. The fee of \$180.00 is generally a one-time fee (see exceptions, below) and is required of those who are applying for a J-1 visa based on a DS-2019 issued to "begin a new program."

Proof of fee payment must be presented at the visa interview.

You must pay the SEVIS fee if you are:

1. Seeking an *initial J-1 visa* from an embassy or consulate abroad for initial participation in an exchange visitor program.
2. A CANADIAN citizen: who does not need a visa to enter the United States as an exchange visitor, but who will be applying for admission at a U.S. **port-of-entry** to begin initial participation in a Department of State designated exchange visitor program.
3. Exceptions: a fee is NOT required for a J-1 exchange visitors participating in a program sponsored by the U.S. Federal government.

SEVIS Fee Rules

1. The SEVIS fee must be processed **at least three business days** before the visa interview, unless you have a printed receipt from an Internet payment.
2. The SEVIS fee **cannot** be paid at the embassy or consulate, or at the U.S. Border.
3. ***A visa will not be issued unless the visa officer can verify that the SEVIS fee payment has been made.*** However, you may schedule your visa interview prior to paying the SEVIS fee.
4. The SEVIS fee is not refundable. If your visa application is denied, and you decide to re-apply for the same type of visa at a later date, you will not be asked to make a second SEVIS fee payment as long as your visa application is made within 12 months of the initial denial.

How to Pay the SEVIS Fee

Currently, there are two payment methods:

1. Payment in U.S. dollars by credit card over the Internet, or
2. Payment in U.S. dollars by check, money order, or bank draft, drawn on a U.S. bank, and mailed to an address in the United States.

Payment of the SEVIS fee may be made by you *or* by any other individual, either in the United States or abroad, including family or friends. However, anyone paying the fee on your behalf will need to have a copy of your DS-2019 form, or a completed copy of Form I-901.

Procedure for Paying the SEVIS Fee

1. Use the DS-2019 enclosed in this mailing.
2. Access the Form I-901 from the internet at <http://www.fmjfee.com>.
3. Complete the Form I-901, answering all questions. Be sure that you enter your personal information exactly as it appears on the DS-2019 form.
4. Pay the \$180 SEVIS fee according to one of the methods described below.

Note: to complete form I-901, you must enter two types of information: (a) J-1scholars need to enter the SU Program Number, see item #2 of the DS-2019 and (b) enter your SEVIS ID number, which is printed at the top right of the DS-2019 form, above the bar code.

Paying on the Internet

1. Once you have received your DS-2019, you can make the fee payment by submitting form I-901 on-line using a credit card. The web address is <http://www.fmjfee.com>.
2. MasterCard, Visa, or American Express debit or credit cards are accepted. It does not matter if the card was issued in the United States or overseas. Follow the on-line instructions, include the required credit card information, and print out the payment screen to verify your payment. The printed receipt should be presented at the visa interview or at the U.S. port of entry as proof of payment. ***Thus, when paying the fee on the Internet, it is essential that your printer be ready before starting the payment process. Do not exit the receipt page until you have successfully printed the receipt. You will not be able to return to the receipt page.***

- For detailed information on the SEVIS fee payment process, and for a list of frequently asked questions, visit: <http://www.ice.gov/sevis/i901/index.htm>

Paying by Mail:

1. To pay by mail, you must download and print form I-901 from <http://www.fmjfee.com> or use the paper copy provided with your DS-2019, fill out the form and mail it with your payment to the address below.
2. Your payment must be in U.S. dollars by check, money order or bank draft, drawn on a U.S. bank. Your check, bank draft or money order should be made payable to: "I-901 Student/Exchange Visitor Processing Fee." Also, be sure to print your name and SEVIS ID number in the lower left-hand corner of the check, money order or bank draft.
3. The need for a check, bank draft or money order in U.S. dollars drawn on a U.S. bank does not mean that only a U.S. bank can issue the document. Many foreign banks are able to issue checks or money orders drawn on a U.S. bank, because they are chartered in the United States, or because they are foreign subsidiaries of a U.S. bank, or because they have arrangements with a U.S. bank to issue a check, money order, or foreign draft that is drawn on a U.S. bank.

Mail the payment and form I-901 to:	To send by courier, use the following address:
I-901 Student/Exchange Visitor Visa Processing Fee	Student/Exchange Visitor Processing Fee
P.O. Box 970020	1005 Convention Plaza
St. Louis, MO 63197-0020 USA	St. Louis, MO 63101
	United States
	Phone Number: 1-314-418-8833
	(United States Country Code 011)

NOTE: Payment by mail is not the recommended process for fee payment from abroad, as it can take as long as four weeks from the day you mail in the fee to the day that you receive the required receipt in the mail if you are applying from outside the United States, unless you pay for courier service.

When Can I Get My Visa and/or Enter the U.S.?

1. The SEVIS fee must be paid and fully processed before the applicant arrives at the consulate for the visa interview.
2. For those non-immigrants who do not need a visa to enter the U.S. as an exchange visitor, the fee must be paid and fully processed before applying for entry at a U.S. port-of-entry.
3. A receipt will be sent by mail to the address that you indicate with your payment. Further, for those that pay the SEVIS fee on-line, a payment confirmation can be printed out immediately after the payment is made, and used as a receipt until the mailed receipt is received.
4. Applicants are strongly encouraged to bring a SEVIS fee payment receipt with them for the visa interview, or, for those that do not need a visa, to the U.S. port-of-entry.
5. Having a receipt for the SEVIS fee payment will facilitate the visa application process. However, if you are unable to print a receipt from an on-line payment and/or do not receive your mailed receipt in time for your visa interview you can still go to your interview as long as your fee has been processed by the Department of Homeland Security.

Showing Proof of SEVIS Fee Payment at the Visa Interview and/or the U.S. Port of Entry

You must be able to prove that the fee has been paid when you appear for your visa interview, and when you enter the United States. This is done by presenting a printed receipt, either from the Internet if you made an on-line payment, or a mailed receipt if you paid by mail.

Visa officers and U.S. port-of entry inspectors should be able to verify SEVIS fee payment electronically three business days after payment is processed, but in case of problems, having a printed receipt is the best evidence of fee payment. If you lose or did not receive a receipt for fee payment, the U.S. government does retain an electronic record that the fee has been paid.

The visa will not be issued unless verification of the SEVIS fee payment can be made.

APPLYING FOR A J-1 EXCHANGE VISITOR VISA

(From the U.S. Department of State web site: http://travel.state.gov/visa/temp/types/types_1267.html)

Applying for an Exchange Visitor Visa

Visa applicants should apply at the U.S. Embassy or Consulate, generally in their country of permanent residence. As part of the visa application process, an interview at the U.S. Embassy or Consulate is required for visa applicants from age 14 through 79, with few exceptions. Persons age 13 and younger, and age 80 and older, generally do not require an interview, unless requested by the embassy or consulate. The waiting time for an interview appointment for applicants can vary, so early visa application is strongly encouraged. Visa wait times for interview appointments and visa processing time information for each U.S. Embassy or Consulate worldwide is available on our website at [Visa Wait Times](#), and on most embassy websites. If you are authorized by your sponsor to be accompanied by your spouse (husband or wife) and children, they will also be given a Form DS-2019 and they can apply at the same time. **Learn how to schedule an appointment for an interview, pay the application processing fee, review embassy specific instructions, and much more by visiting the [U.S. Embassy or Consulate website](#) where you will apply.**

During the visa application process, usually at the interview, an ink-free, digital fingerprint scan will be quickly taken. Some visa applications require further administrative processing, which takes additional time after the visa applicant's interview by a Consular Officer.

Required Documentation

When applying, each visa applicant must submit to the U.S. Embassy or Consulate these forms and documentation, as explained below:

- **DS-2019, Certificate of Eligibility for Exchange Visitor Status.** A SEVIS-generated Form, DS-2019, is provided to you by your program sponsor, after the sponsor enters your information in the SEVIS system. All exchange visitors, including their spouses and dependents must be registered in the Student and Exchange Visitor Information System (SEVIS).
- **A Training/Internship Placement Plan, Form DS-7002.** All exchange visitor (J visa) trainee or intern visa applicants (based on Box 7 on form) must also present Training/Internship Placement Plan, [Form DS-7002](#) when applying for a visa. For more information about the rules for trainee and intern programs, see the Exchange Visitor Program, [Trainees](#) on the ECA website.
- **Online Nonimmigrant Visa Electronic Application, Form DS-160.** Visit our [DS-160 webpage](#) to learn more about the DS-160 online process.
- **A passport valid for travel to the U.S.** and with a validity date at least six months beyond the applicant's intended period of stay in the U.S. (unless country-specific agreements provide exemptions). If more than one person is included in the passport, each person desiring a visa must complete an application;
- **One (1) 2x2 photograph.** See the required photo format explained in [Nonimmigrant Photograph Requirements](#).

What are the Required Visa Fees?

- **Nonimmigrant visa application processing fee** - For current fees for DOS government services select [Fees](#). You will need to provide a receipt showing the visa application processing fee has been paid, when you come for your visa interview.
- **Visa issuance fee** – Additionally, if the visa is issued, if applicable, there will be an additional visa issuance reciprocity fee. Please review the [Visa Reciprocity Tables](#) to find out if you must pay a visa issuance reciprocity fee and what the fee amount is. **NOTE:** U.S. Government sponsored exchange visitor (J visa) applicants and their dependents are not required to pay any applicable reciprocity fees.

Additional Documentation

- Find out if there are any additional documentation items required by reviewing the U.S. Embassy or Consulate website where you will apply for your visa.
- Applicants must demonstrate to the consular officer that they have binding ties to a residence in a foreign country which they have no intention of abandoning, and that they are coming to the U.S. for a temporary period. It is impossible to specify the exact form the evidence should take since applicants' circumstances vary greatly.

My Visa Has Been Issued- When Can I Travel to the U.S.?

- DHS regulation requires that all beginning (initial) J exchange visitors, and J-2 spouse and dependents enter the U.S. 30 days or less in advance of the applicant's program start date as shown on the Form DS-2019. The 30-day limitation does not apply to current exchange participants who are returning to continue with their exchange program.
- If you want an earlier entry in the U.S. (more than 30 days prior to the course start date), you must qualify for, and obtain a visitor visa; however, this is strongly discouraged.

Spouses and Children

Spouses and/or children under the age of 21 who wish to accompany or join the principal (or primary) exchange visitor (J) visa holder in the U.S. for the duration of his/her stay require exchange visitor visas. The application procedure is the same as that for a primary visa applicant. The sponsor must approve the accompaniment of the spouse and/or children and who will each be issued their own Form DS-2019. This form is used to obtain the required visa and the spouse and dependents can enter the U.S. at the same time as the principal exchange visitor or at a later date.

Work - The spouse and/or children of an exchange visitor in the U.S. may not work in J-2 status, unless they have filed Form I-765 Application for Employment Authorization and U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) has approved permission to work. To learn more, select How Do I Get a Work Permit (Employment Authorization Document)? to go to the USCIS website.

Study- The spouse and/or children of an exchange visitor visa holder who are in the U.S. on an exchange visitor visa may study in the U.S. without also being required to apply for a student (F-1) visa or change to F-1 status.

Spouses and/or children who do not intend to reside in the U.S. with the principal visa holder, but visit for vacations only, may be eligible to apply for visitor (B-2) visas, or if qualified, travel without a visa under the Visa Waiver Program.

Family Members Following to Join the Exchange Visitor

The spouse and children can also apply for visas after the principal applicant has already traveled. In general, they must present the following:

- Form DS 2019, SEVIS generated, and approved by the sponsor
- Proof that the principal applicant (the person who received the DS-2019) is maintaining his/her J-visa status
- Copy of the J-1's (principal applicant's) visa
- Proof of relationship to the principal applicant
- Proof of sufficient money to cover all expenses in the U.S.

NOTE: Spouses and children of exchange visitors may not enter the U.S. before the primary exchange visitor enters for the first time.

Health/Medical Insurance Requirements

All J-1 Exchange Visitors and their J-2 dependents are required to have medical insurance coverage with the following minimum benefits [22 CFR 62.14].

- Medical benefits of at least \$100,000 per accident or illness
- Repatriation of remains in the amount of \$25,000
- Expenses associated with the medical evacuation of the exchange visitor to his or her home country in the amount of \$50,000
- A deductible not to exceed \$500 per accident or illness.

All J-1 Exchange Visitors and any dependents entering the United States as holders of a J-2 visa must have insurance in effect during the period of time they are in the J program. An insurance policy secured to meet the benefits requirements must be underwritten by an insurance corporation with an A.M. Best rating of "A-" or above, an Insurance Solvency International, Ltd. (ISI) rating of "A-I" or above, a Standard and Poor's Claims Paying Ability rating of "A-" or above, or a Weiss Research, Inc. rating of B+ or above. Alternatively, the participant's policy may be backed by the full faith and credit of the government of the exchange visitor's home country.

J-1 visa holders must provide proof of health insurance for themselves and any family members when they first arrive and report to the Slutzker Center, and again if they later apply for an extension of their J-1 status. J-1 visa holders may purchase any plan that provides the minimum level of coverage listed above.