

“Academic Training” For Students in J-1 Status

This information is designed for J-1 students. It explains “Academic Training,” the name now used by the United States information Agency (USIA) for certain types of study-related employment. It will tell you the conditions that you have to meet in order to qualify for “Academic Training,” and how to apply.

“Academic Training” is flexible in its format and offers a variety of employment situations to supplement your academic program in the United States. It is available before completion of your program of study as well as afterwards. As long as you stay within the stipulated time limits, it lets you work part-time while classes are in session and full-time during vacation periods; and, under certain circumstances, you may interrupt study to work full-time, for example while you are writing a thesis. J-1 students in non-degree programs are eligible for “Academic Training.”

For advice and for further information consult your J-1 Responsible Officer or your international student adviser (who in many cases will be the same person).

Your J-1 Responsible Officer

To qualify for “Academic Training”, you must first obtain approval in writing from your J-1 Responsible Officer, who represents your J-1 sponsor and issues your Forms DS-2019. He or she must evaluate the proposed employment in terms of your program of study and your individual circumstances, and then decide whether it would be appropriate or not. If your school is your sponsor, then your J-1 Responsible Officer is probably your international student adviser. If your J-1 sponsor is an agency, and if you are uncertain how to reach your J-1 Responsible Officer, your international student adviser will help you find out, but has no authority to grant employment permission.

Conditions

Eligibility

- Your primary purpose in the United States must be study rather than “Academic Training.”
- You must be in good academic standing at the school named on your Form DS-2019
- The proposed employment must be directly related to your major field of study.
- Throughout your “Academic Training” you must maintain permission to stay in the United States, in J-1 student status, and apply for extensions as necessary.
- You must maintain health insurance coverage for yourself and any J-2 dependents throughout your “Academic Training.”

Limitations – general

- Your employment may be authorized for “the length of time necessary to complete the goals and objectives of the training, provided that the amount of time...is approved by [both] the academic dean or advisor and...the “responsible officer,” to quote the regulations. It may not exceed “the period of full course of study” or 18 months, whichever is shorter. If you receive a Ph.D., however, your “post-doctoral training” may last as long as 36 months. Additional “Academic Training,” beyond the 18 or 36-month limit, is allowed only if it is **required for the degree**.
- Part-time employment for “Academic Training” counts against the 18 or 36-month limit the same as full-time employment.
- Earning more than one degree does not increase your eligibility for “Academic Training.”

After completion of your program of study...

- “Academic Training” approved **after** completion of your program must be reduced by any **prior** periods of “Academic Training.”
- “Academic Training” following completion of your program of study must involve paid employment.

- Whether the other items in the application are ready yet or not, you must obtain a written offer of appropriate employment and present a copy to your J-1 Responsible Officer **no later than 30 days after the end of your program**, or you will **lose eligibility** for “Academic Training” after completion.
- If you plan to leave the United States after you complete your program of study and reenter the country for J-1 “Academic Training,” you must obtain employment authorization before you leave. Otherwise you will have trouble reentering. Consult your J-1 Responsible Officer for advice.

The Application

- Obtain a letter of offer from your prospective employer that includes your job title, a brief description of the “goals and objectives” of your “Training program” (your employment), the dates and location of the employment, the number of hours per week, and the name and address of your “training supervisor” (the quotations come from the regulations). Make sure that your employer’s letter includes all of these details.
- Give a copy of your employer’s letter to your academic adviser or dean for use in writing to your J-1 Responsible Officer recommending the “Academic Training.” According to the text of the regulation, your adviser’s letter must set forth:
 - The goals and objectives of the specific training program;
 - A description of the training program, including its location, the name and address of the training supervisor, number of hours per week, and dates of the training;
 - How the training relates to the student’s major field of study; and
 - Why it is an integral of critical part of the academic program of the exchange visitor student
- Your adviser must also approve your “Academic Training” for the length of time necessary to complete the goals and objectives of the training.” (In fact your J-1 Responsible Officer may have a blank for use by your academic adviser that will serve as the required letter of recommendation.)
- When your academic adviser’s recommendation is ready, you should deliver or send it to your J-1 Responsible Officer, with a copy of the employer’s letter attached.
- Your J-1 Responsible Officer must evaluate the “Academic Training” program and decide whether it is warranted and appropriate. If so, he or she will write you a letter of approval. To authorize “post-doctoral training” your J-1 Responsible Officer must also issue you a new Form DS-2019, for no more than 18 months at a time.

Authorization to work

A Social Security Number. To put you on the payroll, your employer will need your Social Security number, which you can obtain by applying for a Social Security card. Take your passport (if you are Canadian you may use another form of photo-bearing identification), I-94 Departure Record card, the pink copy of your Form DS-2019, and your J-1 Responsible Officer’s written work authorization to an office of the Social Security Administration. Your Social Security card may be stamped “Not Valid for Employment.” That stamp will not make you ineligible to work; it means only that no funds will ever go into the Social Security account represented by that number.

Form I-9, “Employment Eligibility Verification.” When you begin work, you and your employer must complete Form I-9, which requires you to document your identity and work authorization according to directions on the back of the form. Of the various items acceptable as documentation, you may find that the most convenient combination is your passport (or other photo-bearing identification if you are Canadian), I-94 Departure Record card, the pink copy of your Form DS-2019, and your J-1 Responsible Officer’s written work authorization. Your employer, who keeps Form I-9, will make copies of the documents you submit, and return the originals to you. Form I-9 must be updated any time that you receive a renewal of your permission for “Academic Training.”

Social Security and other taxes

Social Security taxes. In general, as a J-1 student you will be exempt from Social Security (F.I.C.A.) taxes for your first five years in the United States, as long as you continue to declare non-resident status for tax purposes (see Internal Revenue Service Publication 519, “*U.S. Tax Guide for Aliens.*”

Federal, state and local taxes. Unless you qualify under a tax treaty between the United States and your home government, your earnings as a J-1 student will be subject to applicable federal, state and local taxes, and employers are required by law to withhold those taxes from your paychecks. By April 15 you must file a federal income tax return and a “Required Statement” covering the prior calendar year to determine whether you owe more taxes or have a refund coming.

As a J-1 student you are eligible for a variety of work opportunities in the United States, but employment without proper authorization is serious violation of your status. Remember that before you start any kind of employment, you must first consult your J-1 Responsible Officer, who’s written **approval is necessary in advance**.