

# **F-1 Student Visa versus J-1 Student Visa**

Every full-time degree student at UF is eligible for the F-1 student visa and the majority of UF international students hold this visa status.

Some students may also be eligible for the J-1 student visa, an exchange visitor option. This group of students may choose between F-1 or J-1, or be assigned based on their funding requirements as the J-1 student category may be a requirement from the funding source. The differences are outlined below.

## **Who is eligible for a choice between F-1 and J-1?**

The Exchange Visitor Program, otherwise known as the J-1 visa, is part of a larger U.S. Department of State mission to foster cultural and educational exchange and cooperation between countries. One eligibility criteria for the J-1 student visa is that a substantial portion of financial support must be from a scholarship, fellowship or assistantship, home or U.S. government/government entity, international organization or an employer/corporate sponsor. Students with only personal or family funding are NOT eligible for J-1 status.

## **If I choose J-1 how will that impact my long term plans?**

The J-1 exchange visitor visa intends for students to return home after their study (post-completion Academic Training is available). Academic Training is a learning and employment based benefit, directly related to the J-1 student's field of study, and is an extension of the J-1 student status. If the student/dependent(s) are subject to the two-year home country physical presence requirement (212e), more information below, this will prevent a change of visa status by the in-country process (inside the U.S.) **and** will block the H, K and L visa status as well as any permanent resident petitions (green card).

## **J-1 Two Year Home Country Residence Requirement**

Some J-1 Exchange Visitors are subject to what is called the two-year home country physical presence requirement (212e). This "two-year residence" requirement applies to you if you receive any funding (including nominal travel grants) from your home government or a U.S. government agency as well as certain international organizations. If a student is subject it will be noted on the DS-2019 by the processing consular as well as on your U.S. J visa. It also applies to you if trained personnel in your field are identified by your home government as being in short supply and your field has consequently been included on the U.S. government's "Exchange Visitor's Skills List." The two year residence requirement also applies to persons receiving graduate medical education or training. If you do not know whether your country and/or field appear on the "Exchange Visitor's Skills List," ask the UFIC/EVS or check the [Department of State website](#). An exchange visitor who is subject to this requirement must reside for an aggregate of

two (2) years in his or her country of nationality or last legal permanent residence or have the requirement waived before being eligible for other U.S. immigration statuses, including H, K or L and permanent resident status (green card). For information about the process of applying for a waiver of this requirement, [visit this web site at the Department of State](#). J-2 dependents are also subject to the Home Country Residence Requirement (if the J-1 is subject).

## J-1 Bar on Repeat Participation

Any student who studies on the J-1 student visa for more than 6-months (including the category of Student Intern) are barred from returning to the U.S. in a J-1 Research Scholar/Professor category until **12-months** after the program ends. The 12-Month Bar is separate from the Two Year Home Residency Requirement outlined above.

The categories of J-1 Research Scholar/Professor may not be repeated for a **period of 24-months** from the time the previous Research Scholar/Professor program completes. There must be a gap of 24-months between programs for these J-1 categories. These categories are interchangeable, therefore both categories apply even the first visit was under the Research Scholar category and the next visit is under the Professor category, vice versa. J-2 dependents are also subject to these bars.

## I am eligible to choose between F-1 and J-1. How do I know which student visa is right for me?

There are a few basic differences between the F-1 and J-1 student visa types which are outlined in the chart below.

	F-1 Status	J-1 Status
<b>Source of Funding</b>	A full-time, degree-seeking student, funded either by personal, family, or outside funds or a combination thereof is eligible for F-1 status.	Must have a substantial portion of their funding from a source <u>other than</u> personal/family funds such as a scholarship, fellowship or assistantship, home government, U.S government, international organization or an employer/corporate sponsor. Students with <u>only</u> personal or family funding are

NOT eligible for J-1 status.  
Personal and/or family funds which make up a small portion of the student's funding is acceptable, as well as to support any J-2 dependents.

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**On Campus Employment**

[On-Campus Employment](#) during full-time studies; part-time hours (maximum of 20 hours per week) when school is in session; full-time (over 20 hours per week) on-campus employment permitted during UF's official breaks (winter break, spring break, and summer vacation).

*\*Be aware UF's pay week runs from Friday to Thursday.*

[On-Campus Employment](#) during full-time studies; part-time hours (maximum of 20 hours per week) when school is in session; full-time on-campus employment permitted during periods of recess/summer vacation and holidays **with prior permission of the Responsible Officer or Alternate Responsible Officer (EVS Advisor) from the student's primary immigration sponsor (host university or third party sponsor). All J-1 student must be authorized in advance.** The entity who issues the DS-2019 is the J-1 student's program sponsor. UF is not always the J-1 program sponsor as third party entities do issued DS-2019s.

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**Off Campus Employment**

[Optional Practical Training](#) (OPT): F-1 students are eligible to apply for permission to work on/off campus for up to a 12-month

[Academic Training](#): J-1 students are eligible to apply for employment authorizations directly related to their field of study; paid or

period of training that is directly related to their major field of study (mainly used after graduation). This benefit is adjudicated by USCIS. **It is not required that the student have specific employment prior to application for this benefit.**

The student must simply intend to graduate during the semester in which they apply for post-Completion OPT and plan to work/train (paid or unpaid) in an area that is directly related to their major field of study. Once approved (EAD card issued) the student is limited to a maximum 90 days of unemployment during the 12-month period.

Students with a STEM major which has a CIP code on the DHS approved STEM OPT list may qualify for the additional 24-months of STEM Extension OPT ([separate application process required](#)).

Employment must still be directly related to the students' major field of study and employment must be with an E-verified employers.

The Employment Authorization Document (EAD) will cost \$410 (paid to the Dept. of Homeland Security; **cost subject to increase to \$550 as of soon; date TBD**) and will take 90+ days to receive. There are

unpaid. The length of the period of Academic Training varies greatly depending on the level of study (Master's level up to 18-months, PhD level up to 36-months). Academic Training does not happen automatically. Students must apply by submitting materials to the EVS office. Please note that **one must have an employment offer to be eligible.** For post-graduation work, you will not be eligible for this benefit if you do not have an employment offer in place before you graduate. There is no charge for Academic Training as the authorization is conducted in-office. The wait time for the authorization is significantly less the F-1 OPT/EAD card. Academic Training can be pre- or post-graduation (example: pre-completion Academic Training could be used for internships while the student is in the degree program. Post-doctoral employment for PhD level students is acceptable for post-completion Academic Training eligibility). Academic Training can be authorized with a company, organization or academic institution anywhere within the U.S.

separate applications and fees for the standard OPT and the STEM OPT.

#### [Curricular Practical Training](#)

(CPT): F-1 students are eligible to be authorized for CPT during their degree program for employment (paid or unpaid), for example internships directly related to the student's major. Appropriate credit registration is required by the UFIC/ISS for this authorization. F-1 students must complete a full academic year (fall and spring terms) before being eligible for CPT, other restrictions and qualifications apply.

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#### **Dependents**

Dependents of F-1 (F-2s) are not eligible for any type of employment including volunteering which enhances their skill set (to determine if volunteering is appropriate [see here](#)). F-2s may take part-time courses including part-time English Language Training (ELI).

Dependents of the J-1 (J-2s) are eligible to [apply for permission to work in the U.S.](#) through the duration of the primary J-1's program once they have entered the U.S. in the J-2 category. This permission is obtained through an application that is submitted to USCIS for an Employment Authorization Document or EAD; there is a \$410 fee (**cost subject to increase to \$550 as of soon; date TBD**) for this application and it will take 60-90 days to be issued. Volunteering which enhances the J-2's skill set may only be conducted with an EAD card. To determine if

volunteering is appropriate or requires an EAD please [see here](#).

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**Requirement to Return Home upon program completion**

No requirement to return home upon program completion.

Some Exchange Visitors and their dependents may be rendered subject to what is called the two-year home country physical presence requirement (212e) upon program completion. This "two-year residence" requirement applies to you if:

- you receive any funding (including nominal travel grants) from your home government, U.S. government agency as well as certain international organizations.
- if trained personnel in your field are identified by your home government as being in short supply and your field has consequently been included on the U.S. government's "Exchange Visitor's Skills List." If you do not know whether your country and/or field appear on the "Exchange Visitor's Skills List," ask the UFIC/EVS or [check on the State Department Web site](#).

- to persons receiving graduate medical education

An exchange visitor who is subject to this requirement must reside for an aggregate of two (2) years in his or her country of nationality **or** last legal permanent residence **or** have the requirement waived before being eligible for other U.S. immigration statuses, including H, K or L visa types, and permanent resident petitions (green card). Students who are subject are prevented from filing for a change of visa status by the in-country process (inside the U.S.). Many other visa types may be obtained by conducting the out of country process (apply for the visa at a U.S. embassy/consulate outside of the U.S.). For information about the process of applying for a waiver of this requirement, [see this Web site](#).