



Midwest International Research Institute (MIRI)
Midwest University
USDS Certified DS-2019
J-1 Exchange Research Scholar, Prof, Student-Intern Programs

Visas & Arrival

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).

- **Those in J-1 Student Intern Category Must Submit a Training/Internship Placement Plan, Form DS-7002.** All J-1 Student Interns (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;
- **Proof of SEVIS Fee Payment.** 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>;
- **One (1) 2x2 inch 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.

THE SEVIS FEE

The U.S. Department of Homeland Security's Federal SEVIS Fee took effect on September 1, 2004. The fee of \$180 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:

- Seeking an initial J-1 visa from an embassy or consulate abroad for initial participation in an exchange visitor program.
- 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.
- Exceptions: a fee is NOT required for a J-1 exchange visitors participating in a program sponsored by the U.S. Federal government (i.e. J-1 DS-2019 was issued by USAID or Fulbright).

SEVIS Fee Rules

- 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.
- The SEVIS fee cannot be paid at the embassy or consulate, or at the U.S. Border.
- 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.
- 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:

- Payment in U.S. dollars by credit card over the Internet, or
- 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

- Use the DS-2019 enclosed in this mailing.
- Access the Form I-901 from the internet at <http://www.fmjfee.com>.
- 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.
- 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-1 scholars need to enter the MIO 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

- 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>.
- Master Card, 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:

- 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.
- 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.
- 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 U.S, 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

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.?

- The SEVIS fee must be paid and fully processed before the applicant arrives at the consulate for the visa interview.
- 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.
- 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.
- 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.
- 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.

TRAVELING TO THE UNITED STATES

AIRPORT INFORMATION

The closest major airport is St. Louis Lambert International Airport (Airport code STL): <https://www.flystl.com>. Airlines which fly out of St.Louis are listed under the heading "Airlines" on the airport site: <https://www.flystl.com/flights-and-airlines/flight-status>

TRANSPORTATION FROM AIRPORT : In general, transportation to Syracuse Hancock International Airport is usually done by personal vehicle, but there are several taxi services in the Syracuse area. Rates for transportation are generally more expensive than public transportation and can range from \$30 to \$45 to travel between MIO and the airport.

- BlacklaneTaxi: info@blacklane.com; <https://www.blacklane.com>
- St. Louis County Cab: 314-991-5300; <http://countycab.com/services-airport/>
- Taxi Fare Finder: <https://www.taxifarefinder.com>
- Yellow Cab: 314-656-6705; <https://www.taxiservicessaintlouismo.com/>
- GO BEST Express: 314-222-5300; <https://gobestexpress.com/airport-transfers>

ARRIVING AT A U.S. PORT OF ENTRY: WHAT AN J-1 EXCHANGE VISITOR CAN EXPECT

U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement's Student and Exchange Visitor Program (SEVP) is committed to facilitating your stay in the United States while you take advantage of our nation's academic, educational, and cultural offerings. To enhance security without slowing legitimate travel, the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) has instituted some changes in U.S. entry and exit procedures. Careful planning and preparation by international students and scholars can ensure that any delay based on these procedures is minimal.

PLAN YOUR ARRIVAL

J-1 Scholars are prohibited from entering the United States more than 30 days in advance of the program start date identified in Item 3 of the DS 2019.

ALWAYS HAND CARRY YOUR DOCUMENTS

Do not store your passport or DS-2019 in your baggage or luggage. If your baggage is lost or delayed, you will be unable to present the documents at your port of entry. As a result, you may not be able to enter the United States.

You should hand carry the following documentation in a folder or envelope:

- Your passport, valid for at least six months beyond the date of your expected stay;
- SEVIS Form DS-2019;
- Evidence of financial resources;
- Evidence of status with Midwest University or letter of acceptance as a participant in the J-1 Exchange Visitor Program;
- Paper receipt for the SEVIS fee, Form I-797; and
- Name and contact information for your sponsoring organization, including a 24-hour emergency contact number.

For greater detail on procedures for traveling and arriving in the United States, visit: <http://educationusa.state.gov/predeparture/travel/customs.html>

COMPLETE YOUR ENTRY PAPERWORK

If Arriving By Air: Flight attendants will distribute Customs Declaration Forms (CF-6059) and Arrival-Departure Record Forms (I-94). These must be completed prior to landing.

If Arriving By Land or Sea: The CBP Officer at the port of entry will provide the necessary Customs Declaration Forms (CF-6059) and Arrival-Departure Record Forms (I-94) to be filled out upon your arrival.

AS YOU ARRIVE AT THE PORT OF ENTRY

Proceed to the terminal area for arriving passengers. Have the following documents available for presentation:

- Your passport;
- Your DS-2019;
- Arrival-Departure Record Form (I-94); and
- Customs Declaration Form (CF-6059).

The Form I-94 should reflect the address where you will reside, not the address of the program.

All visitors entering the United States must state their reason for wishing to enter the country. You will also be asked to provide information about your final destination. **It is important for J-1 Visa holders to tell the CBP Officer that they will be an exchange visitor.** Be prepared to include the name and address of the Midwest University.

Once your inspection is successfully completed, the inspecting officer will:

- Stamp your SEVIS Form for duration of status (“D/S”) for J visa holders with date and port of entry
- Stamp the Arrival-Departure Record Form (I-94) and staple it in the passport

FOLLOWING ADMISSION INTO THE UNITED STATES

J-1 Scholars must report to their Exchange Visitor Program sponsor within 30 days of the program begin date identified in line 3 of the DS 2019 to have their participation in the program activity validated. Failure to have participation validated will result in an automatic invalidated SEVIS record.

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

SECONDARY INSPECTION REQUIREMENTS

If the CBP officer at the port of entry cannot initially verify your information or you do not have all of the required documentation, you may be directed to an interview area known as “secondary inspection.” Secondary inspection allows inspectors to conduct additional research in order to verify information without causing delays for other arriving passengers.

It is important to answer all questions the CBP officer asks. Remember to remain calm. Secondary inspection is a normal process and is nothing of which to be afraid.

*The CBP officer will first attempt to verify your status by using the Student and Exchange and Visitor Information System (SEVIS). In the event that the CBP officer needs to verify your admission/participation with your sponsoring school or program, it is strongly recommended that you have **the name and telephone number of your foreign student advisor or J-1 Exchange Visitor Program sponsor available**. In the event you arrive during non-business hours (evenings, weekends, holidays), you should also have the emergency phone number.*

US-VISIT

All nonimmigrant visitors holding visas-regardless of race, national origin, or religion - participate in the US-VISIT, a comprehensive registration tracking system for entries to and exits from the United States. The program involves obtaining a scan of two index fingerprints and a digital photograph. For more information: www.dhs.gov/dhspublic/interapp/editorial/editorial_0440.xml

BEFORE LEAVING THE INSPECTIONS AREA

Make sure you have all of your documentation, including the following:

- *Passport*
- *Departure Record (I-94 Card)*
- *DS-2019*
- *All supporting documents (letters, proof of finances, etc.)*

MANDATORY CHECK-IN AND ORIENTATION FOR ALL NEW J-1 SCHOLARS, PROFESSOR, SPECIALISTS, AND INTERNS

Check-in and orientation for newly arrived J-1 Scholars, Professors, Specialists, and Interns is very important. The MIO for International Services must meet with ALL new J-1's within 3 days of their arrival. During check-in, the Assistant Director for Immigration and Scholar Services will advise new international employees on a variety of immigration issues as well as provide resources to assist with adjustment to life in Syracuse.

Topics typically covered during orientation include:

- *Social Security/Individual Taxpayer Identification Number Application*
- *Banking*
- *Health Care and Health Insurance*
- *Address Reporting Requirements*
- *Travel Requirements*
- *Immigration Regulations*
- *Child care and school resources*
- *Programming activities and opportunities for involvement*

Check-in and orientation requires as much as an hour to complete. Prior to a new J-1's arrival, the J-1 scholars or the host department must set up an appointment with the MIRI. Also please contact at miri@midwest.edu to schedule the appointment.

New J-1 Scholars, Professors, Specialists, and Interns should bring the following items with them to their check-in and orientation appointment:

- *Passport*
- *DS-2019*
- *I-94 Card (The white card stamped at the port of entry that should be stapled inside the passport)*
- *Proof of health/medical insurance, if obtained prior to arrival; if not, options for medical insurance will be provided during check-in and orientation*

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