

## INFORMATION ON EXCHANGE VISITOR J-1 VISA

If it has been determined that you are coming on a J-1, we will send you the DS-2019 form along with these instructions. The Form DS-2019, Certificate of Eligibility for Exchange Visitor (J-1) Status, indicates that MSRI will sponsor your stay in the United States under its SEVIS Exchange Program. After carefully reviewing the entire document, we will ask you to sign the bottom of page 1 of the form sent with your DS-2019 before submitting it to the nearest U.S. Consulate to apply for the J-1 visa. (Canadian citizens apply and are interviewed at the airport or land border inspection.) The Student and Exchange Visitor Information System (SEVIS) fee of \$180 must be paid **before** the visa interview; further information and online payment at <http://www.ice.gov/sevis/i901/index.htm>.

Applicants may be subjected to a security clearance prior to being granted a visa interview, so please apply well in advance. One is allowed to apply up to 4 months in advance of the program start date, although one may only enter the U.S. up to 30 days in advance. The wait times for nonimmigrant visa interviews and for the processing of nonimmigrant visa applications are available online at <http://travel.state.gov/content/visas/en/study-exchange/exchange.html>.

Proof of funding can be from a variety of sources. If your funding is from a payment from MSRI, then present your invitation letter for the documentation required by the U.S. Consulate. If personal funds provide any part of your funding, you should be prepared to prove the amount available when you apply for your visa and when you enter the U.S. **Upon visa issuance the DS-2019 form will be returned to you and should be kept inside your passport at all times.** A separate DS-2019 form is required for each family member.

**Your Visa Interview:** No one is eligible for a non-immigrant visa to enter the U.S. if s/he does not have a clear and definite intent to return to her/his country of legal permanent residence. During the visa interview with an American Consul, any statement that would cast doubt on your intent to return home would likely lead to a denial.

In accepting the J-1 visa you obligate yourself to meet all of the terms and conditions stated on pages 2 & 3 of the form. You will be admitted to the U.S. for the sole purpose of carrying out the program stated in Item 4. You should be particularly aware of the following restrictions placed upon Exchange Visitors by immigration law:

- 1a. **2-Year Home Residency Requirement - 212 (e):** If your financial support comes totally or in part from the American government or your home country government, you are subject to the two-year home country physical presence requirement, and thus are obligated to return to the home country for at least two years before applying for an H-1B visa or permanent residency. This is commonly referred to as the 2-year home residency requirement. Please note: **MSRI funding DOES NOT make one subject to the 2-year home residency requirement.**
- 1b. Those Exchange Visitors who have private funding for their program **will not** be subject to the 2-year home residency requirement **unless** their field of specialization and their country of legal permanent residence appear on the "skills list." A J-1 visitor whose area of specialization has been identified as being in short supply by his/her government is subject to the 2-year home residency requirement. Skills list at: <https://travel.state.gov/content/travel/en/us-visas/study/exchange/waiver-of-the-exchange-visitor/exchange-visitor-skills-list.html>
- 2a. **Short-Term Scholar:** The maximum period of participation for J-1 Short-term Scholars is 6 months with no possibility of extension. If you plan to transfer your J-1 to another institution to continue your academic objective, please let the International Scholar Advisor know of your full itinerary so your category can instead be Research Scholar, valid for up to five years, and counted as a continuous period beginning on the initial program date documented in SEVIS. If one completes a program of less than 5 years and the SEVIS record becomes inactive (neither extended nor transferred), the remaining unused time is forfeited and the individual must wait 2 years before beginning a new program as a J professor or research scholar (see 2b).
- 2b. **Research Scholar - 24-Month Bar:** Upon departure from the U.S. after completing a J-1 program as a Research Scholar, one is not allowed to begin a new J-1 program until 24 months outside the U.S. have elapsed (except in the J-1 Short-Term Scholar category, which allows for visits of less than 6 months).
3. An Exchange Visitor may not change her/his program category, i.e. from student to professor/researcher or from professor/researcher to student.
4. If you are invited to give an occasional talk, consult with colleagues, or attend a workshop at another U.S. institution and will receive an honorarium, travel reimbursement, and/or incidental expenses, you must request prior written authorization from your J-1 sponsor (MSRI's international scholar advisor).

## ARRIVAL

One is allowed to enter the U.S. up to 30 days prior to the J-1 program begin date on the DS-2019, although no work or compensation is permissible until the program begin date. If you will be visiting another U.S. institution before or after your visit to MSRI where you will receive any sort of payment, be sure to alert the International Scholar Advisor so that visit can be added to your SEVIS record.

## ORIENTATION

J-1 program sponsors are required to provide orientation sessions for all in-coming scholars. After completing the check-in process in the main administrative area, please make an appointment with the International Scholar Advisor to have your arrival at MSRI validated in SEVIS and to satisfy additional arrival and reporting requirements.

## DEPARTURE

A J-1 visitor's legal stay in the U.S. expires 30 days after the end date on the DS-2019, although no work or compensation is permissible during this 30-day grace period.

## MANDATORY ENGLISH PROFICIENCY ATTESTATION

**As of January 5, 2015, the Exchange Visitor Program requires that all members provide an English language proficiency certification.** Please have a representative at your academic institution (e.g. English Department) or from an English language school sign a letter printed on official letterhead (see the attached template), or provide us with a copy of a recognized English language test (e.g. TOEFL, IELTS). **Please send a scan of the document to [int-advisor@msri.org](mailto:int-advisor@msri.org) and be ready to present this documentation when you apply for your visa at a U.S. consulate.** Feel free to email the International Scholar Advisor with any question you might have.

## HEALTH INSURANCE REQUIREMENTS FOR INTERNATIONAL VISITING SCHOLARS

The Exchange Visitor Program mandates that all visitors on J-1 sponsorship, along with all accompanying J-2 family members, have adequate health insurance coverage. Health insurance purchased outside the United States can be accepted as adequate coverage when accompanied by written proof of the policy benefits translated into English. **According to federal government requirements for J-1 visa holders, as of May 15, 2015, the policy must include:**

1. Medical benefits of at least \$100,000 per accident or illness.
2. Deductible per accident or illness not to exceed \$500.
3. Expenses associated with the medical evacuation of the exchange visitor to his or her home country in the amount of \$50,000.
4. Repatriation of remains in the amount of \$25,000.
5. Pre-existing conditions must be covered after reasonable wait period. (The current industry standard is after twelve months)
6. May include provisions for co-insurance with maximum 25% co-pay by visitor. Co-insurance must allow for customary & reasonable charges in the U.S., not equivalent cost for services in home country.
7. Policy must be underwritten by an insurance corporation meeting the rating requirements of the U.S. Department of State or backed by the full faith and credit of the government of the visitor's home country.

If the home country insurance policy does not meet all the above requirements, or if documentation, in English, which includes the above requirements cannot be provided, the visitor is required to purchase insurance which meets these guidelines within 30 days of arrival at MSRI. Purchase of a travel insurance policy to cover the trip and the first 30 days in the U.S. is strongly recommended. Please remember that U.S. hospitals do not bill foreign insurance companies; visitors will be expected to pay all medical costs up front—this could run into thousands of dollars in the event of a medical emergency.

Upon arrival, MSRI's Exchange Visitors are eligible to enroll in the Patriot Travel plan through ITG Worldwide/Barney & Barney. The Patriot plan has several deductible and medical limit options to choose from. The cost of coverage varies depending on the length of the trip, deductible, and medical limit. You can obtain a quote and /or purchase the insurance online at ITG Worldwide: IMG Patriot Plan (<https://purchase.imglobal.com/Quote/patriot/pre-quote?imgac=12128>). Once the policy is purchased, an immediate e-mail confirmation with links to IMG's website is sent to your e-mail address where you can print your ID card, visa letter, and register online to obtain other important information about the plan.

If you prefer to provide your own health insurance you must present a letter from the company verifying compliance with the above insurance requirements, or a copy of the policy (in English) with the above requirements highlighted. MSRI funding cannot be administered without insurance verification. Medical insurance is required for each accompanying family member on a J-2 visa.

\* As part of the postdoctoral fellowship benefits, MSRI postdocs and their family members will be enrolled in Health Net, MSRI's HMO group insurance plan. Postdocs will also be provided coverage in our dental and vision plans (waiting periods apply) with an option to cover family members at an additional cost.

**Note:** Exchange visitors and any accompanying spouse and dependent(s) also may be subject to the requirements of the Affordable Care Act."