

J-1 Visa

J-1 Exchange Visitor Program

The J-1 is an exchange visitor classification designed for the purpose of exchanging ideas, knowledge and culture between the U.S. and other countries. The intent of this classification is for individuals to enter the U.S. for a specific and limited period of time, attain knowledge, hone skills and return to their home country to share the knowledge and experience gained in the U.S. UAMS is currently approved to host Short-Term Scholar and Research Scholar category exchange visitors.

J-1 Short-Term Scholar Category

A professor, research scholar, or person with similar education or accomplishments coming to the United States on a short-term visit for the purpose of lecturing, observing, consulting, training, or demonstrating special skills at research institutions, museums, libraries, post-secondary accredited educational institutions, or similar type of institutions. The program duration is up to only 6 months.

- Not subject to 12 or 24 month bar that would prevent a future visit under the Research Scholar/Professor category
- May be possible to return again in the J-1 Short Term Scholar visa category, providing there is a substantial break between visits, and that each visit has a new and unique objective.
- Limited to a maximum time of 6 months with no options of extension, transfers or change of visa inside the U.S.

J-1 Research Scholar Category

A research scholar is an individual primarily conducting research, observing, or consulting in connection with a research project. The research scholar may also teach or lecture, unless disallowed by the sponsor. The program duration is up to 5 years.

- May extend the program, within maximum duration, providing normal sponsorship terms remain (e.g. funding)
- Upon completion of program may not be able to return to the U.S. to participate in another Research Scholar program for 24 months.

Program suitability requirement

All sponsors, are required to determine 1) the suitability of their program for prospective participants; and 2) that participants have sufficient proficiency in the English language to participate in their programs.

Minimum funding requirement

A minimum of \$18,000 a year (\$1,500/month) is required to support a single visiting scholar at UAMS; an additional \$3,600 a year is required for each accompanying dependent (\$300/month). In order to generate the required visa documents, UAMS is required to obtain documentation proving that the visitor has adequate financial resources to provide for estimated expenses (and the expenses of

dependents) for the full duration of the program. If the J-1 Exchange Visitor will be paid by UAMS, the sponsoring department needs to provide a signed offer letter. If the J-1 Exchange Visitor will not be paid by UAMS, they need to provide one or two of the following financial supporting documents **in English**.

- **Private funds:** J-1 Exchange Visitor's or family member's most recent bank balance statement, meeting the requirements described above. If it's family member's bank balance statement, an additional fanatical support letter with family member's signature is needed.
- **Support from government, organization, employer or sponsor:** A detailed letter from the sponsor indicating the exact amount being provided in U.S. dollars. This letter must be on official letterhead and include the dates of sponsorship.

***Please note: Exchange visitors may only use private funds for up to 6 months of their stay.**

Insurance requirement

According to the J-1 program regulations, the exchange visitor must have proof that insurance is in effect that covers himself/herself and his/her dependents for sickness or accident during the period of participation in the program. The minimum J-1 insurance coverage requirements are as follows:

- Provide a minimum of \$100,000 per accident or illness.
- Medical evacuation (emergency medical transportation to the home country) covered in the amount of \$50,000.
- Repatriation (the transportation of remains back to the home country in the unfortunate event of death) covered in the amount of \$25,000.
- The deductible must not exceed \$500 per accident or illness.

If the exchange visitor is an UAMS benefits-eligible employee, s/he will be eligible for this coverage through UAMS-provided medical plans. If the exchange visitor is not a UAMS-paid employee or not eligible for benefits, they will need to secure insurance coverage for themselves through an outside company. The following are some companies that can be contacted to obtain health insurance:

- [Insubuy](#)
- [Student Secure Policy](#) through The Lewer Agency, Inc.

The J-1 scholar must provide insurance proof upon arrival in the US. If the J-1 scholar and/or dependents fail to maintain the mandatory health insurance coverage, they will be in violation of federal immigration regulations; will be subject to termination as a participant; and must leave the US immediately. Failure to secure or maintain adequate health insurance will result in termination of the J-1 program participation.

Pre-arrival information

Sponsors must provide the following pre-arrival information:

- The purpose of the Exchange Visitor Program
- Home-country physical presence requirement

- Travel and entry into the United States
- Other Costs that the exchange visitor will likely incur (e.g., living expenses) while in the United States
- Health care and insurance

Additional information that will assist exchange visitors to prepare for their stay in the United States. The above-mentioned information is provided in the new J-1 packet, which will be emailed to the J-1 Exchange Visitors.

Orientation requirement

Program regulations require sponsors to offer appropriate orientation for all exchange visitors and their immediate family. Orientation includes, but is not limited to, the following information:

- Life and customs in the United States
- Local community resources (e.g., public transportation, medical centers, schools, libraries, recreation centers and banks), to the extent possible
- Available health care, emergency assistance, and insurance coverage
- A description of the program in which the exchange visitor is participating
- Rules that the exchange visitors are required to follow under the sponsor's program

The orientation may be done in person or virtually, whichever applies.

General requirement for sponsors

Sponsors are required to monitor their participants' welfare and progress to the extent appropriate for the category, and ensure that their activities are consistent with the category indicated on the Form DS-2019. Sponsors are also to require that all exchange visitors keep them apprised of their current addresses and phone numbers of their participants and to maintain this information. Sponsors are required to provide all participants with emergency contact information.

J-1 Immigration Process

UAMS J-1 program is for research, consultation and/or observation only. If you are interested in inviting a new J-1 Exchange Visitors to UAMS, please complete and send the [Immigration-Pre-process-Survey to askimmigration@uams.edu](mailto:askimmigration@uams.edu). If you are interested in inviting a current J-1 Exchange Visitor at another institution to join at UAMS, please complete and send [J-1 Exchange Visitor Transfer in Form to askimmigration@uams.edu](mailto:askimmigration@uams.edu). Upon receiving the form, Immigration Services Office will contact you to start the J-1 process.

STEP ONE: OPEN CASE

The sponsoring department will need the access to Immigration Tracker Portal to open case for the J-1 Exchange Visitor. To obtain access to the Immigration Tracker Portal, email AskImmigration@uams.edu.

You will receive a “Welcome to Tracker IMS” email from Support@trackercorp.com with your access link.

Once you have created your account, please do the following:

1. Hover over the “Add” button, and click “Process.”
2. Under the “New Service Request” section, choose J-1 Consular from the Process dropdown list.
3. If you are creating a J-1 request for a NEW EMPLOYEE:

a. Leave the Individual selection as “- New -” and click the “UAMS Intake – Add New Process/Employee” link.

OR

2. If you are creating an J-1 request for an EXISTING EMPLOYEE:

a. Select the employee’s name in the Individual dropdown list.*

b. Click the “UAMS Intake – Add New Process/Employee” link.

*If you do not see your existing employee’s name under Individual, notify the Immigration Services office.

Please make sure that a correct email address is entered when filling out the intake form.

STEP TWO: EXPORT CONTROL FORM

Before any foreign national can be granted J-1 status to come to UAMS they must be run through Export Control Office. Therefore, you will be requested to fill out an Export Control Clearance Form for the foreign national once the intake form is accepted by us in the Immigration Tracker

Note: Export Control Approval can take up to 15 business days depending on the nature of the research project that the foreign national will be involved in. If it is determined that an Export Control license will need to be applied for from the U.S. Government, the visit/work will have to be delayed until the license is granted.

STEP THREE: SUBMIT DOCUMENTS

You will receive an email once the Intake is approved asking you to submit the following documents to Immigration Services Office for the foreign national:

- 1) Signed Affidavit Agreement for J-1 Sponsorship
- 2) Invitation letter or offer letter.
- 3) Copy of passports for foreign national and any dependents they might be bringing.

STEP FOUR: PICK UP NEW J-1 PACKET AND SEND IT TO FOREIGN NATIONAL

After a new J-1 packet for the foreign national is created by the Immigration Services Office, you will receive an email asking you to pick up the new J-1 packet and send it to the foreign national.

STEP FIVE: IMMIGRATION CHECK-IN

You need to keep the Immigration Services Office updated with the foreign national's J-1 visa application process and inform the arrival date once you find it out. The new J-1 Exchange Visitors need to bring their immigration documents to our office as soon as they enter the U.S.

J-1 Program FAQs

GENERAL PROGRAM INFORMATION

1. What are the basic requirements to qualify for an exchange visitor (J) visa under immigration law?

Exchange visitor applicants must meet specific requirements to qualify for an exchange visitor (J) visa under immigration law. The consular officer will make the final determination whether an individual qualifies for the visa. All applicants must demonstrate that they properly meet requirements, including, but not limited to, the following:

- That they plan to remain in the U.S. for a temporary, specific, limited period;
- Evidence of funds to cover expenses in the U.S.;
- Evidence of compelling social and economic ties abroad; and other binding ties which will insure their return abroad at the end of the visit.

2. Which J-1 categories are available for UAMS appointments?

Research Scholar: a research scholar is an individual primarily conducting research, observing, or consulting in connection with a research project. The research scholar may also teach or lecture, unless disallowed by the sponsor.

- Minimum stay of three weeks required
- Maximum stay of five years

Short-term Scholar: a short-term scholar is an individual coming to the US for a period of up to six months to lecture, observe, consult, and participate in seminars, workshops, conferences, study tours, professional meetings, or similar types of educational and professional activities.

- No minimum stay required
- Maximum stay of six months (NOTE: no extensions beyond six months under any circumstances)

3. What are the advantages of the exchange visitor (J) status?

The primary advantages of the J-1 status are that it can be obtained relatively easily and quickly and that it usually allows the spouse and dependents holding J-2 status to work while in the US.

4. When should other immigration classifications be considered?

Visiting scholars and researchers who are unsure of their future plans with respect to employment at UAMS or in the US, and who would be subject to the two-year home country residence requirement, are advised to review and consider alternative non-immigrant work visas.

5. Which types of UAMS appointments are eligible for J-1 scholar status?

J-1 scholar status is limited to those who hold temporary, “visiting” academic positions. It cannot be used for tenure-track faculty positions, regular faculty or support positions, administrative positions, or staff positions. Be sure to check your college’s internal policy regarding appointments, positions, lengths, and restrictions (e.g. Academic Visitor policy). Also, the J-1 program may not be used for clinical appointments or for foreign medical graduates (FMGs) who will be involved in clinical activities or for those receiving medical training. FMGs who wish to participate in clinical programs of graduate medical education or training cannot be sponsored by the UAMS exchange visitor program. The only exchange program authorized to sponsor FMGs as J-1 exchange visitors for internships, residencies, specialized clinical training, and in other positions involving more than incidental patient contact, is the [Educational Commission for Foreign Medical Graduates \(ECFMG\)](#).

6. Can departments sponsor physicians to pursue graduate medical education such as a residency or fellowship?

NO. Physicians may ONLY be involved in teaching or research. Any patient contact must be incidental and under direct supervision of a state licensed physician who is a U.S. citizen or permanent resident. To pursue graduate medical education or training (residency or fellowship), a physician must apply through the [Educational Commission for Foreign Medical Graduates \(ECFMG\)](#).

7. How far in advance should planning begin to invite a J-1 scholar to UAMS?

Plans to invite a J-1 scholar should begin three to four months in advance of the start date of the appointment to allow for case review, document preparation, mailing immigration documents, and visa processing. In some cases, scholar may experience significant delays in visa processing abroad. Sponsors and prospective exchange visitors are encouraged to familiarize themselves with the visa application process as specified by the U.S. Embassy or Consulate abroad.

8. How long will it take Immigration Services to issue a DS-2019?

Upon receiving all the required documents and informatin, please allow 10 business days for processing.

9. Who is responsible for sending the DS-2019 to the exchange visitor?

The UAMS sponsoring department is responsible for sending the original DS-2019 (whether domestic or international) to the exchange visitor.

LIMITATIONS / REPEAT PARTICIPATION

1. What is the Twelve Month Bar?

A foreign national is ineligible to participate in a research scholar exchange program if he or she has held any J nonimmigrant status within the 12-month period immediately preceding the start of the exchange program. This Twelve-Month Bar applies to J-2 dependents as well as principal non-immigrants. The following three exceptions exist:

- J-1 transfers to UAMS without any gap
- Prior presence in J status in the US was of less than 6 months duration
- Presence in J status as a Short-Term Scholar

2. What is the 24-Month (Two-Year) Bar?

An individual who participates in the Exchange Visitor Program as a J-1 Professor or Research Scholar becomes subject to the 24-Month Bar on “repeat participation” in those particular categories after completing his or her program even if the program lasts less than five years. DOS has taken the position that the 24-Month Bar will also apply to J-2 dependents of J-1 Professors or Research Scholars if the J-2 subsequently wishes to return as a J-1 Professor or Research Scholar.

3. What is the Two-Year Home Country Residence Requirement?

J-1 individuals who have received funding from their government or the US government for J-1 program participation, or whose skills are deemed to be in short supply by the home country (i.e. on the “Skills list”), are obliged to leave the US upon completion of their programs. Exchange visitors who are subject to the Two-Year Home Country Residence Requirement must “reside and be physically present” in their “home” country for an aggregate of two years before being eligible for certain immigration benefits. For more information, see the [DOS Exchange Visitor Website](#).

While an individual is subject to the Two-Year Home Country Residence Requirement, they are ineligible for the following benefits:

- Change nonimmigrant status within the United States from J to any other nonimmigrant category except A (diplomatic) and G (international organization) statuses;
- An immigrant visa or adjustment of status to lawful permanent resident (immigrant/green card) status;
- H visa (temporary workers and dependents), or an L visa (intracompany transferees and dependents).

4. Can an exchange visitor request a waiver of the 2 year home residence requirement?

In some cases, this requirement may be waived upon recommendation of the home government or on other grounds. The final authority to grant the waiver lies with USCIS. Please note that once J-1/J-2 receives either a waiver approval notice (from USCIS) or a waiver recommendation (by DOS), he/she is no longer eligible for any extensions, etc. as he/she is no longer considered as a bona fide exchange visitor by DOS, which oversees the J exchange visitor program. He/she can, of course, finish his/her current exchange program until the end date listed on the current DS-2019. Thus, a J-1/J-2 should plan the timing of a waiver application carefully. Visit [J-1 Waiver page](#) for more information about the J-1 Waiver requirements and process.

APPLYING FOR A J-1 VISA

1. What are SEVIS and SEVP?

The SEVP monitors school and exchange programs and F, M and J category visitors. The Student and Exchange Visitor Information System (SEVIS) is an Internet-based system that maintains accurate and current information on nonimmigrant students (F and M visa), exchange visitors (J visa), and their dependents (F-2, M-2, and J-2). SEVIS enables schools and program sponsors to transmit mandatory information and event notifications via the Internet, to the DHS and DOS throughout a student or exchange visitor’s stay in the U.S.

2. What is a form DS-2019?

Form DS-2019 is Certificate of Eligibility for Exchange Visitor Status, which is the document required for a scholar to obtain a J-1 visa. UAMS Immigration Services Office issue Form DS-2019 to the J-1 Exchange Visitors. The J-1 Exchange Visitors take the DS-2019 to the US Embassy or consulate to apply for their J-1 visa.

3. What is the process to obtain a J-1 visa?

If the J-1 Exchange Visitor is outside the U.S., they need to obtain a J-1 visa in order to enter the U.S. For more detailed information about how to apply for a J-1 visa, and the supporting documents they need to take to the visa interview, please see <http://www.usembassy.gov/>.

4. Is form DS-7002 required when applying for a visa at the US Embassy or Consulate?

The DS-7002 form is ONLY required for the **Trainee** or **Intern** category of J-visa. This form is NOT required for J-1 Professor / Research Scholar or Short-Term Scholar categories.

5. How long does it take to obtain a J-1 Visa?

The wait time for an interview and processing for a J-1 Visa varies from country to country and is based on individual circumstances. Learn more about interview wait and processing times by visiting Travel.State.Gov.

6. The J-1 visa has been issued, when can the exchange visitor 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.

7. What is Administrative Processing?

Some visa applications require further administrative processing, which takes additional time after the visa applicant's interview by a Consular Officer. Applicants are advised of this requirement when they apply. Most administrative processing is resolved within 60 days of the visa interview. When administrative processing is required, the timing will vary based on individual circumstances of each case. Visa applicants are reminded to apply early for their visa, well in advance of the anticipated travel date. **Important Notice:** *Before making inquiries about status of administrative processing, applicants must wait at least 60 days from the date of interview or submission of supplemental documents, whichever is later.*

8. Can the UAMS Immigration office expedite my J-1 application or request to expedite administrative processing?

No. There is no expedited or premium processing option for J-1 visa applications, please visit the U.S. Embassy or Consulate website for current processing times. Exchange visitor planning should begin well in advance allowing for ample time to obtain the J-1 visa. No assurances regarding the issuance of visas can be given in advance. Therefore final travel plans or the purchase of non-refundable tickets should not be made until a visa has been issued.

ARRIVAL & PROGRAM ADJUSTMENTS

1. Why does UAMS Immigration Services need to be notified when exchange visitors arrive?

Among other reasons, failure to adjust the scholar's status within 30 calendar days of the program start date on the DS-2019 will cause the exchange visitor's program to be automatically terminated. Please notify Immigration Services if the scholar plans to arrive later than the program start date.

2. What documentation is required for immigration check-in upon arrival?

Once the J-1 Exchange Visitor arrives in Little Rock, he/she needs to bring the following documents to Immigration Services Office for immigration check-in purposes:

- Passport & I-94 Card
- DS-2019 & copies of all previous DS-2019 / I-20 forms
- Verification of Insurance Compliance

3. How to extend J-1 program?

The supervisor of the J-1 Exchange Visitor needs to submit the [J-1 Exchange Visitor Extension Request Form](#) to askimmigration@uams.edu at least one month prior to the J-1 Exchange Visitor's program expires, together with a new offer letter or invitation letter for extension.

4. How to transfer a J-1 Exchange Visitor from other institution to UAMS?

In order to transfer a current J-1 Exchange Visitor from other institution to UAMS, the sponsoring department needs to contact Immigration Services Office at least two months prior to the transfer. The sponsoring department needs to submit the [J-1 Exchange Visitor Transfer in Request form](#) to askimmigration@uams.edu to initiate the process.

5. How to transfer a J-1 Exchange Visitor from UAMS to other Institution?

The J-1 Exchange Visitor needs to submit the [J-1 Exchange Visitor transfer out request form](#) to askimmigration@uams.edu to initiate the process.

6. What should J-1 Exchange Visitors do before leaving UAMS?

The J-1 Exchange Visitors need to submit the [J-1 Exchange Visitor Exit form](#) to askimmigration@uams.edu at least two weeks before they leave UAMS and return to their home country.

7. What are the legal rights/protections for employment or education-based nonimmigrants?

Recent changes to U.S. law relate to the legal rights of certain employment or education-based nonimmigrants under Federal immigration, labor, and employment laws, and the information to be provided about protections and available resources. As a temporary visitor to the U.S., it is important to be aware of rights, as well as protections and resources available. Review the Nonimmigrant Rights, Protections and Resources pamphlet for additional information.

8. How long are exchange visitors allowed to stay in the U.S. after the program has ended?

The initial admission of an exchange visitor, spouse and children may not exceed the period specified on Form DS-2019, plus a period of 30 days only for domestic travel and/or to prepare for and depart from the U.S.

DEPENDENTS: J-2 VISA

1. Can spouses and children accompany J-1 exchange visitors?

Spouses and/or children (or dependents) 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. Immigration Services must approve the accompaniment of the spouse and/or children and who will each be issued their own Form DS-2019.

2. Can J-2 dependents work while in the U.S.?

The spouse and/or child of an exchange visitor in the U.S. may only work if 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, visit www.uscis.org.

3. Can J-2 dependents study while in the U.S.?

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.