

Immigration Documents

DS-2019

A form **DS-2019**, also known as a **Certificate of Eligibility**, is issued to someone in order to participate in a **J-1 Exchange Visitor (EV) Program**. It is called a certificate of eligibility because it demonstrates that one is eligible for an academic or “work-based” appointment in the U.S., and used to apply for a J-1 visa at a U.S. Embassy or Consulate abroad. Dependents will need their own J-2 DS-2019 to apply for a J-2 visa, and to obtain J-2 dependent “status”.

If more time is necessary to complete EV program objectives, an EV may be eligible for a **DS-2019 extension**. The length of extension is based on a recommendation of the host University department and the maximum program duration allowed by the J-1 visa category. An extension of your DS-2019 would not automatically extend your J-1 visa, since a visa can only be renewed at a US Embassy abroad. Remember that a visa is allowed to expire while physically in the US, and a legal “status” can continue as long as the DS-2019 has been extended and valid.

A form DS-2019 is one of three “travel” documents (along with a visa and passport) that work together to allow entry and participation in an exchange visitor program.

Visa

A **visa** is used to facilitate **travel and entry** to the United States, and in most cases, required to board a flight to the US. Because it is mainly a travel document, it is not required to remain valid while **physically in the US**, or necessary to request an extension of stay, once you have been **admitted to J-1 “status”** (see the I-94 section below for more information). You can have a valid J-1 status even with an expired J-1 visa. Although a visa does not have to be valid to legally remain in the U.S. after being admitted to J-1 status, it must be valid to **re-enter** the U.S. **after a departure**, in order to continue a J-1 exchange visitor program, and to **regain “J status”** at a US port of entry. **Note:** Canadian citizens do not need a non-immigrant visa to enter the US.

An exception to the valid US visa rule is called Automatic Revalidation, if traveling to Canada, Mexico, or to an [adjacent island](#) for 30 days or less. Visit the [Automatic Revalidation](#) website and **conduct the necessary research** to verify if this option is appropriate, and to determine eligibility, as not every person nor every situation is eligible.

Passport

A **passport** is both an official form of identification and a travel document, issued by a government, and required for many important activities, such as travel abroad, opening a bank account, and getting a driver’s license. U.S. Department of State regulations disclose that a passport **must be valid at the time of admission** (entry) to the U.S. and must be valid for a minimum of six months beyond the expiration of an initial period of stay, unless the country of citizenship is exempt from the [six-month rule](#). If exempt, a passport must only be valid through the end of the initial period of stay, as identified on the DS-2019, not six months beyond this date.

Disclaimer: International Student & Scholar Services at the University of Utah provides support and information related to U.S. immigration laws and regulations related to F and J status. ISSS staff are not attorneys and any information provided should not be construed as legal advice. Individuals are welcome to consult a qualified immigration attorney for specific legal advice, particularly in complicated cases.

Note: An **expired passport** does not put one “out of status”, but is required to be valid at all times, and can make one ineligible benefits, such as an extension of stay. In most cases, application for a new passport can be done through a country’s U.S. Embassy or Consulate located in the US.

I-94

The **I-94 arrival/departure record** is evidence that someone has been **admitted** to the United States in “J-1 status” at a **US port of entry** (land, air, or sea) by **US Customs and Border Protection**. This document identifies the date and class of admission (J-1) to the US, as well as the expiration date of the authorized period of stay. For EVs on a J-1 visa, the period of authorized stay is identified as “**duration of status**”, also known as **D/S**, which is "stamped" on the visa foil page of a passport. D/S is not an expiration date, so check the dates on the DS-2019 to confirm an authorized period of stay in the US, and to confirm **J-1 status**.

EVs and their dependents will have a new I-94 with each new entry to the US, so all new I-94s should be kept for record keeping. Please provide the “newest” copy of the I-94 to the ISSS office, as this is the document that identifies a legal status in the US. Visit the official [I-94 website](#) for more information on the I-94 and how to “**get most recent I-94**” record.

DS-160

(Online Nonimmigrant Visa Application form)

The [DS-160](#) (Online Nonimmigrant Visa Application form), is an application for a J-1 visa to facilitate temporary travel to the United States. Form DS-160 is submitted electronically to the Department of State website. Consular Officers use the information entered on the DS-160 to process the visa application, and combined with a personal interview; determine an applicant’s eligibility for a nonimmigrant visa, such as a J-1 visa.

I-901 Fee

Regulations require that all prospective J-1 Exchange Visitors pay the I-901 Student and Exchange Visitor Information System (**SEVIS**) fee before the U.S. Department of State will issue a visa. To pay the I-901 SEVIS Fee, visit [FMJfee.com](#). For more information, you can review the [I-901 SEVIS Fee payment video](#) to learn about each step of the payment process. You can also review the **I-901 SEVIS fee frequently asked questions** page [here](#). A separate fee is not required for a dependent spouse or minor child, nor is a new fee paid if an exchange visitor were to transfer to another university. The current fee for J-1 visa applicants is \$220 US dollars.

In summary, the DS-2019, visa, and I-94 all work together. The **DS-2019** identifies the site of activity (lab or classroom), the duration of the exchange program, as well as the program activity, such as research, study, or teaching. The **visa** is used for travel to a US port of entry, and the **I-94**, after arrival to the US, is your proof of a legal “J-1 status”. Each document has its own unique role in your J-1 Exchange Visitor Program.

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