The J Exchange Visitor classification was developed to increase mutual understanding between the people of the United States and the people of other countries by means of educational and cultural exchanges. There are four main categories under the J visa used at our institution: Short Term Scholars, Professors and Research Scholars, Students and Alien Physicians.

In order to ensure compliance, the Office of International Affairs (OIA) has been designated as the only representatives to prepare documentation for any J-1 visitors in behalf of the institution.

Departments or visitors seeking the J visa status are encouraged to consult with the Office of International Affairs as early as possible. A general process flowchart, document checklist and other instructional forms are also provided through the OIA J-1 Exchange Visitor Program Web Page.

Eligibility

To qualify for a J-1 visa, the visitor must meet the following criteria:

1) Research Scholar, Professor & Short-term Scholar. To qualify under one of these categories, applicants must:
   a. Be sponsored by a UTHealth department for a full-time appointment
   b. Have the approval from the Office of Postdoctoral Affairs if it is for a postdoctoral appointment
   c. Have the approval from OGHI, Human Resources and the Provost office if it’s an observer, trainee or visiting scientist appointment.
   d. Have completed at least a Bachelor’s degree and able to provide an official credential evaluation
   e. Present evidence of financial solvency in the minimum amount of $1,797 U.S. dollars per month, and $2,500 per year per family dependent when applicable.
   f. Have the necessary English proficiency
   g. Agree to purchase health insurance coverage including medical evacuation and repatriation insurance for the duration of the J-1 visa status in the U.S. in the following amounts:
      i. Medical benefits of at least $50,000 per accident or illness;
      ii. Repatriation of remains in the amount of $7,500;
      iii. Expenses associated with the medical evacuation of the exchange visitor to his or her home country in the amount of 10,000; and
      iv. A deductible not to exceed $500 per accident or illness.” 22 C.F.R. § 62.14(a)

2) Students. To qualify under the J student category, students (degree & non-degree seeking) must have been admitted to an educational program for a “full-course of study” and meet at least one the following criteria:
   a. They or their program are financed directly or indirectly by U.S. government, the student home government, or international organization of which the U.S. is a member by treaty or statute
   b. The exchange program is carried out pursuant to an agreement between the U.S. government and foreign government;
   c. The exchange program is carried out pursuant to a written agreement between an American and foreign educational institution, an American educational institution and foreign government, or a U.S. state or local government and a foreign government
   d. The exchange visitor student is supported substantially by funding from any source other than personal or family funds.
   e. The student must present evidence of financial solvency to meet the minimum yearly amount required by the School and agree to purchase health insurance for the duration of the J-1 visa status in the U.S
   f. Agree to purchase health insurance coverage including medical evacuation and repatriation insurance for the duration of the J-1 visa status in the U.S. in the following amounts:
      i. Medical benefits of at least $50,000 per accident or illness;
      ii. Repatriation of remains in the amount of $7,500;
      iii. Expenses associated with the medical evacuation of the exchange visitor to his or her home country in the amount of 10,000; and
      iv. A deductible not to exceed $500 per accident or illness.” 22 C.F.R. § 62.14(a)
3) **Physicians.** For physicians to qualify for graduate medical training at the residency or fellowship levels must refer to specific instructions for this category provided through the OIA J-1 Physicians in Graduate Medical Education Web Page.

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**Application Process for Initial J-1 Visa Sponsorship**

When the sponsoring school/department decides to appoint the international visitor and OIA determines that a J-1 visa is the appropriate visa, the department must submit all of the items on the J-1 Documents Checklist For All J Visa Requests found in the OIA J-1 Instructions and Forms Web Page.

It is strongly recommended that all sponsorship documentation on the checklist be delivered together vs. the delivery of one document at a time. Application processing will not begin until all sponsorship documentation has been completed by the sponsoring school/department and delivered to the OIA.

It is the responsibility of the sponsoring school/department to ensure appropriate institutional approval and clearance for processing the offer or appointment required in connection with the individual in reference prior to submitting final visa request to OIA. This includes but is not limited to Office of Postdoctoral Affairs, Human Resources, Provost Office, Office of Global Health Initiatives, etc.

Once OIA reviews the required documents, OIA will notify the department whether or not the prospective visitor is eligible to obtain form DS-2019. If eligible, an advisor will process the DS-2019 form in the Student Exchange Information System (SEVIS). This normally requires 7 to 10 business days.

When the DS-2019 and supporting documents are ready for pick-up OIA will notify the sponsoring department to pick-up and mail the documents to the visitor. The sponsoring department can also provide a pre-paid air bill and OIA will send the documentation to the applicant directly.

To prevent the visitor from encountering any delays in entering the U.S. to begin his/her appointment, departments are advised to submit all documentation to OIA at least three months prior to the anticipated date. The visitor should not make any travel arrangements to enter the U.S. until he/she received the form DS-2019 and is granted the J visa stamp by the U.S. Embassy.

The final decision to grant the J-1 visa is that of the U.S. Embassy or Consulate abroad and is based on the applicant:
- Establishing qualifications for the appointment offered (educational credentials)
- English proficiency
- Sufficient funds to support his/her stay in the U.S
- Evidence that any prior stay in the U.S. was in compliance with the Department of Homeland Security regulations
- Strong ties to the home country.

Upon arrival at the U.S. Port of Entry, it is the final decision of the U.S. Department of Homeland Security Inspector to grant admission to the J-1 visitor.

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**Transfer- IN To UTHealth J-1 Exchange Visitors**

Individuals who are currently in the U.S. in the J-1 Exchange Visitor visa status and would like to transfer their Student and Exchange Visitor Information System (SEVIS) record to The University of Texas Health Science Center at Houston (UTHSC-H) must complete the documents listed in the J-1 Documents Checklist For All J Visa Requests found in the OIA J-1 Instructions and Forms Web Page including a completed and signed Request to Transfer-In Form as well as a Research Correlation Letter from the sponsoring current or future supervisor that specifically states how the research at The University of Texas will directly relate to the research being conducted at the previous institution. If the Office of International Affairs (OIA) determines that the visitor is eligible to transfer to UTHSC-H, the RO/ARO at their current institution must release the SEVIS record. OIA will not have access to the SEVIS record until the release date set by the visitor’s RO/ARO is reached.
Transfer-Out From UTHealth
J-1 Exchange Visitors

Individuals who are currently in the U.S. in the J-1 Exchange Visitor visa status and would like to transfer their Student and Exchange Visitor Information System (SEVIS) record from The University of Texas Health Science Center at Houston (UTHSC-H) to another SEVIS approved institution must complete Section I of the Request to Transfer Out Form found in the OIA J-1 Instructions and Forms Web Page. The RO/ARO at the transfer-in or receiving institution must complete Section II of this form. If the Office of International Affairs (OIA) determines that the visitor is eligible to transfer-out from UTHSC-H, the OIA International Visitor Advisor (IVA) will set an effective date for the record to transfer-out in the Student and Exchange Visitor Information System (SEVIS). The RO/ARO at the transfer-in or receiving program will not have access to the SEVIS record until the effective date of transfer set by the current IVA is reached. It is the visitor's responsibility to contact the International Visitor Advisor (IVA) at OIA within 30 days of the new program start date in order to complete the transfer-out process.

Application Process for Extension of J-1 Visa Sponsorship

Based upon the visitor's classification, if an extension is necessary and the visitor is eligible for the extension beyond the time initially requested, the end date on the DS-2019 can be extended according to the UTHSC-H and visitor's needs. The Office of International Affairs (OIA) will determine the eligibility for the extension of J-1 visa status and issuance of an extended Form DS-2019 upon receipt of the items on the J-1 Documents Checklist For All J Visa Requests found in the OIA J-1 Instructions and Forms Web Page.

Maximum stay allowed for J-1 Exchange Visitor categories

Research Scholar/Professor: eligible to extend up to 5 Years if exchange visitor has not received or been recommended for a waiver of the 2 year home residency requirement and has maintained J status.
Short-Term Scholar: eligible to extend up to 6 months with no option to extend beyond the six month period.
Student Non-Degree: eligible to extend up to 2 Years if exchange visitor has not received or been recommended for a waiver of the 2 year home residency requirement and has maintained J status.

Once OIA reviews the required documents, an International Visitor Advisor (IVA) will notify the department administrator whether or not the prospective exchange visitor is eligible to obtain extension of Form DS-2019. If not eligible, the IVA will notify the Department and Visitor of the reasons the extended document cannot be issued. If eligible, the IVA will process the extended DS-2019 in the Student Exchange Visitor Information System (SEVIS). This normally requires 10 business days. Please refer to OIA Timelines Chart for Visa Requests located in the OIA J-1 Instructions and Forms Web Page.

Once the DS-2019 information is accepted by the SEVIS system, the IVA will print the extended DS-2019 and will contact the exchange visitor to pick up the extended DS-2019 Form.

The Office of International Affairs stands ready to assist sponsoring departments and visitors in complying with the procedures outlined above. If you have any questions needing immediate attention, please do not hesitate to contact the Office of International Affairs by phone at (713) 500-3176, or by e-mail at utoiahouston@uth.tmc.edu. OIA is located in the University Center Tower, 7000 Fannin Suite 130. The office hours are Monday – Friday from 8 AM to 5 PM with the exception of Thursday when the office is closed from 2 PM until 5 PM.