

J-1 PRE ARRIVAL INFORMATION

UPDATED 2024

INFORMATION FOR
NEWLY ACCEPTED J-1
EXCHANGE VISITORS



TEXAS A&M UNIVERSITY

International Student
& Scholar Services

TABLE OF CONTENTS



TEXAS A&M UNIVERSITY
International Student
& Scholar Services

I. PRE-ARRIVAL INFORMATION

- Review the enclosed DS-2019
- Apply for the J-1 visa
- Attend your visa interview
- Housing arrangements
- Financial preparedness

II. ARRIVAL INFORMATION

- Entering the United States
- Getting to Bryan-College Station
- Mandatory check-in and orientation

III. J-1 PROGRAM DESCRIPTION

- Length of stay as an exchange visitor
- Two-year Home Residence Requirement

WELCOME TO AGGIELAND!

Global Engagement at Texas A&M University would like to extend you a warm welcome to our J-1 Exchange Visitor Program. We hope that the information presented below will best assist you in preparing for your trip and stay in the United States.

PRE-ARRIVAL INFORMATION

Review the enclosed form DS-2019 carefully and verify that all information is correct.

Pay the SEVIS \$220 fee

US Immigration and Customs Enforcement charges a SEVIS I-901 fee to international visitors who enter the U.S. for the first time in J-1 status.

This fee must be paid and a receipt must be obtained before you apply for the J-1 visa. This fee is in addition to the visa fees charged by the U.S. consulate or embassy in your home country. Submit form I-901 and fee payment online at <https://www.fmjfee.com/i901fee/>

Apply for the J-1 visa

You will be required to complete a DS-160 form at <https://usvisa-info.com/> before you can schedule your visa appointment. A listing of U.S. Consulates or Embassies can be found on <http://www.usembassy.gov/>. Be sure to plan ahead as the visa application as security checks can delay visa issuance by several weeks or month. You will be required to complete the online visa application (<https://ceac.state.gov/genniv/>). The visa fee is \$185.



ATTEND YOUR VISA INTERVIEW

Make sure that all your documentation is ready:

- Your DS-2019 issued by Texas A&M University (TAMU)
- Your DS-7002 Internship Placement Plan (only required if you are coming as a J-1 student intern)
- A current, valid passport (valid for at least 6 months past the last day you intend to be in the U.S.)
- Your invitation/offer letter from TAMU
- Evidence of financial resources to prove availability of funds for your living expenses in the U.S.
- Proof of payment of SEVIS and visa fees
- Passport-size photos
- Other supporting documents (evidence of English proficiency or evidence of strong ties to your home country, CV, etc.)
- If your dependents will accompany you, they will apply for J-2 visas using the DS-2019 forms issued by IFSS and enclosed in the packet. You will be required to show a marriage certificate and birth certificates.

If your visa application is approved, you will receive your passport back with the J-1 visa stamp on it.

HOUSING ARRANGEMENTS

The Bryan-College Station area offers a wide variety of housing options. There are several resources available to assist you in finding a place to stay. Your host department may have arranged for some type of accommodation for you. If not, the following websites may be of helpful to you in your search for housing: <https://aggiesearch.tamu.edu/>, <https://simplyinternational.com/>, or <http://www.apartmentratings.com/tx/college-station/>.

FINANCIAL PREPAREDNESS

You are expected to have sufficient money to cover your living expenses while you stay in the U.S. For more information about credit cards, traveler checks, currency exchanges, etc. go to <http://www.discoveramerica.com/usa/travelinformation.aspx>.

DRIVING IN THE UNITED STATES

An individual can legally drive with a valid, unexpired driver's license from another state or country for up to 90 days after moving to Texas. If you are planning on driving in Texas for more than 3 months, it is recommended that you obtain an International Driving Permit (IDP) or apply for a Texas Driver's License. An IDP functions as an official translation of your driver's license into 10 foreign languages. It is valid up to one year from the date of issue and must be accompanied by a valid foreign driver's license. Check with your home country government office on how to obtain an IDP in your home country

ARRIVAL INFORMATION ENTERING THE UNITED STATES

At the U.S. port of entry (airport), you will be asked to present the following documents to the U.S. Customs and Border Protection (CBP) officer:

- Passport with a valid J-1 visa stamp (J-2 for your dependent(s))
- Signed original form DS-2019(s) for you and any accompanying family members
- Supporting documents used to obtain your J-1 visa stamp (proof of financial support and invitation/offer letter from TAMU)
- Any supporting document that you provided at your visa interview

ENSURE THAT THE IMMIGRATION OFFICER RETURNS

- Your DS-2019 Form
- Your Passport with a stamp and the annotations D/S and J-1 or J-2

If you notice an error, be sure to address it with the officer immediately as it may be difficult and time consuming to make any correction once you leave the port of entry.

You may enter the U.S. no more than 30 days prior to your J-1 program begin date that is on your DS-2019.

GETTING TO BRYAN-COLLEGE STATION

Bryan-College Station is conveniently located between Houston, Austin, and Dallas. However, because of limited public transportation, it is easier to fly directly to our local airport (Easterwood) or to Houston (George Bush Intercontinental).

- ISSS covers the cost of travel from Houston (IAH) to College Station via Ground Shuttle for J-1 scholars and their J-2 dependents, if the ride is reserved through [this form](#) at least 3 days before arrival to Texas. Scholars are given the option to be delivered to the door of their apartment or hotel or will be brought to the Ground Shuttle headquarters in College Station
- If you plan to arrive at Easterwood Airport, please visit <https://www.flyeasterwood.com/>
- If you plan to arrive at Austin-Bergstrom International Airport, you can take a ground shuttle to Bryan-College Station <https://www.streamride.com/>



MANDATORY CHECK-IN

You are required to do a check-in with ISSS after you get to the U.S. and, if you plan to work at Texas A&M, your check-in must be processed by ISSS before you can complete employment onboarding. You will need to email the following documents to jlscholars@tamu.edu for your check-in:

- I-94 (select the "Get your Most Recent I-94" option – you will need your passport number)
- Signed DS-2019
- A copy of your J-1 visa
- J-1 Registration Form
- Profile photo (light colored, solid background)

You must also submit one of the following documents if you haven't already:

- Certification of Insurance Form OR
- Proof of Health Insurance Coverage – Including insurance for all J-2 dependents (if applicable)
- If you are enrolling in TAMU's healthcare plan, please send up a screenshot of your coverage enrollment screen from Workday

ISSS will add the documents to your record and activate your J-1 status. We will also have a welcome bag to give you! You can pick up the bag from the ISSS office or have it mailed to you.

After checking your documents, we will notify the Department of Homeland Security that you have arrived and your SEVIS record will become change to Active status.

Note that you have 30 days from your program start date to report and check-in with our office; failure to do so will result in your status becoming Inactive and you will be unable to start working or conducting your research.

MANDATORY ORIENTATION

A mandatory virtual orientation is also included with your check-in via [this Zoom link](#), starting at 4pm CST. Dates for the Mandatory Virtual Orientations can be found [here](#).

J-1 PROGRAM DESCRIPTION

“

The Exchange Visitor Program is carried out pursuant to the Mutual Educational and Cultural Exchange Act of 1961, as amended. Its purpose is to foster mutual understanding between the people of the United States and the people of other countries through educational and cultural exchanges.

All exchange visitors are expected to return to their home country upon completion of their program in order to share their exchange experiences with people in their home country.”





TWO-YEAR HOME RESIDENCE REQUIREMENT

Upon completion of the J-1 program in the U.S., the J-1 and J-2s must return to their home country for at least 2 years before they are eligible to change to an H-1B or apply for permanent residence.

The 212(e) rule is normally associated with:

- Government financing (either foreign or U.S.)
- Exchange Visitor Skills List (list of critically needed skills by home country)
- Foreign medical training

The U.S. Department of State (DoS) in Washington, D.C makes all final determinations regarding the twoyear home residence requirement.

The maximum length of stay as an exchange visitor is as follows:

- Short-term scholar – 6 months with no extension
- Research scholar – 5 years
- Student intern – 12 months per degree level/major



HAVE ANY QUESTIONS? FEEL FREE TO REACH OUT TO US!

ijlscholars@tamu.edu

(979)-845-1824

Please allow us 3 standard business days to begin working on your request and 15 standard business days for your request to be processed.