

# HOW TO OBTAIN A J-1 VISA

## EXCHANGE VISITOR PROGRAM

The information below will help you as you prepare to participate in your exchange program at California State University, Fresno. It will ensure that you arrive with the appropriate immigration status in compliance with the U.S. Department of State (DOS) and Department of Homeland Security (DHS) regulations.

For more information, visit: <http://j1visa.state.gov/>

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### Obtain DS-2019 from the ISSP Office

All individuals requesting J-1 status will be issued a DS-2019 from the International Student Services and Programs Office (ISSP). The DS-2019 is a document that details the nature of your visit and verifies that you have documented eligibility to obtain J-1 status. You will use your DS-2019 to apply for the J-1 visa at a U.S. consulate and must be received before you apply for your visa.

### How to Apply for an Initial J-1 Entry Visa

Carefully read and follow these procedures.

#### Step 1: Check your form DS-2019 for completeness and correctness!

Your DS-2019 indicates that we have created a record for you in SEVIS (Student and Exchange Visitor Information System), a national database for international students and scholars. Your unique assigned SEVIS ID number is in the upper right corner of page 1. Check to see that all information is correct and that your expected completion date is in the future.

You will need to sign the DS-2019 with your name, city and country of your location, and the date of signature at the bottom of Page 1 once you have read the "Exchange Visitor Certification" statement on page 2.

#### Step 2: Make an appointment at a U.S. Consulate...

...to apply for an J-1 Student entry visa. You will need the DS-2019 form from California State University, Fresno at the time of your appointment. Check the following websites for more information on visa appointments.

- [http://travel.state.gov/visa/temp/wait/wait\\_4638.html](http://travel.state.gov/visa/temp/wait/wait_4638.html) for information about current waiting times for the appointment and for visa issuance. NOTE that the processing wait times do not include extra time that may be required for security clearances.
- <http://usembassy.state.gov/> to locate the nearest U.S. Consulate and its instructions for applying for a visa (including links to required forms). Make a list of documentation required for the interview. Note procedures for paying the visa application fee and any visa issuance fees, if applicable.
- Refer to <http://www.ice.gov/sevis/students/> for general information regarding Exchange Visitor visas.

#### Step 3: Make sure your passport is valid.

When you apply for a visa or enter the U.S., your passport must be valid for at least 6 months into the future. Some countries are exempt from this requirement and have their passports automatically extended for 6 months which means that you can use your passport up until the written expiration date.

#### Step 4: Pay the \$180 SEVIS fee and print the receipt.

With your DS-2019 in front of you, go to the web site <http://www.fmjfee.com> and follow the instructions. Print copies of the receipt - you will need one with you for the visa interview and you should keep one for your own records. You can only access the receipt at the time of payment so be sure your printer is working before paying the fee.

#### Step 5: Complete the required Department of State application form

**DS-160 (New Online Nonimmigrant Visa Application):** Everyone applying for a J-1 visa must complete this form. COMPLETE THIS ELECTRONIC FORM ON-LINE and take a printed copy with you to the interview.

<https://ceac.state.gov/genniv/>

*(The Forms DS-156, DS-157 & DS-158 are no longer required and have been replaced by the DS-160 Online Application)*

#### Step 6: Refer to Step 2 and follow instructions for paying any visa fees required in advance of your appointment.

Procedures may vary from country to country, and even post to post within the same country. Note that application and

issuance fees are based on reciprocity and generally reflect your country's policies in granting visa privileges to visiting U.S. students.

**Step 7: Bring a passport-size photo less than six months old.**

Check "Photograph Requirements" at [http://travel.state.gov/visa/visaphotoreq/visaphotoreq\\_5334.html](http://travel.state.gov/visa/visaphotoreq/visaphotoreq_5334.html) for details.

**Step 8: READ! Prepare for your interview appointment by learning what to expect.**

You will be applying for a J-1 student visa, a non-immigrant classification. According to U.S. immigration law, "Every alien shall be presumed to be an immigrant until he establishes to the satisfaction of the consular officer, at the time of application for admission, that he is entitled to a non-immigrant status." This means you need to establish that you have no intention of staying in the U.S. permanently, but are coming here for a temporary purpose, i.e. to pursue your educational objective. Consular officers are aware that it may be difficult for students to demonstrate strong professional and economic ties to their home countries, but you should still think about how to show those home country ties. In advance of your interview, please read the following:

**Ten Points to Remember When Applying for a Nonimmigrant Visa**

<http://www.nafsa.org/resource/library/default.aspx?id=8643>

...published by NAFSA: Association of International Educators, in consultation with the U.S. State Department.

**Step 9: Checklist of what to take with you to your visa interview:**

- A passport valid for at least six months
- Form DS-2019
- School Admission Letter or a Letter of Invitation
- A completed visa application (DS-160) Remember to complete the DS-160 electronically and take a printed copy with you.
- A photograph in the prescribed format (see Step 7)
- A receipt for the visa application fee
- A receipt for the SEVIS fee. If you have not received an official receipt in the mail showing payment and you have paid the fee electronically, the consulate will accept the temporary receipt you printed from your computer. If you do not have a receipt, the consulate may be able to see your payment electronically if your fee payment was processed at least 3 business days before your interview.
- Financial evidence that shows you have sufficient funds to cover your tuition and living expenses during the period you intend to study or otherwise participate in your program.
- Any information that demonstrates your intention to return to your home country after finishing your studies in the U.S. This may include proof of property, family, or other ties to your community.

**Step 10. After the visa is processed, make sure you got what you requested!**

Check your passport to be sure you obtained a J-1 visa, and that any dependents obtained a J-2 visa. Also, be certain that the DS-2019 was returned to you, as you must have the original with you when you arrive in the United States. Sometimes, the document is returned to you in a sealed envelope, which must be presented to the immigration inspector when you arrive.

**The home-country physical-presence requirement.** (also known as 2-year residency requirement - INA Section 212(e))

Some, but not all, Exchange Visitors are subject to this requirement. Its purpose is to have the home country benefit from the Exchange Visitor's experience in the United States. Exchange visitors come to this country for a specific objective such as a program of study or a research project. The requirement is intended to prevent a participant from staying longer than necessary for the objective, and to ensure that he or she will spend at least two years in the home country before coming back to the United States for a long-term stay. For the terms of the requirement please see page (2) of the enclosed Form DS - 2019. If you have questions about the requirement, including whether or not you will be subject to it, please raise them with the Consular Officer when you apply for your visa.

*For questions or concerns regarding the visa process, please contact California State University, Fresno's Responsible Officer, Jasmine Cao at [jcao@csufresno.edu](mailto:jcao@csufresno.edu)*