

# J-1 scholar FAQs

## **I would like to be a visiting scholar at MTSU. What should I do?**

International Affairs (IA) cannot help to “place” you with a MTSU department. You must work directly with a department to find a faculty sponsor. Once the department extends an invitation or job offer to you, the departmental contact person (usually the HR contact person in the department) will work with our office to initiate the visa process. You will receive your DS-2019 packet from the departmental contact person.

## **My MTSU host department has offered to “sponsor” me for J-1 status, but I’m concerned about the two-year home residency requirement.**

The two-year home residency requirement (212e) applies to Js whose home country and field of research are on the Exchange Visitors Skills List ([http://travel.state.gov/visa/temp/types/types\\_4514.html](http://travel.state.gov/visa/temp/types/types_4514.html)), or whose source of funding is a government agency. If 212e applies to you, you will be prohibited from changing your status in the United States, and from applying for H or L visas or permanent residency until you have returned to your home country for two years. It may be possible for you to obtain a waiver of the 212e requirement.

## **How long will it take to receive my DS-2019?**

Once IA receives a complete request, it can take up to two weeks for a DS-2019 to be issued. Do not contact IA to check on the status of your request; your departmental contact person can provide that information for you.

## **I am currently abroad, and I just received my DS-2019. What should I do to prepare for my arrival to the United States?**

A packet of information was sent with your DS-2019. Please refer to that packet for information about paying the SEVIS (I-901) fee, applying for your visa, and arriving to the United States. Please pay special attention to the information regarding the health insurance requirement. You will need to have your health insurance in place in order to begin your J-1 program. You may enter the United States up to thirty days before the start date listed on your DS-2019.

## **I am applying to change my status to J-1 within the United States, and I just received my DS-2019. Can I begin my J-1 activities/employment now?**

Simply receiving a DS-2019 does not mean that your status has been changed to J-1. Please make an appointment with an IA advisor immediately to discuss the change of status procedure. You cannot begin your J-1 activities/employment until you have received a change of status approval from USCIS.

## **When I applied for my visa, I was told that my application was subject to administrative processing. Can you help expedite that process?**

Unfortunately, nothing can be done to expedite administrative processing or security clearances. Please keep your MTSU host department informed of any delays, so your DS-2019 start date can be amended if necessary.

**I have already received my DS-2019, but I will need to delay my arrival now. What should I do?**

If you will arrive more than two weeks after the start date listed on your DS-2019, the start date must be amended. Please inform your departmental contact person of your delay, so an amended DS-2019 can be issued if necessary. If you have already paid the SEVIS fee and obtained a visa, you should not need to do so again simply because the DS-2019 dates were amended.

**I am a new J-1 scholar, and I just arrived! What should I do now?**

Check in with your MTSU host department first. The departmental contact person will give you instructions on how to check in with our office. At check-in, you will be registered for a mandatory J-1 Scholar Orientation session.

**How can I request DS-2019s for my dependents?**

Complete a "Request for Dependent DS-2019s" (under "Forms" on the IA website) and submit it to our office. You will need adequate funding to support your dependents for the remainder of your J-1 program, even if they only plan to visit for a short time; IA will contact you if you need to provide documentation of additional funding, and when the DS-2019s are ready for pick-up. Normal processing time is two weeks. As a reminder, you will need to purchase health insurance for your J-2 dependents, and they will be subject to the two-year home residence requirement (212e) if you are.

**Are my parents (siblings, boy/girlfriend, etc.) eligible for J-2 status?**

No. Only your spouse and unmarried children (under the age of 21) are eligible to be your J-2 dependents. All other family members and friends may be eligible to visit you for a short time in B-2 (Visitor for Tourism) status. B-2s are not eligible to work or study during their time in the United States. IA cannot advise on the B-2 application process or issue invitation letters for your visitors. Visit the website of the consulate where your visitors will apply for their visas for information about the application process and requirements.

**I received a DS-2019 for my dependent, but the start date has already passed. Can my dependent still use that document to enter the United States?**

Yes. The DS-2019 dates reflect the J-1 program. The J-2s can travel in and out of the United States for the duration of the J-1 program, as long as the J-1 program is still active.

**What can my J-2 dependents do in the United States?**

J-2s can study (part-time or full-time). If they wish to work, they must apply to USCIS for employment authorization; they can set up an appointment with IA to learn about that application process. For information about resources in the community for J-2 dependents, please contact IA and set up an appointment with Angie Melton.

**How can I extend my J-1 program?**

As long as you will continue within the same program objective, have adequate funding to support your stay and have time remaining in your J category, an extension may be possible. Initiate the extension process with your MTSU host department. It can take up to two weeks for an extended DS-2019 to be issued.

**I am a current J-1 scholar. Can I accept an off-campus job or internship?**

No. J-1 scholars are only permitted to be employed by their program sponsor (MTSU) and in the field listed on their DS-2019. However, it may be possible for you be paid for an occasional lecture or consultation (see below) or to transfer to another U.S. institution to continue your J-1 activity/employment (see below).

**Am I eligible for a Social Security Number/Card?**

Only J-1 exchange visitors who will be paid by MTSU are eligible to apply for a [Social Security Number](#). Exchange Visitors must complete their check-in with IA and wait *at least 10 days* after entering the U.S. before visiting the local SSA office. After completing the check-in process with IA, exchange visitors must wait until the next business day to visit the Social Security Office.

**I have been invited to another institution to give a lecture. Can I receive payment for that activity?**

It is possible, but you must contact IA in advance of the activity to receive authorization. You will be asked to provide a letter from the institution that includes certain information about the activity. If the request is approved, IA will add the information to your SEVIS record and issue a payment authorization letter for you.

**I would like to transfer my J-1 program from MTSU to another U.S. institution. What is the transfer process?**

A transfer should be possible, provided that you will continue within the same J-1 category and program objective and you have time remaining in your J category. A transfer is not possible if you have already completed your J-1 program and are in your thirty-day grace period. Complete a "Transfer Out Request for J-1 Scholars" (under "Forms" on the IA website) and return it to our office in advance of the transfer date. Once the transfer date arrives, the new institution will issue a DS-2019 for you.

**I would like to transfer my J-1 program from another U.S. institution to MTSU. What is the transfer process?**

The departmental contact person in your MTSU host department will initiate the process with our office. After we have received and reviewed the request, we will e-mail a transfer form to you. That form must be completed and returned to our office in advance of the transfer date. Once the transfer date arrives, IA will issue a DS-2019 for you.

**Which documents should I bring with me when traveling abroad during my J-1 program?**

When you return to the United States, you will be asked for your passport, valid J-1 visa, and valid DS-2019 with travel signature. If you are a Student Intern or Trainee, you should also carry your DS-7002 Trainee/Internship Placement Plan. It is also advisable to carry your SEVIS fee receipt, MTSU invitation letter and documentation of your funding. To request a travel signature, drop off your DS-2019 at the IA front desk.

**My J-1 entry visa will expire next month, but my DS-2019 will still be valid for another year. Do I need to go home to renew my entry visa now?**

No. You are allowed to remain in the country with an expired U.S. entry visa, as long as the rest of your documents (passport, I-94, DS-2019) are still valid. However, you do need a valid J-1 visa to enter the United States; therefore, the next time you go abroad, you will need to apply for a new entry visa before returning to the United States. We always recommend that you apply for a visa in your home country.

**My DS-2019 and/or visa indicate that I am subject to the two-year home residency requirement (212e), but I don't think that's correct. What can I do?**

Make an appointment with an IA advisor to discuss your situation. If it appears that the 212e requirement was applied incorrectly, we can assist you with requesting an Advisory Opinion from the U.S. Department of State.

**I would like to apply for a waiver of the two-year home residency requirement (212e). How do I start the process?**

Although you will request the waiver on your own, it is wise to make an appointment with an IA advisor before beginning the process. We can explain the waiver process, show you how to start and clarify the results of receiving a waiver.

**I have finished my J-1 program. What should I do before I leave the United States?**

Please complete a "Departure Data Sheet" (under "Forms" on the IA website) and submit it to our office, so we can close out your SEVIS record correctly. If you are a Student Intern or Trainee, you will also need to complete a Final Evaluation, which can also be found under "Forms" on the IA website. As a reminder, you have a thirty-day grace period to leave the United States. During that time, you may not work, study or travel internationally. However, you may travel within the United States or prepare for your departure.