

Preparing for Your J-1 Visa Interview

The U.S. Department of Homeland Security (DHS) now requires the collection of a one-time SEVIS fee of \$100 [1] from certain J-1 Exchange Visitor students and scholars. This fee is being collected to fund operation of the Student and Exchange Visitor Program Office, which has oversight over SEVIS - the Student and Exchange Visitor Information System.

Exchange-Visitors Not Required to Pay the SEVIS Fee:

1. Continuing J-1s: No SEVIS fee is due for J-1 students or scholars, whose program began BEFORE September 1, 2004 who maintains that status, and whose initial DS-2019 for the current program was issued before September 1, 2004.
2. J-1s sponsored by the U.S. federal government: No SEVIS fee is due for a J-1 exchange visitor who is coming to the United States as a participant in an exchange visitor program sponsored by the U.S. federal government (i.e., Fulbright).
3. J-2 dependents: J-2 dependents are not required to pay a separate SEVIS fee in order to obtain J-2 status or during the time the J-2 remains in that status.

Exchange-Visitors Who Are Required to Pay the SEVIS Fee

The following exchange visitors are required to pay the SEVIS fee if their form DS-2019 was issued on or after September 1, 2004:

- * An individual applying for a J-1 visa for initial participation in a program
- * An individual in the U.S. applying for a change of status to J-1
- * An exchange visitor who is in a U.S. government sponsored program and who is transferring to a non-U.S. government sponsored program
- * An exchange visitor applying for a change of category (example – J-1 student to J-1 researcher)
- * A J-1 exchange visitor applying for reinstatement for a substantive violation

Time of payment of SEVIS fee:

A J-1 student or scholar, who is subject to payment of the SEVIS fee, must remit the fee directly to DHS by completing Form I-901 electronically using the Internet or by mail as follows:

1. Applying for the J-1 visa abroad: The SEVIS fee should be processed by DHS at least 3 business days prior to the consular interview. Fees will not be payable at the consulate. The following steps are a guideline for obtaining a J-1 visa from abroad:

- a. Receive DS-2019 from the Exchange Visitor Program.
- b. Make visa appointment with U.S. Embassy/Consulate.
- c. Submit SEVIS fee payment in time to allow DHS to process payment at least 3 days prior to visa interview.
- d. Print SEVIS fee payment receipt from Internet or wait to receive form I-797 receipt from DHS via mail and submit receipt with visa application.
- e. Receive J-1 visa stamp in passport from U.S. Embassy/Consulate.
- f. Enter U.S. up to 30 days PRIOR to the start date indicated on the DS-2019 and no later than 30 days AFTER the start date indicated on the DS-2019.
- g. Report to the Services for International Students & Scholars to validate program no later than 30 days AFTER the start date indicated on the DS-2019.

2. Entering U.S. by individuals exempt from the visa requirement: The SEVIS fee should be processed at least 3 business days prior to applying for admission at a U.S. port-of-entry by non-immigrants, who are exempt from the visa requirement (i.e., citizens from Canada, Bermuda, and other island countries listed in 8 CFR 212.1).

3. Change of J-1 category: A J-1 student or scholar applying for a change of category within the U.S. (i.e., J-1 student to J-1 research scholar) must pay the SEVIS fee prior to the Exchange Visitor Program approving a change of category

4. Changing status to J-1: A non-immigrant in the United States seeking a change of status to J-1 student or scholar must pay the SEVIS fee prior to submitting the application to USCIS for change of non-immigrant status.

5. Applying for reinstatement: A J-1 student or scholar, who is applying for reinstatement after a substantive violation or who has been out of program status for longer than 120 days, but less than 270 days during the course of his or her program, must pay the SEVIS fee prior to applying to the Exchange Visitor Program for reinstatement to J-1 status.

Note: SEVIS fees are transferable. If an applicant pays the SEVIS fee in connection with a previously issued DS-2019/SEVIS ID number other than the one associated with the document that s/he actually uses to apply for a benefit (new J-1 visa, change of status, reinstatement), it is strongly recommended that s/he submit a copy of the DS-2019 that is connected to the paid SEVIS fee, in addition to the original current DS-2019.

Circumstances where no new fee is required:

J-1 students and scholars, who have previously paid the SEVIS fee prior to obtaining his or her current status, are not required to pay a new SEVIS fee in connection with:

1. An application for an extension of stay in the current program.
2. An application to transfer between programs in the same exchange visitor category where no differential fee exists (i.e., transfer between two non-fee-exempt exchange visitor programs or transfer between two fee-exempt exchange visitor programs).
3. A re-application for a J-1 visa following denial of visa application by consular officer, as long as the re-application occurs within 12 months of the original denial notice.
4. A motion to re-open a change of status application, which was previously denied for reasons other than failure to pay the SEVIS fee, as long as the motion occurs within 12 months of the original denial notice.

Procedures for payment of the SEVIS fee:

1. On-line submission of Form I-901 (www.FMJfee.com) to DHS using a credit card (Visa, MasterCard, or American Express accepted).
2. Mail-in submission of Form I-901 to DHS address on form, along with the \$100 SEVIS fee paid by check, money order, or foreign draft drawn on a financial institution in the U.S. and payable in U.S. currency.

Another person (friend or family) can make the payment for an exchange visitor by one of the two methods above.

Receipts: DHS will issue and mail an official paper receipt (I-797) acknowledging every payment regardless of payment method. Express delivery service for the I-797 receipt may be requested at an additional cost. Anyone who submits an individual fee electronically will be able to print out an electronic receipt immediately at the time of payment for use in advance of the mail delivery of the official paper receipt.

Although SEVIS fee payments will be recorded by DHS in the J-1 students' and scholars' SEVIS records and will eventually be used by government officials to document the SEVIS fee payment, it is recommended that a SEVIS fee receipt be used to request any status-related benefit (i.e., application for visa, admission at U.S. port-of-entry, application to change status).

NOTE: DHS will not refund the SEVIS fee if J-1 students and scholars are not granted a visa or choose not to come to the U.S. after their visas are granted.

Note: The fee for some exchange visitors categories is \$35. Those categories are (1) summer work/travel program, (2) au pair program, and (3) camp counselor program.