August 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 changes related to our J-1 visa Exchange Visitor (EV) Program to departments that host J-1 Exchange Visitors.

The August 2018 newsletter is an update to the May 2018 newsletter that introduced the DS-2019 application fee and English3’s J-1 Interview.

Best,

J-1 Scholar Team

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English3 Language Proficiency “J-1 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 “departmental” interview process (English proficiency for J-1 scholars rubric) conducted by host departments, although additional options, such as the TOEFL, IELTS, and CEFR will still available. Please visit our website for the English Language Proficiency requirements.

English3’s J-1 interview is now available to use for proof of language proficiency, but we will continue to accept the academic host department interview for DS-2019 applications received on or before December 31, 2018. The J-1 interview will replace the departmental interview beginning with all DS-2019 applications received January 1, 2019 or later. The departmental interview will no longer be accepted as a measure of English language proficiency after December 31, 2018.
English3 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 is charged to the EV, 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.

We plan to update the DS-2019 application to include information on this option, provide an **e-mail templet** that host departments can use to advise on this option, as well as provide instructions on how to access the interview through English3’s website.

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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 interview is conducted by a single entity with expertise in this area
2. Help the University of Utah meet its obligation to ensure that 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 with internet access, 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
New J-1 Exchange Visitor Application Fee:

International Student and Scholar Services (ISSS) implemented 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 application processing 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 to support departments and EVs.

Currently, the entire cost of administering the Exchange Visitor Program is funded by F-1 visa 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 was 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’re aware of many stories related to how the exchange of knowledge, expertise, and culture due to an EV’s 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.
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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