May 2018

Important Updates to the J-1 Visa Exchange Visitor Program

Dear Departments hosting J-1 Exchange Visitors,

International Students and Scholar Services (ISSS) would like to provide a few updates related to our J-1 visa Exchange Visitor (EV) Program to those of you who host J-1 Exchange Visitors. The following updates are highlighted.

Best,

J-1 Scholar Team

New J-1 Exchange Visitor Application Fee:

International Student and Scholar Services (ISSS) will begin to implement an application processing fee of $350 for all J-1 Exchange Visitor DS-2019 applications received on or after July 1, 2018.

For Exchange Visitors (Research Scholars, Short Term Scholars, Student Interns, Specialists, and Professors) with accompanying dependents, there will be an additional dependent application fee of $50 per dependent.

The fee amount was determined through a review of peer institution practices, as well as an evaluation of the resources required to process applications and support departments and EVs.
Currently, the entire cost of administering the Exchange Visitor Program is funded by student fees, not by departments or EVs participating in the EV Program. The application fee is not expected to cover the total cost of the EV Program, however it will allow a larger proportion of student fees to be allocated to student-facing services.

The fee will only be assessed for an initial evaluation of a new or transfer DS-2019 application. Although many peer institutions charge for program extensions and other EV Program services, we have decided to keep costs lower by charging one comprehensive fee.

The DS-2019 application will be updated to include a section for the host department to list their chartfield information. Our office will submit a journal entry to charge the fee to your department chartfield upon receipt of the application.

Completed applications will be processed following the fee payment. We are not able to collect fees directly from Exchange Visitors, however the department is free to make individual arrangements with visiting scholars if it chooses.

Finally, we know that J-1 Exchange Visitors play an important role on our campus. We’ve heard many stories of how the exchange of knowledge, expertise, and culture due to EV presence has benefited both the University community and the Exchange Visitors themselves.

We look forward to working with you in the future to continue to support the U’s research mission through this process.
**English3 Language Proficiency Interview:**

International Student and Scholar Services (ISSS) is excited to announce a partnership with English3, a company that specializes in language proficiency assessment. Their “J-1 interview” is designed specifically to assess language proficiency for J-1 Exchange Visitors. The recorded interview will replace the current interview process conducted by host departments, although additional options, such as the TOEFL, IELTS, and CEFR will still available. The implementation date of this option has not yet been determined, but we will let you know as soon as we have more information!

English3’s language assessment will be a significant improvement over the current interview process. Their “J-1 interview” will:

1. **Provide more consistency in language assessment,** as the test is conducted by a single entity with expertise in this area
2. **Help the University of Utah meet its obligation to ensure than an "objective measurement of English language proficiency" is used to comply with the minimum language proficiency requirements set by the U.S. Department of State**
3. **Provide more convenience in the process,** as Exchange Visitors can complete the interview anytime, anywhere, in under 25 minutes, and
4. **Remove the burden to a host department to conduct an interview,** trying to schedule based on differing time zones, as well as removing the burden to assess language proficiency, especially when there is a lack of expertise in language assessment

The company will conduct a recorded interview initiated by an EV, assess language proficiency based on an evaluation of pronunciation, vocabulary, grammar, as well as fluency and topic development, and then provide an assessment within 48 hours. The cost of the test will be $99, which will be charged to the scholar, although a host department can purchase a test or “promo code”, and then provide to the scholar at no cost.

Language proficiency is a critical factor in an EV’s ability to succeed in the lab or classroom, and on a day-to-day basis. This includes everything from negotiating rent to describing an illness to a physician. Proficiency in English is essential to the health, welfare, and safety of EVs, as well as a critical tool to fully understand their responsibilities, rights, and protections while in the U.S.
Reminder about Scholar Orientation!

Scholar Orientation occurs every Monday from 11:00 am to 12:00 noon in Building 124. Please encourage your EV to attend upon arrival! We cover everything from visa regulations to cultural activities unique to USA. The following is a sample of the information covered:

- Life and customs in Salt Lake City and Utah
- Community resources, such as transportation and libraries
- Healthcare in the USA
- Information about the Exchange Visitor Program
- Information on visa regulations, sponsor (University of Utah) rules, and how to maintain legal status, such as travel, employment, and program extensions
- Name and address of the J-1 scholar advisors (RO and ARO) at the University
- Contact information for the Office of Designation (US Department of State)
- Information about applying for a driver’s license, social security card, and a bank account

We would like to thank you for the support that you’ve provided to the University’s Exchange Visitor Program. We feel the current and planned changes mentioned above will strengthen the EV Program and allow us to better serve EVs and the overall University community.

If you have any questions, please contact the ISSS EV Program at internationalscholars@utah.edu.

If you know of someone else in your department that works with Exchange Visitors, please forward this information to them.

Best,

J-1 Scholar Team

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