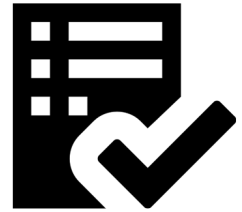


J Program Handbook

Guidebook for J Exchange Visitors

Welcome to Columbia! This guide is intended to provide an initial orientation to the Exchange Visitor Program, in which you are a participant, so that you may fully understand the rules and regulations of this immigration status. This information is also designed to be a resource for practical information as you prepare to participate in the intellectual life of Columbia University and as you settle in and begin to experience life in the vibrant city of New York.

J-1 Exchange Visitor Program Overview



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. Columbia University has been designated as a program sponsor to provide our participants with opportunities to engage in academic exchange and then return home to share their experiences. An overview of the most important aspects of J-1 status can be found in the U.S. Department of State Exchange Visitor Program Welcome Brochure at <http://j1visa.state.gov/wp-content/uploads/2015/03/Brochure-The-Exchange-Visitor-Program.pdf> . You can also visit their website at <http://j1visa.state.gov> for further details on the J-1 Exchange Visitor Program.

J-1 Categories

J-1 Exchange Visitors come to Columbia University for a variety of purposes. The specific purpose for which an exchange visitor is sponsored is indicated by the “category” listed in section 4 of the DS-2019. The category governs the terms and duration of the exchange. The ability to extend J-1 sponsorship as well as the ability to transfer to another J-1 sponsor depends on the category and purpose of the visit remaining consistent and is also limited by the duration of the academic program or title one holds and the maximum duration of sponsorship the category allows. Please consult with an adviser directly about any extension or transfer concerns prior to the expiration date of your DS-2019 form and prior to the end of your academic program.

Professor and the Research Scholar Category

The Professor and the Research Scholar categories are both used for individuals who come primarily to teach, lecture or research, based upon the terms of the academic appointment and specific title offered by the academic department. Maximum length of stay under this category is 5 years.

Short-Term Scholar Category

The Short-term Scholar category facilitates similar purposes of researching or lecturing, based on the terms of the academic title being offered by the academic department, but sponsorship is limited to a maximum of duration of 6 months.

Student-Intern Category

The Student-Intern category commonly used by Columbia University for those pursuing a degree at a postsecondary academic institution abroad and who have not been awarded a terminal diploma equivalent to the U.S. Bachelor’s degree prior to the start of the Columbia program. This category allows students to engage in research-based internships that are integral to the curriculum of the home-school degree program for up to 12 months.

Student Category

The Student categories facilitate the purpose of full-time study based upon admission to one of the academic full-time programs at Columbia University for those who receive more than half of their financial support to cover the program costs and living expenses from a government, international organization, third-party fellowship or award, or the University. Maximum length of stay is dependent on enrollment in a degree program and eligibility for Academic Training employment sponsorship after degree completion.

Preparing to Begin your J-1 Program



The ISSO provides incoming students and scholars with extensive guidance on the transition to Columbia University and life in New York City. We encourage you to utilize these guides, and in particular the Coming to Columbia guides, which can be found at <http://www.columbia.edu/cu/isso/incoming/>. Coming to Columbia provides an overview of how to obtain and maintain J-1 status and how to complete the SEVIS immigration registration upon arrival. You will also find practical information on housing resources, taxes and money matters, local and campus resources and cultural opportunities.

Information for Accompanying J-2 Family Members



Eligibility for J-2 visa sponsorship

J-2 visa sponsorship is available for your spouse or child under the age of 21 as long as funding to cover their living expenses has been documented. If your accompanying family member would like J-2 sponsorship but has not received a DS-2019 form for J-2 status, please contact the ISSO or IAO for guidance. If any accompanying J-2 family member leaves the U.S. permanently prior to the end of your program, you are required to report this information to the ISSO or IAO immediately.

Benefits of J-2 visa sponsorship

J-2 visa sponsorship enables a spouse and child to accompany you for the duration of your program. Immigration regulations pertaining to this visa status enable the J-2 to study and apply for employment authorization through the United States Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) as the purpose of the Exchange Visitor Program is to provide opportunities to experience U.S. cultural, educational and professional life.

- **J-2 Study:** Those in J-2 status can study part-time or full-time without changing status, though it is best to consult the immigration adviser at that educational institution for guidance on the most appropriate visa option.

- **J-2 Employment:** Immigration regulations allow spouses to apply for work authorization to the USCIS after arrival in the U.S. as J-2, as long as the purpose of the employment is not to financially support the J-1 program. Through this opportunity for employment the J-2 can have an enriching professional and cultural experience while accompanying the J-1. The application takes the USCIS on average about 3 months to process and information can be found online at http://www.columbia.edu/cu/isso/visa/scholar/J-2_employment_authorization.html.

J-2 Permanent Departure Recording

The ISSO must be informed when a J-2 family member permanently departs the United States and is certain not to be returning as J-2 at any time during the remainder of the program. The ISSO will then invalidate the J-2 SEVIS record, thereby informing the U.S. Department of State of the permanent departure. If you are unsure as to whether the J-2 departure is permanent, please discuss your situation with the ISSO.

Domestic Partners and Other Family Members

J-2 status is only available for spouses and children under 21 years of age. Domestic partners and other family members are not eligible for J-2 status but can apply for a B-1/B-2 visitor visa to accompany you. Though B-2 visits are usually for short periods of time, it is permissible as a way to accompany you for the duration of the program in the US. The accompanying partner must demonstrate intent to depart the U.S. at the conclusion of your authorized stay.

English Classes for Spouses and Partners

Many take advantage of the inexpensive ESL classes at the Community English Program (CEP) at Teachers College (TC) taught by TC students who are ESL teachers in training. Teachers College is located on 120th Street between Broadway and Amsterdam Avenue.

The Community English Program's website is a great source of information on registration dates, fees, programs and class schedules. <http://www.tc.columbia.edu/centers/communityenglish/>.

Columbia University's American Language Program offers courses in English as a Second Language (ESL). Information is found at ce.columbia.edu/node/295 or call (212) 854-3584.

Columbia University's Office of Work-Life

This office provides a central location for current related policies, programs and services available at Columbia University. It provides personalized support for those who are exploring in-home care, early childhood education options, special needs, independent, parochial, and public elementary, middle, and high schools in the greater New York Metropolitan area. The School and Child Care Search

Service support parents at Columbia University through school placement counseling, child care referrals, a searchable database of New York City area schools, and other informational resources. <http://worklife.columbia.edu>.

Columbia University Family Support Network

The Columbia University Family Support Network (CUFSN) is an organization which supports members of the Columbia community with families through its programs, resources and advocacy. CUFSN has an active program calendar and is a valuable resource to students and scholars and their family members. More information on how to sign up for email news and updates can be found at <http://www.cufsn.org/about>.

Orientation

This guide is intended to provide information to help J-1 Exchange Visitors and their J-2 family members prepare for their visit to Columbia University and to provide answers to common questions that arise upon arrival. In addition to this guide, orientation sessions are provided throughout the academic year for Visiting Scholars and faculty. Information on these sessions will be sent by email upon arrival. International students have an ISSO representative present at the new student orientation organized by the academic program.



Health Insurance and Health Matters

Those in J-1 and J-2 status are required by regulation to have health insurance with specific minimum coverage requirements for the duration of the program, as listed on the DS-2019. These coverage requirements are explained in detail at http://www.columbia.edu/cu/isso/visa/scholar/J_health.html



It is your responsibility to select, obtain and maintain health insurance coverage for yourself and any of your dependents. It is extremely important to have health insurance due to the high cost of health care in the U.S. Bear in mind that health insurance often does not cover pre-existing conditions, including pregnancy. It is also important to note that you and any accompanying family member(s) may be subject to the requirements of the Affordable Care Act [22 CFR 62.14(a)].

All full-time students are required to pay the Health Service Fee, which provides access to on-campus programs and services, including Alice! Health Promotion Program, Counseling and Psychological Services, Disability Services, Primary Care Medical Services, and the Sexual Violence Prevention and Response Program. The University also requires all full-time students, and strongly urges their dependents, either to enroll in the Columbia Student Medical Insurance Plan or provide proof of comparable insurance coverage. For more information regarding specific coverage plans and providers, immunization requirements for students and the full array of services available to support the health and wellness of students please explore the Columbia Health website at www.health.columbia.edu.

Columbia Employee Insurance

If you are a full-time employee on Columbia University's payroll and receiving full-time benefits of the University, it is likely that you and your dependents will be eligible for health insurance through Columbia University. Therefore, you should confirm with your hiring department or Benefits Officer in Human Resources as to whether you are eligible for this benefit. If you decide to enroll in Columbia University's health insurance plan, you must voluntarily authorize this action in writing. Information on the costs of insurance for full-time employees and guidance on benefit eligibility, payroll deductions and costs can be found at <http://hr.columbia.edu/wac/welcome>

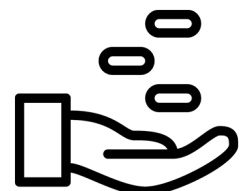
Insurance Resources outside of Columbia University

If you are not a full-time employee of Columbia University, or if you are a Visiting Scholar, you must obtain health insurance from an outside carrier to cover your entire duration of J-1 and J-2 status. An overview of these insurance coverage requirements can be found on the ISSO website at http://www.columbia.edu/cu/isso/visa/scholar/J_health.html and at the bottom of that page is a link to an external list of reputable insurance providers with their websites which will list the cost and coverage levels to assist you in arranging your coverage.

Financial Matters

Estimate of living expenses

The funding amount listed on your DS-2019 gives a good idea of how much you can expect to need to pay for your tuition, fees, and living expenses for the academic year. If you are bringing your family, your expenses will be higher.



The estimates of monthly living expenses currently are \$2,800/month for yourself, \$1000/month for your spouse, and \$500/month per child. This amount is realistic, but conservative. It is possible that you will require more than this amount per month. You should also take into account currency fluctuations, ensuring that you have more than the required amount available in the event the value of your country's currency decreases.

Required fees

If you are a student, information on tuition and fee amounts will be given to you from your academic department and admission office. Student Financial Services provides information on tuition rates, fees, billing and payments at <http://sfs.columbia.edu>. Students who apply for post-completion Academic Training are subject to a fee to Columbia University to support immigration advising and SEVIS compliance during the additional length of the Academic Training experience. Further information can be found at http://www.columbia.edu/cu/isso/visa/J-1/J_academic_training.html.

Scholars with a University Appointment

Those holding an academic appointment will receive an appointment letter from the hiring department which will include information on compensation and benefits eligibility. Complete guidance on working at Columbia can be found on the website of Human Resources at <http://hr.columbia.edu/>.

Visiting Scholars

Those conducting independent research at Columbia University cannot be employed at Columbia University nor receive employment authorization for external positions. Authorization for incidental activities such as conference lectures or symposium participation may be possible in certain circumstances. An ISSO adviser can be consulted for more information. A complete description of this title can be found at <http://www.columbia.edu/cu/vpaa/handbook/visiting.html>.

Two Year Home Residence Requirement

The two-year home residency requirement, or 212(e) as it is referenced in the immigration regulations, means that those J-1s or J-2s that are subject to this requirement cannot become permanent residents in the U.S., change status in the U.S., or be eligible for employment-based or family-based visa sponsorship in H, L or K visa status until they return to their country of last permanent residence for at least two years cumulatively or receive a waiver of this requirement.



The U.S. Consular officer and/or the DHS officer at the port of entry make a determination as to whether this requirement applies and the notation(s) can be found on the DS-2019 in the bottom left corner and/or on the visa page of the passport. More information on this requirement can be found on the ISSO website at http://www.columbia.edu/cu/isso/visa/scholar/J_resreq.html.

University and Community Resources

An essential part of your experience in the U.S. will be taking part in the Columbia University community and the amazing city of New York. Your involvement both on and off-campus will allow you to gain a deeper understanding of the American culture and hopefully build friendships and make important connections that will last a lifetime. Below are some commonly utilized resources at the University and in the community which may be of help as you begin your stay here.



Arts Initiative

The Arts Initiative of Columbia University provides diverse programs to encourage members of the Columbia community to experience the creative life of the campus, engage in the cultural riches of New York City and the wider world, and create arts and performance. <http://artsinitiative.columbia.edu>

Dodge Fitness Center

This is a comprehensive wellness facility which includes which include an indoor running track, 25-yard pool, Scandinavian Sauna, multi-sport gymnasium, and a tri-level fitness center with the latest cardiovascular and strength training equipment. You will find a vast array of fitness and recreation facilities and training programs in addition to intramural leagues and club sports. For accompanying children, there is a variety of sports camp programs offered throughout the year.

Community Impact

This is an independent organization that is dedicated to serving disadvantaged people in the Washington Heights, Harlem, and Morningside Heights communities. It strives to provide high quality programs, advance the public good, and foster meaningful volunteer opportunities for students, faculty, and staff of Columbia University through partnerships with more than 100 community organizations and agencies who do service work in these neighborhoods. <http://www.columbia.edu/cu/ci>

One to World

This community organization helps international students, scholars, and their families in the New York area make use of the cultural, ethnic, and professional resources of the City. They sponsor various activities, including tours throughout New York and visits with American families. www.one-to-world.org

Columbia University's Department of Public Safety

The website at www.columbia.edu/cu/publicsafety is a valuable resource for personal safety tips, emergency response protocols, shuttle bus schedule, crime prevention, and more.

In case of an emergency situation, you can contact Columbia's Department of Public Safety at (212) 854-5555 (Morningside) or (212) 305-7979 (Medical Center).

If you encounter problems during your stay it is important for you to know where and how to get help. The ISSO advising staff is here to assist you as a first point of contact and can direct you to University and local resources.

The U.S. Department of State has a Wilberforce Rights, Protections and Resources Pamphlet at <http://travel.state.gov/content/visas/english/general/rights-protections-temporary-workers.html>.

Immigration Definitions

The following common terms will be used throughout your stay in the United States.



SEVIS	The Student and Exchange Visitor Information System (SEVIS) is the web-based system that the Department of Homeland Security uses to maintain information on those in F, J, M visa status (and their dependents) in the United States and the Student and Exchange Visitor (SEVP)-certified schools that enroll and sponsor them.
Entry Visa Stamp	This is affixed in the passport by a U.S. Embassy or Consulate abroad and indicates eligibility for entry in a specific immigration visa category. The duration of the visa and the number of times it can be used vary based on reciprocity agreements between the U.S. and other countries. The entry visa can be issued up to 120 days before the start date on the DS-2019, but admission to the U.S. is limited to 30 days in advance of the DS-2019 start date. The visa must be valid upon entry to the U.S. and can only be renewed abroad. While inside the U.S. you are not required to have a valid visa to stay in the U.S., as it is needed only to enter the country. Citizens of Canada are exempt from the entry visa requirement.
DS-2019	This is a visa certificate issued by the institution or organization which has sponsored the J-1 program. This certificate includes biographical information and important details of the program. It is officially called the "Certificate of Eligibility" because with it you are "eligible" to apply for a J-1 visa at a U.S. Embassy or Consulate. It is also shown at the Port of Entry along with the valid visa during every trip into the U.S. during the program. Any accompanying dependent will each need a separate DS-2019 for J-2 status. It is recommended all DS-2019s are kept for your records after the program ends.
I-94	This is a record of admission to the U.S., which documents legal entry into the U.S., the specific immigration status, and how long you can stay in the U.S. This is created in an electronic format (with limited exceptions) upon entry to the U.S. and a paper printout is available at http://www.cbp.gov/i94 . You should consult this website soon after each arrival into the U.S. to confirm the information of your entry is correct. As a J-1 or J-2 status holder the I-94 must show J-1 or J-2, D/S.