

## Overview of the University of Nebraska Medical Center J-1 Exchange Visitor Program

(Revised 5/23/2020)

The University of Nebraska Medical Center is an official program sponsor for the J-1 Exchange Visitor Program as authorized by the U.S. Department of State. The broad purpose of the J-1 program is to promote international educational and cultural exchange, in order to develop mutual understanding between the people of the United States and other countries.

Under the Department of State's authorization, UNMC is permitted to offer prospective exchange visitors opportunities for study and research. UNMC's J-1 program is appropriate for:

- Basic scientists of all academic ranks
- Post-doctoral fellows performing a specified research program
- Full-time academic students seeking a degree from UNMC or participating in an established, full-time non-degree program of study
- Physicians who are **not** involved in any direct patient care and **do not** have any form of contact with patients. An official agreement may be required, signed by the faculty sponsor, the department chair, and the prospective J-1 scholar attesting that **there will be no direct patient care or patient contact. A specified research program objective must be detailed in the letter of agreement.**

The Department of State allows UNMC to issue DS-2019s for the following J Exchange Visitor categories:

- Research Scholar
- Short-term Scholar
- Student (Bachelors, Masters, Doctorate and Non-Degree)

## Overview of J-1 Regulations

UNMC undertakes substantial responsibility and liability as an official sponsor of the J-1 Exchange Visitor Program as authorized by the U.S. Department of State. Faculty sponsors/ supervisors also assume considerable responsibility and liability when inviting a foreign scholar to participate in a UNMC academic or research program.

For your reference, we have summarized the main points to keep in mind when issuing a J-1 program invitation to a visiting scholar.

**Failure to comply jeopardizes UNMC's ability to sponsor the J-1 Program and could result in revocation of J-1 status for the participant and the loss of UNMC's J-1 program designation rights.**

- **Insurance Requirement:** All J-1 participants and dependents must be covered by health, emergency medical evacuation, and repatriation of remains insurance in amounts specified by the U.S. Department of State. Failure to comply with this requirement can lead to termination of the exchange visitor's J-1 status. Persons employed by UNMC in an eligible job class may be enrolled in health insurance through the benefits program (United Healthcare Global). Visiting scholars who are not financially sponsored by the University may be covered by the programs of the affiliated agency or may present evidence of insurance coverage either from their home country or purchased from a private carrier in the United States. The OGE website has information regarding J-1 insurance carriers available for visitors to use for either full medical insurance coverage or only medical evacuation/repatriation as necessary. The current rates below are effective **May 15, 2015. Insurance must provide the following minimum coverage:**

*(continued on next page)*

- a) \$100,000 of coverage per accident or illness; maximum of \$500 deductible; may include co-insurance provision where person pays no more than 25%.
  - b) Emergency evacuation to home country in the amount of \$50,000.
  - c) Repatriation of remains in the amount of \$25,000.
- **English Language Requirement:** The exchange visitor possesses sufficient proficiency in the English language, as determined by an objective measurement of English language proficiency, successfully to participate in his or her program and to function on a day-to-day basis. A sponsor must verify an applicant's English language proficiency through a recognized English language test, by signed documentation from an academic institution or English language school, or through a documented interview conducted by the sponsor either in-person or by videoconferencing, or by telephone if videoconferencing is not a viable option.
  - **Financial Support Determination for J-1:** The Department of State mandates that all incoming J-1 scholars will have sufficient financial support or funds for the length of their stay. This is to ensure that any exchange visitor does not become a public charge. IHME has determined this amount to be \$1,000 per month for a program duration not longer than six months, or \$1,167 (\$14,000/yr) for any program lasting six months or more.
  - **Financial Support for J-2 Dependents:** the OGE determines an additional \$500 per month is necessary for a dependent spouse and \$250 for each dependent child joining the visitor with J-2 dependent status.
  - **No Direct Patient Contact:** J-1 participants may not have any direct patient contact or any patient care responsibilities. In this context, “no direct patient care” and “no patient contact” mean that a J-1 participant may not touch patients, nor may they diagnose or prescribe any treatments.
  - **Patient Contact:** UNMC’s J-1 Program may not be used for physicians with clinical responsibilities. There is only one official agency in the U.S. authorized to issue J-1 invitations to physicians with clinical responsibilities who are formally enrolled in a Graduate Medical Education program: The Educational Commission on Foreign Medical Graduates (ECFMG).
  - **Additional Employment:** J-1 participants may not accept any unauthorized employment or additional remuneration for any activity outside of the authorized J program without prior authorization from the program sponsor and the OGE.
  - **Changing Program Terms:** J-1 participants may not change any aspect of their program terms without ADVANCE APPROVAL from the OGE. This includes changes to: academic objective, effective dates, department or insurance coverage.
  - **Faculty Agreement:** Faculty, sponsors/supervisors may not authorize any change for any aspect of the J-1 participant’s program, either verbally or in writing. The J-1 participant and UNMC faculty sponsor are responsible for understanding and complying with the terms of the program. Representations or statements made by the faculty sponsor do not change the terms of the J-1 program, or relieve the participants of their obligations under the terms of the program.
  - **Tenured Positions:** J-1 participants may not hold tenured or tenure-track faculty positions.
  - **212(e) Requirement:** Most J-1 participants are subject to the two-year home residency requirement, known as 212(e), and may not be eligible to apply for a change of visa status without first completing the requirement of returning to his/her home country for a period of two years, or by obtaining an official waiver of this requirement from the Department of State.
  - **12-Month Bar for Student/Research Scholar:** If the student/scholar has held J-1 status in the U.S. during the preceding 12 months, he/she is only eligible for J-1 status in these categories if transferring from another J-1 program (see following point regarding Transfers).
  - **Transfer to or from UNMC:** Once in the U.S., J-1 participants may transfer to other U.S. institutions with the approval of the original sponsoring institution. However, both sponsoring institutions must confirm that the program objective is substantially similar to the original purpose of the J-1 program.

**SEE PAGE 3 FOR INFORMATION ON THE DEPARTMENT PROCESS FOR REQUESTING J-1 SPONSORSHIP**

Additional questions regarding J-1 processing or a participant’s visa status should be directed to the OGE at [globalsupport@unmc.edu](mailto:globalsupport@unmc.edu) or (402) 559-8326.

## Specific Procedure for J-1 Sponsorship

1. Sponsoring Department determines that prospective J-1 visitor or employee will be/can be sponsored for J-1 status. Contact the OGE with questions about J-1 eligibility.
2. Sponsoring Department determines whether the J-1 should be a Short-Term Scholar or Research Scholar. If total time at UNMC will not exceed six months and the scholar is not in the US, then Short-Term would be better.
3. Sponsoring Department prepares “Department Request for J-1 Sponsorship” form found on our website here: <http://www.unmc.edu/global/support-services/immigration-visa-sponsorship/j-1/j-1-department-sponsorship.html>
4. Sponsoring Department submits Department Request and proof of financial support by email to [globalsupport@unmc.edu](mailto:globalsupport@unmc.edu) with the subject “New J-1 Sponsorship”.
5. The OGE will attain approval from Department of State through the SEVIS system and print Form DS-2019. We will then send the DS-2019 to Sponsoring Department (along with instruction sheet; see 8.a).
6. SEVIS Fee Payment—Sponsoring Department may pay SEVIS Fee at [www.fmjfee.com](http://www.fmjfee.com). If this is a J-1 transfer, then the SEVIS Fee does not need to be paid (it would have been paid at the start of their current program). If the department will not pay the SEVIS Fee, an email should be sent to the visitor with instructions for the SEVIS Fee payment (website address) and also include the SEVIS ID Number, found on the DS-2019 Form. This allows the visitor to arrange payment of the fee prior to receiving the original DS-2019 form, so they can also start arranging their visa interview.
7. Sponsoring Department sends DS-2019 and SEVIS Fee payment receipt (if paid) to the incoming J-1 Scholar – FedEx strongly recommended.
8. After J-1 scholar arrives at UNMC, we must be notified with required information by email so that we can “Activate” the J-1 record in SEVIS. This must be done before the end of the 30-Day Window. If not completed before the end of the 30-day window, we must apply for reinstatement or else the J-1 scholar will be classified by the DOS as a “No Show”. If a J-1 scholar “No Show” is determined to have arrived at UNMC, then our J-1 program faces termination. If a J-1 scholar cannot arrive to UNMC before the end of the 30-Day Window, contact our office to simply change the beginning date.
  - a. A list of information and documentation required to activate a J-1 record is sent to each department along with a completed DS-2019.