



J-1 EXCHANGE VISITOR PRE-ARRIVAL INFORMATION

PRE-ARRIVAL PROCESS OVERVIEW

STEP 1

Review and sign your Form DS-2019. Make sure your personal information is correct.

STEP 2

Pay your SEVIS fee online at least 1 week prior to making your visa appointment.

STEP 3

Schedule your visa appointment at a US Consulate or Embassy and pay the visa fee.

STEP 4

Attend your visa interview and receive a J-1 visa in your passport.

STEP 5

Travel to the US with your passport, DS-2019, and visa in your purse or carry-on bag.

STEP 6

Electronic I-94 Admissions Record is issued upon your arrival to the US.

STEP 7

Contact your SDSU department or dean's office to complete the J-1 Registration Process and to confirm health insurance requirements are met.

STEP 8

Begin your program at SDSU and enjoy what San Diego has to offer!

WELCOME TO SDSU

Welcome to the Exchange Visitor Program at San Diego State University (SDSU). We are pleased to have you as an exchange visitor. This information packet is designed to help you understand the purpose of the Exchange Visitor Program and to introduce you to the major requirements of the program.

The J-1 Exchange Visitor category was developed to implement the Mutual Educational and Cultural Exchange Act (Fulbright-Hays Act) of 1961. The overall purpose of the Act, and the objective of the Exchange Visitor Program, is to increase mutual understanding between the people of the United States and the people of other countries by means of educational and cultural exchanges. 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.

The United States Department of State (DOS) has designated San Diego State University as an Exchange Visitor Program sponsor for scholars in the J-1 visa category. DOS has appointed a Responsible Officer for the program as well as Alternate Responsible Officers. The Responsible Officer for the program at SDSU is Dr. Joanna Brooks.

Any questions about the program should be directed to:

Christinejoy Sampankanpanich
Alternate Responsible Officer
Office of Faculty Advancement
Direct Line: (619) 594-6111
Manchester Hall, Room 3310J
Email: csampan@sdsu.edu

STEP 1: UNDERSTAND YOUR J-1 PROGRAM

Enclosed with this packet is a Certificate of Eligibility for Exchange Visitor Status (J-Nonimmigrant), commonly referred to as the DS-2019. The DS-2019 outlines your program information and is used to help you obtain your J-1 visa. J-2 dependents are issued their own DS-2019 forms. The information on the DS-2019 has been entered into the U.S. Department of Homeland Security's Student Exchange Visitor Information System (SEVIS).

You are required to meet all of the terms and conditions stated on the DS-2019, so please read the document carefully. Please note that entry into the U.S. is for the sole purpose of carrying out the program stated in Item 4 of the DS-2019. Once you have reviewed your personal information and read the front and back of your DS-2019, please sign and date where indicated (bottom of page 1).

Participants in the J-1 Exchange Visitor Program should provide proof of sufficient funds to cover all expenses, or funds must be provided by the sponsoring organization or other stipend. Below is the minimum amount of funding required for each month of your program:

- \$1,600 USD per month for the J-1
- \$500 USD per month for J-2 spouse (if applicable)
- \$250 USD per month for each J-2 child (if applicable)

It is also **extremely important** to notify the Office of Faculty Advancement **immediately** if any of the following changes:

- Source or amount of your funding;
- U.S. address (must report within **10** days of moving);
- Travel outside of the U.S.;
- Site of activity or an additional site of activity; and
- Completing your program early.

Please visit the Faculty Advancement website at <http://fa.sdsu.edu/immigration/j1> for the necessary forms. **Failure to notify Faculty Advancement of these changes may result in termination of your participation in the exchange program and legal permission to stay in this country.**

STEP 2: PAY YOUR SEVIS FEE

Now that you have your DS-2019, the next step is to pay your SEVIS fee. The SEVIS fee is a **one-time fee** that all J-1 visa applicants must pay. The fee covers the SEVIS system, which is the Department of Homeland Security's web-based data collection and monitoring system. This fee **does not** apply to your J-2 spouse or child, as they are covered under your SEVIS fee payment.

The SEVIS fee is **\$180 (USD)**, and is separate from the visa application fee. Please pay the fee **at least 1 week prior to scheduling your visa appointment.**

STEP 3: SCHEDULE YOUR VISA APPOINTMENT

Once the SEVIS fee has been paid, you may proceed with scheduling your visa appointment with a U.S. embassy or consulate. It is highly recommended that you schedule your visa appointment at a U.S. embassy or consulate in your home country, as they are more familiar with your country's background and may have better access to information. Please visit <https://www.usembassy.gov/> to locate an embassy or consulate near you.

In order to schedule your appointment, you must complete the Online Nonimmigrant Visa Application (DS-160) by visiting: <https://ceac.state.gov/GenNIV/Default.aspx>. You will need to pay the **\$160 (USD)** visa application fee when you schedule your visa appointment.

STEP 4: ATTEND YOUR VISA INTERVIEW

At the date and time of your interview, you will need to bring the following:

- Visa application fee receipt
- Form DS-2019
- Passport
- Evidence of financial support
- SDSU invitation letter
- Anything else that the embassy or consulate requested

During the interview, please listen closely to the questions, answer directly and most importantly answer truthfully. You are ineligible for a temporary (nonimmigrant) visa if you **do not have a clear and definite intent to return to your country of citizenship or legal permanent residence.** Any statement that would cast doubt on the firmness of intent to return home would likely lead to the denial of your nonimmigrant visa.

STEP 5: TRAVEL TO THE US

Your arrival to the U.S. must be within **30 days** of your start date. Note that you cannot enter the U.S. with your J-1 visa more than **30 days** prior to your start date. If your arrival is delayed, please let your SDSU contact know so that we can determine whether an amended DS-2019 is needed.

When you travel to the U.S., you should have your DS-2019 and passport with your J-1 visa stamp in your purse or carry-on luggage, as you will need to present these documents to

the Immigration Inspector at the first U.S. port of entry. The DS-2019 should be returned to you after inspection.

STEP 6: REVIEW YOUR I-94 ADMISSIONS RECORD

Upon entry to the U.S., you will be assigned an admissions number, which is referred to as the I-94 Admissions Record. Your I-94 record may be retrieved electronically at <https://i94.cbp.dhs.gov>. If you are traveling via a land border, please read the information located on the I-94 CBP homepage, as an additional step is required.

It is your responsibility to check the I-94 electronic record to make sure you were admitted into the U.S. under the correct visa status and timeframe. If there are any issues, please contact Faculty Advancement immediately.

STEP 7: MEET WITH YOUR SDSU REPRESENTATIVE

As soon as you arrive to San Diego, you **must** contact your SDSU host department or dean's office to arrange a time to complete your immigration paperwork. When you meet with your contact, you will need to complete the J-1 Registration Form. Please be prepared to provide the following:

- U.S. Residential Address
- U.S. Telephone Number
- Copy of your DS-2019
- Copy of your visa
- Copy of your entry stamp, located in your passport
- Copy of your I-94 admissions record

If you have dependents arriving with you, please provide copies of their documents as well.

This process should be completed as soon as you arrive in the U.S., and must be within **30 days** of your start date. **Please note that your SEVIS record must be validated no more than 30 days after your start date.** If you cannot arrive within **30 days** of your start date, please let your SDSU contact know so that we can adjust your start date.

During this time, you will also provide evidence that you meet the minimum health insurance requirements. Please see the next section for health insurance information.

STEP 8: MAINTAIN YOUR J-1 STATUS

Below please find information that you will need during and after your J-1 Exchange Visitor Program. For additional information, please contact Faculty Advancement or visit <http://fa.sdsu.edu/immigration/j1>. For questions unrelated to immigration, please contact your college immigration representative or your faculty mentor/supervisor.

Health Insurance Requirements

As participants of the J-1 program, you and your dependents (if applicable) are **required** to have health insurance, and medical evacuation and repatriation coverage for the entire length of your stay at SDSU. Please note the following:

- You must consider insurance requirements when making your budget projections.
- We recommend travel insurance that will cover your first month at SDSU, until other health coverage becomes effective.
- You (and accompanying dependents) must be enrolled in and provide your SDSU host department proof of adequate health insurance coverage **within 30 days of arrival.**
- You may enroll in medical evacuation and repatriation insurance upon your arrival for individual or family coverage. Please contact your SDSU host department when you arrive for more information.

The minimum health insurance requirements that you must meet include **all** of the following:

- **\$100,000** per accident/illness;
- Repatriation benefits in the amount of at least **\$25,000**;
- Medical evacuation expenses in the amount of **\$50,000** and;
- A deductible not to exceed **\$500** per accident or illness.

If you choose to use a health insurance plan from your home country, the insurance must:

- Meet the **minimum** health insurance requirements.
- Backed by the full faith and credit of the government in your home country.
- Have written documentation **in English** of dates of coverage and explanation of benefits, including daily U.S. rate of hospitalization and proof of amount of coverage in U.S. **dollars**. Please note, you will be **required** to sign a Health Insurance Memorandum of Understanding stating that you have been informed about the insurance requirements and that you will maintain them for yourself and your family during your stay at SDSU.

Failure to maintain health insurance could result in the termination of your J-1 status as well as jeopardize any possibility of participation in the SDSU Exchange Visitor Program in the future.

Also, please be aware that non-American health plans may require that you pay medical bills first and be reimbursed directly by your insurance company later.

The SDSU International Student Center is available to assist you with obtaining health insurance and can answer any questions you may have related to health insurance matters. Please email isc.reception@mail.sdsu.edu or call (619) 594-1973 for assistance.

Maximum Time in J-1 Categories

Depending on your J-1 visa category, you are restricted on how long you may be in the U.S. for your J-1 program. The table below outlines the minimum and maximum times in which a person may be in a particular J-1 category. Please refer to Box 4 Exchange Visitor Category on your DS-2019 form to identify which category you are classified under.

J-1 Category	Min. Program Duration	Max. Program Duration
Professor	3 weeks	5 years
Research Scholar	3 weeks	5 years
Short-Term Scholar	1 day	6 months

Please note that Short-Term Scholars cannot extend their program beyond 6 months.

A change of category is **not** permitted after the DS-2019 is issued. Additionally, unauthorized employment is a violation of program status. **Your participation in the SDSU program is subject to termination if you engage in employment outside of SDSU.**

12-Month Bar (Research Scholars & Professors ONLY)

The 12-Month Bar is important to make note of if you are in the J-1 Research Scholar or Professor category, and especially if you have previously been in J-1 or J-2 status.

The 12-Month Bar indicates that you are ineligible to begin an exchange visitor program in the Research Scholar or Professor categories if you were physically present in any J status for all or part of the **12 months** before your J-1 program is set to begin.

Exceptions to this rule exist for J-1 transfers and those who have been present in J status in the Short-Term Scholar category.

24-Month Bar (Research Scholars & Professors ONLY)

The 24-Month Bar on repeat participation pertains only to exchange visitors in the Research Scholar or Professor categories who want to return to the US on another J-1 in the Research Scholar or Professor categories. This does not apply to anyone in the Short-Term Scholar category.

If you fall under the Research Scholar or Professor categories, regulations require that you wait **24 months** before you may re-enter the US to participate in another J-1 program under the Research Scholar or Professor categories. Please note this 24-Month Bar will be in effect regardless of the duration of your program.

Two-Year Home Country Residence Requirement (212e)

Certain J-1 scholars and their family members may be subject to the Two-Year Home Country Residence Requirement (Two-Year Home Rule). Unlike the 24 and 12 Month Bars, the Two-Year Home Rule is specific to the individual and not the J-1 category in which they are in. If you are subject to the Two-Year Home Rule, you must return to your home country or country of permanent residence for at least 2 years after completing your education or cultural program before you can change or adjust to a certain nonimmigrant (H, L, K) or immigrant status.

There are three ways in which you may be subject to the Two-Year Home Rule:

- **Government Funding** - If any of your financial support comes from government funding (the U.S., your home country, or a government funded international organization), you are subject to the Two-Year Home Rule.
- **Exchange Visitor Skills List** – This Department of State’s Exchange Visitor Skills List identifies the fields of specialized knowledge and skills that are deemed necessary for the development of an exchange visitor’s home country. If your area of specialization is listed under your country’s name on the Skills List, you are subject to the Two-Year Home Rule.
- **Medical Education or Training** – If you come to the US for graduate medical education or training, you are subject to the Two-Year Home Rule.

When you attend your visa appointment, the consular officer will review your documentation and will annotate whether you are subject or not subject to the Two-Year Home Rule on your DS-2019. This annotation will be made at the bottom left hand corner of your DS-2019. You may also find this

information on your J-1 visa stamp. Please note that these documents may sometimes be marked incorrectly.

The Two-Year Home Rule may be waived in certain circumstances. The U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services office accepts waiver applications and issues a decision whether you may waive this requirement.

Contact Faculty Advancement if you are unclear as to whether you are subject to this requirement or if you would like to apply for the waiver.

Social Security

If you will be earning income during your J-1 program, you must have a Social Security number (SSN). Those who will not be earning income in the U.S. are ineligible to apply for an SSN. If you are eligible to obtain an SSN, you must apply in-person at the Social Security Administration office in Downtown San Diego. **Please wait 10 days after your initial entry to the US and 5 days after completing the J-1 registration process before visiting the Social Security Administration office**, as your SEVIS record must be validated prior to your visit. The information for the office is below:

Social Security Administration
109 West Ash St.
San Diego, CA 92101
Open Monday through Friday 9:00 AM to 4:00 PM
No appointment necessary

When you apply for SSN, you must bring the following:

- Your original passport with visa stamp;
- Your original DS-2019; and
- A copy of your I-94 admissions record from the CBP website
- Copy of your SDSU invitation letter

For more information on applying for SSN, please visit <https://www.ssa.gov/ssnumber/>.

If you will be opening a U.S. bank account, you may be asked for your SSN. Please note that you do not need an SSN in order to open a U.S. bank account. You will, however, need to obtain an Individual Taxpayer Identification Number (ITIN) from the Internal Revenue Service (IRS). You may apply for an ITIN by completing Form W-7 on the IRS website. For more information visit www.irs.gov and search for Form W-7.

California Driver's License

If you will be in California for more than a couple months, and intend to drive a car, it is recommended that you obtain a

California driver's license. In order to obtain a driver's license, you must either have a SSN or obtain a letter from the Social Security Administration indicating that you are ineligible for an SSN. A Social Security document (SSN or letter of ineligibility) must be obtained prior to applying for a driver's license.

If you would like to apply for a driver's license, and you have already obtained the appropriate Social Security document, you will need to prepare for the driving exam and behind-the-wheel test that are required by the California Department of Motor Vehicles (DMV). Note that in order to take the behind-the-wheel test, you must make an appointment and you must bring your own car. For specific information about the DMV tests, please visit <http://www.dmv.ca.gov/portal/dmv>.

Income Tax

If you have earned income from any U.S. source (the U.S. government, a U.S. foundation, or a U.S. employer), you must complete and file income tax forms by April 15 each year. At the time of hire, the SDSU Center for Human Resources will refer you to the Audit and Tax Analyst at SDSU, who will determine the amount of tax to be withheld from each paycheck, if any. You will receive a W-2 form and/or Form 1042-S that you must include when you file your tax return. Income tax filing forms are available on the IRS website at <http://www.irs.gov>. You may also wish to contact a licensed tax expert to assist you with your filing. **Failure to file an income tax return may affect your departure from the U.S. and your eligibility to return.** For more information, please contact Faculty Advancement.

Housing

SDSU offers temporary living arrangements, when available, for individuals who wish to stay on campus during their visit. For information please visit the Office of International Programs website at <http://oip.sdsu.edu/> and click the Visiting Scholars link. If you need additional information on housing, you may also want to visit these websites:

<http://sandiego.apartments.com/> (click Rentals)
<http://sandiego.craigslist.org/> (under Housing)
<http://www.sandiegouniontribune.com/real-estate/>

Note: The above resources are listed as an information service only and are not endorsed by Faculty Advancement. For more information about local housing, please contact your SDSU host department or dean's office.

For questions, please contact
Christinejoy Sampankanpanich
csampan@sdsu.edu