

Change of Status to J-1 Visa

All applicants who plan to change their visa status to J-1 must meet with UTSA International Scholar Services to determine their eligibility and discuss application requirements. Unmarried dependents who hold non-immigrant visas may not be older than 21 years old to apply for a change of status.

Eligibility Requirements

To apply for a change of status to J-1 visa, you must be accepted to participate in a UTSA academic/research program.

Methods

There are two ways to change visa status:

1. Remain in the U.S. and apply by mail to the U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS)
2. Depart the U.S. and apply in person at a U.S. Embassy or Consulate

Method 1: Apply inside the U.S.	Method 2: Apply outside the U.S.
<p>Things to Consider:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • It will take approximately 3-5 months, possibly longer, for USCIS to process a change of status application. USCIS processing time information can be found on the USCIS website: www.uscis.gov/. • Applicants must be in valid visa status at the time they apply for change of status. • Applicants must maintain their current visa status up until the start date requested in the change of status application. • If applicants holds dependent status (e.g. F-2, H-4, etc.) must provide evidence of the validity of the status of the principal (e.g. F-1, H-1, etc.) since their status is dependent on the status of the principal. • Applicants with the following visa status are not permitted change status to J-1 while in the U.S.: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ C, D, K, and S visa holders ○ J-2 visa holders subject to the 212(e) 2-year foreign residence requirement ○ Those who are admitted as visitors under 8 C.F.R. § 212.1 (e) 	<p>Things to Consider:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • It may require 2 to 6 weeks to schedule for an J-1 visa interview. Applicants should verify interview time by contacting the U.S. embassy/consulate they plan to use. • Applicants cannot re-enter the U.S. more than 30 days before the program start date listed on the DS-2019 Form. • If you are not a citizen of Canada or Mexico, changing status in those countries can be problematic. Some consulates do not process visas for third country nationals. Security checks can cause delays and you could be refused re-entry to the U.S. if your status change is denied. • Your embassy visit should be no later than the program start date on the DS-2019 Form.

Method 1: Applying inside the United States

Application Process

1. Submit all required documents listed in the “Required Documents” section for issuance of DS-2019 Form to the International Scholar Services.
2. International Scholar Services issues DS-2019 Form within 5 business days.
3. Pick up DS-2019 Form at the International Scholar Services front desk.
4. Pay the SEVIS I-901 fee and print a receipt.

All individuals applying for change of status to J-1 visa must pay the SEVIS I-901 fee. The payment can be made online at <https://www.fmjfee.com/i901fee/index.jsp>.

5. Assemble the application.

In addition to the documents submitted for issuance of the DS-2019 Form, the applicant must include the following:

- Photocopy of a valid DS-2019 Form issued by UTSA International Scholar Services;
- Proof of payment of the SEVIS I-901 fee: The payment can be made online at <https://www.fmjfee.com/i901fee/index.jsp>
- Letter from the UTSA Inviting/Hiring Department

6. Mail the application to USCIS.

The applicant is responsible for mailing the application to the USCIS Services Center.

For U.S. Postal Services	For express mail and courier deliveries
USCIS P.O. BOX 660166 Dallas, TX 75266	USCIS Attn: I-539 2501 S. State Highway 121 Business, Suite 400 Lewisville, TX 75067

7. USCIS mails a receipt in 2-4 week. Upon receiving the receipt, submit the copy to International Student Services.
8. If approved, USCIS mails the approval notice with a new Form I-94.
9. Bring the approval notice to International Scholar Services for scheduled mandatory immigration check-in.

Required Documents - Checklist

Below are the required documents for issuance of the DS 2019 Form for a change of status inside the U.S.

- Letter from the UTSA Inviting/Hiring Department
- Confirmation of Financial Resources (letter from UTSA Hiring Department, bank statement, etc.)
- Photocopy of Form I-94 (front and back): If the applicant is admitted under the electronic I-94 system, he or she should print out a copy of the I-94 Arrival/Departure Record from the Customs and Border Protection (CBP) website at <https://i94.cbp.dhs.gov/i94/request.html>
- Photocopies of all immigration documents including the passport, visa stamp, Employment Authorization (EAD), and USCIS approval notice.
- SEVIS I-901 payment receipt

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Dependent family member immigration documents: If dependent family members currently in the U.S. plan to change their status as well, their information should be included. Their documents should show the validity of their current visa status.

Original Form I-539: available at <http://www.uscis.gov/portal/site/uscis>

Personal Statement: addressed "To Whom It May Concern" a) stating that the applicant is in legal status, b) requesting that the applicant's status be changed to J-1, and c) stating the reasons the change is desired or necessary.

\$370 application fee: money order or personal check payable to U.S. Department of Homeland Security

Additional documents listed below.

Additional Documents

H-1 or L-1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Proof of status: copies of last three pay stubs, employment verification letter on company letterhead
F-2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Proof of F-1 spouse/parent's status: copies of I-94, visa, passport, Form I-20, status verification letter, transcripts • Copy of proof of relationship to F-1 visa holder: Copy of marriage certificate for spouse, copy of birth certificate or equivalent for child
H-4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Proof of H-1 spouse/parent's status: copies of I-94, visa, passport, last three pay stubs, employment verification letter on company letterhead • Copy of proof of relationship to H-1 visa holder: Copy of marriage certificate for spouse, copy of birth certificate or equivalent for child
J-2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Proof of J-1 spouse/parent's status: copies of I-94, visa, passport, Form DS-2019, status verification letter, transcripts (if spouse is J-1 student) • Proof of no residence requirement: if visa shows individual is subject 212 (e) residence requirement, include copy of visa waiver • Copy of proof of relationship to J-1 visa holder: Copy of marriage certificate for spouse, copy of birth certificate or equivalent for child
L-2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Proof of L-1 spouse/parent's status: copies of I-94, visa, passport, last three pay stubs, employment verification letter on company letterhead • Copy of proof of relationship to L-1 visa holder: Copy of marriage certificate for spouse, copy of birth certificate or equivalent for child
E-1/E-2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Proof of E-1/E-2 status: copies of I-94, visa, passport, articles of incorporation, business account bank statement • Copy of proof of relationship to E-1 visa holder if the applicant is E-2: Copy of marriage certificate for spouse, copy of birth certificate or equivalent for child

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TN/TD	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Proof of TD/TN status: copies of I-94, visa, passport, Form I-129 approval notice • Copy of proof of relationship to TN visa holder if the applicant is TD: Copy of marriage certificate for spouse, copy of birth certificate or equivalent for child
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Important Notes

- An applicant who travels abroad while his or her change of status application is pending is considered to have abandoned the application. USCIS will deny the application if they become aware of the applicant’s departure.
- If a change of status to J-1 is granted by USCIS, the applicant obtains J-1 status, but not an J-1 visa. Next time she or he leaves the U.S., she or he must apply for an J-1 visa at a U.S. embassy or consulate to re-enter the U.S. as an J-1 Exchange Visitor.
- J-1 visa benefits (such as on-campus employment) are not available until applicants are approved for change of status to J-1.

Method 2: Applying outside the United States

Application Process

1. Submit all required documents for issuance of DS-2019 Form to International Scholar Services.
 - Letter from UTSA Inviting/Hiring Department
 - Confirmation of Financial Resources (letter from UTSA Hiring Department, bank statement, etc.)
 - Photocopy of Form I-94 (front and back): If the applicant is admitted under the electronic I-94 system, he or she should print out a copy of the I-94 Arrival/Departure Record from the Customs and Border Protection (CBP) website at <https://i94.cbp.dhs.gov/i94/request.html>
 - Photocopies of all immigration documents including the passport, visa stamp, Employment Authorization (EAD), and USCIS approval notice.
 - Dependent family member immigration documents: If dependent family members currently in the U.S. plan to change their status as well, their information should be included. Their documents should show the validity of their current visa status.
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5. Schedule a visa appointment at a U.S. Embassy or Consulate following the procedures on how to get a J-1 visa on the U.S. Department of State website:
<http://travel.state.gov/content/visas/english/study-exchange/exchange.html>
6. Depart the U.S. and attend your visa appointment.
7. J-1 Exchange Visitors may enter the United States within 30 days prior to the program start date and no later than 30 days after program start date.
8. Schedule a mandatory orientation with International Scholar Services upon arrival to UTSA.