A Guide to Exchange Visitor Program

Welcome

We are glad that you chose The University of Texas at Tyler (UT Tyler) for your J-1 Exchange Visitor Program and look forward to welcoming you to Tyler. We, at International Student, Scholar & Faculty Services (ISSFS), are here to help you with immigration and other matters during your stay.

This guide contains critical information about immigration regulations, programs and services for new international scholars and students with the Exchange Visitor Program. Whether you are coming to UT Tyler from your home country or from another U.S. university, please read this guide carefully.

UT Tyler is located in Tyler, Texas, the business and medical center of East Texas. UT Tyler’s main campus consists of about 210 acres nestled into the beautiful pine and oak forests of East Texas. The University has regional campuses in nearby cities of Longview and Palestine. And it is about 100 miles from Dallas. We are the safest campus in the state of Texas.

To learn more about the city of Tyler by visiting these websites, www.visittyler.com and www.cityoftyler.org.

Contact Information:
International Student, Scholar & Faculty Services (ISSFS)
Office of International Programs
The University of Texas at Tyler
3900 University Blvd. Tyler, Texas 75799

Email: issfs@uttyler.edu
Phone: 903-566-7479 FAX: 903-565-5858
Web: http://www.uttyler.edu
Pre-arrival Checklist

- Read all of the information in the J-1 Scholar Pre-arrival Guide. All of the items listed below are discussed in further detail in this guide.
- Verify that all the information on your DS-2019 is correct. Note the program beginning date and notify your inviting department and ISSFS immediately if your travel plans have changed.
- Pay the SEVIS FEE online at [http://www.fmjfee.com/i901fee](http://www.fmjfee.com/i901fee).
- Apply for a J-1 Visa at the nearest U.S. Consulate or Embassy to your home residence.
- Purchase or make plans to purchase **health insurance coverage**. The U.S. Department of State requires all individuals who in J-1 (including J-2) status must be insured from day one of their arrival in the United States.
- Arrange for your housing needs. Although ISSFS is able to assist you in arranging housing, this guide provides an overview of the many housing choices in the area near the campus and in Tyler.
- Schedule your mandatory J-1 Student & Scholar Orientation with ISSFS shortly after your arrival in Tyler.
- Arrange for transportation from the Tyler airport to your hotel or apartment.

SEVIS Fee

All J-1 visa applicants must pay the SEVIS fee of $180. The SEVIS fee must be paid at least three business days before the scheduled visa application interview at the U.S. Consulate. For most individuals, the SEVIS fee can be paid by electronically completing the Form I-901 and paying with a credit card through the Internet at [http://www.fmjfee.com/i901fee](http://www.fmjfee.com/i901fee). You will need the information from your DS-2019 in order to complete the SEVIS Fee payment.

*The SEVIS fee must be paid at least three business days before the scheduled interview for the visa application at the U.S. Consulate.*

Please print the electronic receipt immediately after payment has been made. You must show the receipt to the consular officer at the time of the interview. Spouses and dependent children (J-2s) do not pay this fee. The SEVIS fee is not a visa application fee. It is used to operate and maintain the SEVIS system. The fee is non-refundable, even if the visa application is denied.

Note for Mac Users: The Internet Explorer browser does not work properly with the website [http://www.fmjfee.com/i901fee](http://www.fmjfee.com/i901fee) for payment of the SEVIS fee. Please use Safari1.2.2 or higher, available at [http://www.apple.com](http://www.apple.com); Netscape7.1 or higher, available at [http://www.netscape.com](http://www.netscape.com); or Firefox1.0 or higher, available at [http://www.mozilla.org](http://www.mozilla.org).
Applying for a J-1/J-2 Visa

A valid J-1 visa is required to enter the United States on the Exchange Visitor Program. For information on processing times and procedures, visit the U.S. Department of State at [http://travel.state.gov/visa/temp/types/types_1267.html](http://travel.state.gov/visa/temp/types/types_1267.html).

A personal interview is required, so you will need to schedule your appointment as soon as possible. Be aware there also could be substantial delays due to security checks, so please plan your travel arrangements accordingly.

Immediate family members (spouse and children under the age of 21) who will accompany you to the United States may apply for J-2 visas using the DS-2019 forms enclosed. If your family will join you later, a DS-2019 form will be issued by ISSFS upon request.

The following is generally required for the J-1/J-2 visa application:

- Signed Form DS-2019(s). A separate form is required for all visa applicants. The J-1 should sign the bottom of the first page of all forms and submit them for the visa application. The DS-2019(s) will be returned to you to present at the U.S. port of entry.
- Receipt showing payment of the SEVIS fee (J-1 visa only).
- Payment of the visa application fee, and appropriate visa application forms (see U.S. Consulate webpage), for each visa applicant.
- Passport(s) valid for at least 6 months into the future, for each visa applicant.
- Proof of ties to your home country. Consult the website of your local U.S. Consulate/Embassy for suggestions.
- Proof of financial support. You must be able to verify the total funds indicated on the DS-2019 with a personal bank statement and/or a sponsor’s official statement of support. If you are receiving payment from UT Tyler, you may request a letter from the inviting department that specifies your position and salary.
- Two passport-size photos for each visa applicant often required (check with U.S. Consulate/Embassy).
- J-1 Invitation letter from the sponsoring department at UT Tyler (recommended).
- Marriage certificate and birth certificates (in English with attached transaction) of children carrying their own passports (J-2 visa only).

Funding/Financial Support Requirements

The initial request by the hiring department can be for up to a maximum of five years. Verification of funding/financial support is required. Funding may be from the University, the Exchange Visitor's government, personal funds or a combination of these sources.

The funding/financial support requirements for visiting scholars are:
- $1,500/month (J-1)
- $500/month (J-2 spouse)
- $300/month (per J-2 child)

**Medical Insurance Requirements**

U.S. Department of State regulations require all J-1 Exchange Visitors to have medical insurance for themselves and any accompanying J-2 family members for the duration of their program.

*Willful violation of the insurance requirement is a violation of J-1 status and can result in the termination of your J-1 program by ISSS, in accordance with immigration regulations.*

Your insurance must meet the following requirements:

- Major Medical Coverage: $50,000 per accident/illness
- Repatriation of Remains: $7,500
- Medical Evacuation: $10,000
- Deductible cannot exceed: $500 for accident/illness

Fulfilling this requirement is essential, not only because of the U.S. Department of State regulations, but because medical treatment in the United States is very expensive without proper insurance coverage.

It is the J-1 visa holder’s responsibility to notify ISSFS of dependents who are currently in the United States or who arrive subsequently and present evidence of appropriate insurance coverage for them.

You are required to purchase an insurance policy for the entire duration of your program (as indicated on your DS-2019) if your program’s duration is less than one year. If your program will continue for more than one year, you may purchase insurance for first year only and renew your policy in yearly increments. It is your responsibility to provide proof of continuous insurance coverage to ISSFS.

**Foreign Medical Insurance Policies**

J-1/J-2 Exchange Visitors who will be covered within the United States under a foreign insurance policy must submit a copy of the insurance policy to ISSFS. If applicable, the policy documentation should have an English translation, indicating amounts of coverage and the dates of coverage. Individuals carrying policies that do not meet the minimum levels of coverage outlined in this guide will be required to purchase insurance that meets the U.S. Department of State requirements, which must include medical evacuation and repatriation coverage.
Pregnancy and Insurance Coverage

Most U.S. medical insurance plans will not cover a pre-existing pregnancy. If you or your spouse is currently pregnant, you must purchase a medical insurance policy in your home country that will cover the pregnancy and birth while you are in the United States.

Program Dates and Activities

Your application for a J-1 visa using the enclosed Form DS-2019 implies acceptance of the terms and conditions outlined on the second page of the form. You will be admitted to the United States to engage in the activity described in item 4 of the form and for the period of time specified in item 3.

Note: The period of your stay may be extended after your arrival, at the request of your sponsoring department at UT Tyler, for the maximum period of time indicated.

Entering the United States

Please present the following documents to the U.S. Customs and Border Protection (CBP) officer at the U.S. port of entry:

- Passport(s) containing a valid J-1 visa (or J-2 visas for accompanying family members).
- Signed Form DS-2019(s) for you and any accompanying family members.
- I-94 card(s), which are distributed on the airplane before landing.
- **Recommended:** Proof of financial support (same as the document presented at the U.S. Embassy or Consulate).
- **Recommended:** Invitation letter from the sponsoring department at The University of Texas at Tyler.

The CBP officer should return to you:

- Passport(s).
- Stamped Form(s) DS-2019 for you and any accompanying family members.
- Stamped I-94 card. Please check that your I-94 card has the notation “J-1 D/S” (stands for “duration of status”) and I-94 cards of any accompanying family members have the notation “J-2 D/S” on them.

  - **Note:** If you notice a discrepancy, please be sure to address it with the CBP officer immediately as it may be difficult to make any correction to I-94 cards once you leave the port of entry. Do not lose your I-94 card(s), which prove that you entered legally.

- Any of the recommended documents that you provided in support at your consular visa appointment.
Arrival Information

The airport at Tyler is called Tyler Pounds Regional Airport (airport code TYR), and is about 7 miles from the UT Tyler campus.

Upon your arrival to Tyler, it is very important that you:

- Inform your inviting department that you have arrived safely.
- Attend the mandatory J-1 Faculty & Scholar Orientation at ISSS.

Please Note: If you arrive Saturday or Sunday, you will find that the University and many other businesses are closed.

Mandatory J-1 Student & Scholar Orientation

Overview

The U.S. Department of State requires that your program sponsor provide you with an orientation program. After you attend the orientation, an International Student & Scholar Advisor will validate your arrival in the Student and Exchange Visitor Information System (SEVIS) database. This notifies the Department of Homeland Security that you have arrived, begun your J-1 exchange visitor program and changes your SEVIS record to ACTIVE status.

Failure to attend orientation and have your SEVIS record validated may result in future immigration complications as well as problems in obtaining a Social Security Number.

Days and Time

Please contact ISSS for scheduling a meeting as soon as possible after you arrive in UT Tyler, and attend the required J-1 Student & Scholar Orientation meeting with all of your documents with you (noted below).

What to Bring

You will need to bring the following documents to your orientation meeting for you and any accompanying J-2 dependents: passport(s), I-94 card(s), DS-2019(s), and proof of insurance. In addition, you should be prepared to provide a local U.S. Address and Emergency Contact information.

Your J-2 dependent family members are welcome to attend the orientation with you; however, the J-1 student/scholar is the only one who is required to attend.

Note: If your family members do not accompany you to the orientation, please remember to bring their documents and insurance for verification.
At orientation, we will cover topics such as J-1 maintenance of immigration status, medical evacuation/repatriation insurance, employment, banking, U.S. tax laws, obtaining a Texas Driver’s License, University Identification Card (UT ID) and U.S. Social Security Number, intercultural and family programs, and local transportation and shopping options.

212(e) Two-Year Home Residence Requirement

Exchange Visitors and their dependents may be subject to the Two-Year Home Residence Requirement. This requirement is different from the 12-month and 24-month bars mentioned below. It is very important to read and understand section 1(a) on the second page of the enclosed Form DS-2019.

The 212(e) requirement is normally associated with government funding (your country’s or U.S. government funding) and/or the skills list. To see if your country and skill results in this requirement, please check the skills list at: travel.state.gov/visa/temp/types/types_4514.html.

If you are subject to 212(e), it does not mean that you cannot return to the U.S. for two years in any nonimmigrant status, (e.g. F student or B tourist). However, it does mean that you cannot change status in the U.S. or obtain a work visa (H), permanent residency (green card) or an intra-company transferee visa (L) unless this requirement is waived or until it is met.

For more information on the Two-Year Home Residence Requirement, please see our website at www.utexas.edu/international/issss/handouts/waiver.pdf. The Consular Officer may indicate this requirement on your visa or the U.S. CBP officer may indicate it on your I-94 card as you enter the United States; however, the Department of State Exchange Visitor Program has the final determination concerning this requirement.

Repeat Participation Bars

12-month bar

USCIS regulation 22 CFR 62.20(d)(ii) established a “12-month bar” on beginning a new J-1 program as a Research Scholar or Professor for those persons who spent the previous year in the U.S. in any J status (J-1 or J-2). The bar does not apply to transfers from one institution to another, to persons who were Short-Term Scholars or to persons whose J program lasted less than six months.

24-month bar

USCIS regulation 22 CFR 62.20 (i) (2) established a “24-month bar” on repeat participation as a Research Scholar or Professor for those persons were present in the United States in J-1 Research Scholar/Professor Category on or after Nov. 17, 2006. The bar does not apply to
transfers from one institution to another.

Please note that these bars only prevent new programs for Research Scholars and Professors who have previously held J status. They do not prevent someone who has held J status from beginning a new program as a J-1 Student or Short-Term Scholar. Once the applicable 12-month or 24-month time period has lapsed, exchange visitors are again eligible to begin a program in any J category.

If you held J status within the last year or believe that one of these bars might apply to you, please contact your Faculty and Scholar Advisor at ISSS for possible alternative options for visiting The University of Texas at Tyler.

**Maximum Stay**

If the category Research Scholar or Professor is indicated in item 4 of your DS-2019, your maximum period of stay under this program is limited to five years. If the category Specialist is indicated, your maximum period of stay is limited to one year. If you will be a Short-Term Scholar, your maximum limit is six months. See the second page of the DS-2019, 1(c) “Limitations of Stay.” Upon completion of your J-1 program, you are afforded a 30-day grace period to prepare for departure from the United States.

**Tax Information and Social Security Numbers**

As in most countries, the tax laws in the United States are complex. Tax treaty benefits, Social Security taxes and filing requirements depend on your visa status, the purpose of your visit, the number of days you will be in the United States and the history of prior visits.

**Taxation of Exchange Visitors**

It is hard to generalize about specific tax situations. Under normal circumstances, visitors in J-1 status do not pay Social Security, or Medicare, taxes until they have been in the U.S. for two calendar years. However, U.S. source income is normally subject to federal income tax withholding at a 10-14% rate, or at a 30% rate for one-time payments for independent contractor services. If your country has a Tax Treaty with the United States, then a portion of your income is generally exempt from tax withholding for a certain period of time specified by the treaty.

*Please note that J-2 dependents with work authorization are fully subject to Federal, Social Security and Medicare taxes and are not eligible for tax treaty benefits.*
Tax Filing Responsibilities & Assistance

If you are in the United States for even one day in J-1/J-2 status, you will have tax filing responsibilities. If you did not have any U.S. source income, you are still required to file Form 8843 with the Internal Revenue Service (IRS). Your J-2 dependents must also file Form 8843. If you have U.S. source income, you may also be required to file a tax return. Although ISSS cannot assist you with preparing your taxes during normal office hours, volunteer tax assistance is available on Monday and Thursday evenings during tax filing season (February-April).

Social Security Number

A Social Security Number (SSN) is required for payment and taxes in the United States. Instructions on the SSN application procedure are available from ISSS.

You must wait 10 days from your arrival to the United States and be validated in the SEVIS system in order to apply for an SSN, so please plan accordingly.

Your J-1 status will be validated in the SEVIS system within 4 days of your attendance at the mandatory J-1 Scholar and Student Orientation.

Please note that if you have an SSN from a past visit to the United States, you will use the same number for your entire lifetime.

Maintaining Your J-1 Status

As a J-1 visiting scholar at University of Texas at Tyler, you have been admitted for a specific period of time to engage in a particular research or teaching activity, as described on your DS-2019 form. You must take care during your stay to maintain lawful J-1 status, as failure to do so can have serious long-term consequences for you. Fortunately, there are some simple steps you can take to ensure that your stay in the U.S. remains valid:

1. Be aware of the expiration date of your status. This is not your visa expiration date; it is the ending date in section 3 of your DS-2019 form. If your appointment at the UT Tyler is extended, the hiring department must contact ISSS before the current expiration date of the current form to have the DS-2019 form extended.
2. Do not accept unauthorized employment. The only activity you are permitted is the one described in section 4 of the DS-2019 form. You must consult ISSS beforehand if you wish to take up any other work during your stay.
3. If offered a comparable position at another college or university, discuss your plans with ISSS to make sure that the required transfer procedure can be accomplished.
4. Comply with the U.S. Department of States health insurance requirements for J-1 visa holders and their families. Willful disregard of these requirements will result in termination of your program and your J-1 status.
5. Report to ISSS any change of home address or phone number within 10 days of move.
6. The dependent spouse is expected to reside with the J-1 while in the United States.
7. Keep your passport valid. Passports can be renewed by your consulate in the United States. For a listing of Foreign Embassies in the U.S., go to the US State Department Website of Foreign Embassies Homepage.

Travel outside the United States

When traveling outside the United States, J-1 Exchange Visitors/dependents must have their DS-2019 signed for travel by ISSS, a valid passport and visa for re-entry to the United States.

Housing Information:

You may also want to make housing arrangements prior to your arrival. Visit the UT-Tyler housing webpage, www.uttyler.edu/housing/.

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J-1 Program and Key Definitions

The following information is provided by the U.S. Department of State. We include it in this guide according to the Department of State’s requirements for J-1 Program Sponsors.

The U.S. Department of State administers 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 with opportunities to participate in exchange programs in the United States and then return home to share their experiences.

Sponsors:

The U.S. Department of State designates sponsors to administer individual exchange visitor programs. Sponsors are U.S. organizations such as government agencies, academic institutions, educational and cultural organizations, and corporations. They screen and select exchange visitors participating in their programs, provide them with pre-arrival information, an orientation, and monitor their activities. Sponsors offer exchange visitors cross-cultural activities that will expose them to American society, culture, and institutions. Exchange visitors are encouraged to voluntarily participate in activities that provide them with an opportunity to share their language, culture, and history with Americans.
Exchange Visitors:
An exchange visitor is a foreign national selected by a sponsor to participate in an exchange program, and is issued a J-1 visa. An accompanying spouse and any unmarried children under 21 years of age may apply for J-2 visas, with the permission of your sponsor.

Responsible Officers:
Sponsors appoint individuals as responsible officers and alternate responsible officers to advise and assist exchange visitors. These officers issue the Certificates of Eligibility (Form DS-2019), and conduct official communications with the Department of State and the Department of Homeland Security (DHS).

Rules and Regulations:
It is important that you understand and abide by the Exchange Visitor Program regulations, U.S. laws and sponsor rules. Regular contact with your responsible officer will help you keep current of any changes, which may affect your J status.

Activities & Program Provisions:
You will enter the United States in one program category, and will be required to engage in that category and subject/field of activity listed on your form DS-2019. You must comply with the specific program provisions of the regulations relating to your program category.

Maintenance of 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.

Notification:
You must inform your responsible officer if you change your address or telephone number, or complete or withdraw from your program early. Doing so will assist your sponsor in complying with their notification and reporting requirements to the U.S. Department of State.

Contact Information:
U.S. Department of State
Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs
Office of Exchange Coordination and Designation
301 Fourth Street, SW Room 734
Washington, DC 20547