

## Overview – About the Exchange Visitor Visa

The exchange visitor (J) nonimmigrant visa category is provided for persons who are approved to participate in exchange visitor programs in the U.S., under provisions of U.S. immigration law. This means that before you can apply at a U.S. Embassy or Consulate for a J visa, you must first apply, meet the requirements, and be accepted for one of the Exchange Visitor Program categories through a designated sponsoring organization. If you are accepted as a participant in an exchange program, the sponsor will provide you with information and documents necessary to apply for the J visa to enter the U.S.

## The DS2019 Form and Paying the SEVIS Fee

**All exchange visitor applicants must have a SEVIS generated DS--2019 issued by a DOS designated sponsor, which they submit when they are applying for their exchange visitor visa. The consular officer verifies the DS-2019 record electronically through the SEVIS system in order to process your exchange visitor visa application to conclusion.** Unless otherwise exempt, exchange visitor applicants must pay a SEVIS I-901 Fee to DHS for each individual program. Go to <https://www.fmjfee.com/i901fee/> to pay the fee, and see the [SEVP Fact Sheet](#) for SEVIS fees.

## Qualifying for an Exchange Visitor Visa

Exchange visitor applicants must meet specific requirements to qualify for an exchange visitor (J) visa under immigration law. The consular officer will determine whether you qualify for the visa. Additionally, applicants must demonstrate that they properly meet requirements, including the following:

- That they plan to remain in the U.S. for a temporary, specific, limited period;
- Evidence of funds to cover expenses in the U.S.;
- Evidence of compelling social and economic ties abroad; and other binding ties which will insure their return abroad at the end of the visit.

## Applying for an Exchange Visitor Visa

Visa applicants should apply at the U.S. Embassy or Consulate, generally in their country of permanent residence. As part of the visa application process, an interview at the U.S. Embassy or Consulate is required for visa applicants from age 14 through 79, with few exceptions. Persons age 13 and younger, and age 80 and older, generally do not require an interview, unless requested by the embassy or consulate. The waiting time for an interview appointment for applicants can vary, so early visa application is strongly encouraged. Visa wait times for interview appointments and visa processing time information for each U.S. Embassy or Consulate worldwide is available on our website at [Visa Wait Times](#), and on most embassy websites. If you are authorized by your sponsor to be accompanied by your spouse (husband or wife) and children, they will also be given a Form DS-2019 and they can apply at the same time. **Learn how to schedule an appointment for an interview, pay the application processing fee, review embassy specific instructions, and much more by visiting the [U.S. Embassy or Consulate website](#) where you will apply.**

During the visa application process, usually at the interview, an ink-free, digital fingerprint scan will be quickly taken. Some visa applications require further [administrative processing](#), which takes additional time after the visa applicant's interview by a Consular Officer.

## Required Documentation to Apply for a J Visa

When applying, each visa applicant must submit to the U.S. Embassy or Consulate these forms and documentation, as explained below:

- **DS 2019, Certificate of Eligibility for Exchange Visitor Status.** A SEVIS-generated Form, DS-2019, is provided to you by your program sponsor, after the sponsor enters your information in the SEVIS system. All exchange visitors, including their spouses and dependents must be registered in the Student and Exchange Visitor Information System (SEVIS).
- **Online Nonimmigrant Visa Electronic Application, Form DS-160.** Go to: [http://travel.state.gov/visa/forms/forms\\_4230.html](http://travel.state.gov/visa/forms/forms_4230.html) to fill out the online DS-160. Find your home country in the list of countries and closest city on the first page of the web site and click on the link. The following pages can be viewed in your own language. Follow the directions to fill out the DS-160.
- **A passport valid for travel to the U.S.** and with a validity date at least six months beyond the applicant's intended period of stay in the U.S. (unless [country-specific agreements](#) provide exemptions). If more than one person is included in the passport, each person desiring a visa must complete an application;
- **One (1) 2x2 photograph.** See the required photo format explained in [Nonimmigrant Photograph Requirements](#).

## What are the Required Visa Fees?

- **Nonimmigrant visa application processing fee** - \$140.00. You will need to provide a receipt showing the visa application processing fee has been paid, when you come for your visa interview.

## Additional Documentation

- Applicants must demonstrate to the consular officer that they have binding ties to a residence in a foreign country which they have no intention of abandoning, and that they are coming to the U.S. for a temporary period. It is impossible to specify the exact form the evidence should take since applicants' circumstances vary greatly.