



**Checklist for Hosting a J-1 Exchange Visitor**  
International Students and Scholar Services  
<https://global.upenn.edu/iss/j1scholar>

*This checklist is intended to provide Penn schools and departments guidance for hosting a visiting scholar. It should be used to assist with every step of the invitation process, departmental onboarding, orientation to the university, and compliance with all federal regulations. Updates to this document will be made on an annual basis or in the event of significant changes to policies.*

**1. Before issuing an invitation (as soon as possible but at least 6 weeks before the program start date), verify the following:**

- **Length of Stay & Intended Activities:** This can impact which Exchange Visitor category is used (e.g., short-term scholar, professor, research scholar, J-1 Student Intern) and eligibility for extensions.
- **Selection:** Departments and Schools are encouraged to develop a consistent internal protocol about the selection of incoming J-1 Exchange Visitors. Procedures should be put in place to determine what constitutes an invitation, what the minimum qualifications will be, services provided to the visitor, and how long appointments will last.
- **Visitor Responsibilities:** Ascertain that the Exchange Visitor understands their responsibilities and potential obligations to pay taxes, insurance, or other fees, which vary widely from department to department. Except under the limited conditions described [here](#).
  - Scholars may only work for Penn at the location indicated in their application.
- **Funding:** [See our page on J-1 Visiting Scholar Application for the latest funding requirements](#)
  - Postdocs should be funded according to the guidelines found at: <https://research.upenn.edu/postdocs-and-students/policies/>
  - Additional funding per year will be required for a dependent spouse as well as each dependent child. Please note whether funding source will be Penn, the home institution, personal funds, government funds, etc.
- **Dependents:** If dependents will accompany the J-1 visitor, confirm with the Exchange Visitor that all J-2 dependents are subject to the same regulations, including J-2 employment guidelines and possible bars (see below).
- **Restrictions on J-1 Sponsorship: There are certain circumstances that prevent international visitors from applying for a J1 Exchange Visitor visa. For example, if they have recently participated in another J-1 program, they may not be able to do so again until a designated amount of time has passed. See below:**
  - An Exchange Visitor may not come to the US in the J-1 Professor or J-1 Research Scholar category if s/he has held any J-1 status, including J-2 status, within the 12-month period immediately preceding the new program.
  - Once an exchange visitor completes a J-1 Professor or J-1 Research Scholar program, s/he may not begin a new J-1 Professor or J-1 Research scholar program for 24 months.
  - Exchange Visitors who have received funding from their home country government or the US government, or whose skills are on their home country's Skills List, may not change visa status within the US or apply for an H-1B visa or a green card until they have spent at least two years in their home country or requested an appropriate waiver.

**2. Before completing the eform, make sure to have:**

- **Letter of Invitation** from Penn department describing activities of the J-1 Exchange Visitor,

length of stay, financial support and equipment and facilities available to the J-1 Exchange Visitor. Outline all terms and conditions of the J-1 Exchange Visitor's visit and/or work. It should be signed by department chair. A suggested template may be found [here](#).

- **Resume/CV** of J-1 Exchange Visitor.
- **Certification of English Language Proficiency:** J-1 Exchange Visitors are required to demonstrate proficiency in English, which may be evidenced by:
  - Acceptable scores on recognized [standardized English language test](#) (TOEFL, ACTFL OPI, etc.).
  - Oral Proficiency Interview (OPI) conducted by [ELP](#),
  - [a Host Department Interview](#). Hosting departments may choose to conduct an interview on their own determination. Individual schools or departments may impose more stringent standards for demonstrating English language proficiency.Information on test scores and language ability can be found at the ISSS website, [J-1 English Language Proficiency Requirements](#). ISSS has outlined a few [exceptions](#) when demonstrating a scholar's English language ability is not required.
- **Export Control/ Restricted Party Screening:** Penn utilizes Visual Compliance for restricted party screening. The training can be accessed here: [Restricted Party Screening at Penn](#) (COURSE UP.87023.ITEM.NEWRESTPARTSCR, or search for "Restricted Party Screening" in Workday Learning). [Please note that section II has a clickable walkthrough on how to screen; the link you need to use to register, along with instructions on how to register, will show up once you've reached the end of the training.]
  - If you have not personally screened the scholar, please do so using visual compliance. This applies even if the scholar has been at Penn and is seeking an extension. You must confirm that the scholar has been screened on the ISSS eform.
  - If you have questions directly related to export control or restricted part screening, please email [expctrl@lists.upenn.edu](mailto:expctrl@lists.upenn.edu) or contact the Director of Export Compliance, Jessica Buchanan, at [jessib@upenn.edu](mailto:jessib@upenn.edu) or 215-573-8817
- **Financial Documentation:** If the J-1 Exchange Visitor is supported by a source other than Penn, provide documentation of the source and amount of the funds. If supported by an outside source/company, the letter must be on company letterhead and signed by the authorized signatory.
- **Passport bio page** of the J-1 Exchange Visitor and all dependents who will accompany the J-1 Exchange Visitor.
- **Department Budget Codes ISSS Processing Fee**
- **Timely submission:** If the start date is within 6 weeks from the time the complete application is submitted to ISSS, the Exchange Visitor might not be able to begin on time. iPenn will not accept initial requests with appointment start dates that are less than 30 days out from the date of submission. Applications missing documentation may increase processing times.



**3. DS-2019 Form issuance:** Once an application is approved, the DS-2019 form (*Certificate of Eligibility for J-1 Sponsorship*) will be digitally signed by an ISSS staff member and emailed directly to the J-1 applicant. Departmental Representatives are cc'd on the email. In addition to the DS-2019 form, the email contains a link to instructions for the J-1 to follow in order to apply for a J-1 visa at a US Consulate. The link also provides other important information regarding regulatory requirements of the J-1 program they must follow in order to maintain J-1 visa status.

#### **4. Fulfill Host Department Obligations of Hosting a J-1 Exchange Visitor: Pre-arrival**

- **Confirm Arrival Date/Time – VERY IMPORTANT:** The J-1 Exchange Visitor must arrive within 14 days (before or after) of the start date listed on the DS-2019 form. Please inform ISSS if the J-1 Exchange Visitor will arrive more than 15 days after the requested start date. Additional documentation may be required by the US government for late arrivals based on the following:
  - Arriving 15 to 21 days after start date: The Penn department must complete an ISSS LateArrival Form.
  - Arrival beyond 21 days: If more than 21 days late, a new offer letter must be issued, LateArrival Form must be submitted to ISSS, plus a new DS-2019 must be issued**Failure to arrive within the timeline described above may result in a scholar's SEVIS program termination or designation as a "no-show".**
  
- **Pre-Arrival Communications:** Communicate with J-1 Exchange Visitor and answer pre-arrival questions they may have about Penn, Philadelphia, the US, etc. Send them department contact lists, or other onboarding information via mail or email.
  
- **Health Insurance:** In accordance with US government regulations, the J-1 Exchange Visitor **must** have sufficient health insurance for him/herself and all dependents. This insurance **must meet the mandatory State Department requirements**. Verify that the J-1 Exchange Visitor has the required medical insurance effective upon or within one day of arrival.
  - For **non-post-doctoral** J-1 Exchange Visitors, the Insurance requirement can be met in by either of the following:
    - The J-1 Exchange Visitor enrolls in one of the University's pre-approved insurance plans through [Gallagher Benefit Services](#).
    - The J-1 Exchange Visitor already has, or purchases, an individual insurance plan, which must be [evaluated and approved by Gallagher Benefit Services](#) as meeting the US government requirements.
  
  - *J-1 Exchange Visitors with a **Postdoctoral Appointment*** should not purchase the plans referenced above, since they will be automatically enrolled in Penn's Postdoctoral Researcher insurance plan. Penn's Postdoctoral health insurance meets the J-1 Federal Regulations' required coverage for both J-1 scholars and their enrolled J-2 dependents.

Please note that some Visiting Scholars who are considered University employees may be offered insurance as part of their benefits package. This insurance alone does NOT meet the Department of State requirements. Scholars who elect to accept this insurance will also need to purchase a separate rider to cover the repatriation and evacuation obligations of the Department of State. [International SOS](#) and other insurance companies provide such riders for purchase.



*Medical insurance premium payments made by a Penn department on behalf of a scholar are considered taxable benefits to the scholar. Payments must go through Accounts Payable to properly report the benefit. Penn's Purchasing Card (PCard) is not appropriate for transactions that are considered taxable benefits to the recipient.*

## 5. Arrival & Beyond - Plans for logistical support, orientation, and supervision

- **Work Conditions:** Determine resources to be provided to the J-1 Exchange Visitor. Consider work space/office, telephone, computer, email, database, listserv and library access, [Pennkey](#), [PennCard](#), etc.
- **ISSS Orientation:** J-1 Exchange Visitors must complete the online arrival tutorial and notification in iPenn no later than 14 days after arrival to the United States. Once completed, ISSS staff will report their arrival to Penn in the *Student and Exchange Visitor Information System (SEVIS)* a government database.
- **School/Departmental Onboarding:** Please refer to Penn's [HR Manager's Toolkit](#) for general onboarding procedures. Also, consult your school/center HR for any appointment requirements specific to your School, department or lab. Additional resources are available [below](#).
- **Job Class Codes & Role Descriptions:**
  - J-1 Visiting Scholars may **not** be categorized as:
    - TA, GA, RA, or any kind of "student worker".
    - "Research specialist"
    - Staff or administrative position
    - Tenure track or other indefinitely renewable faculty appointment
- **Visiting scholars paid by Penn or offered benefits from Penn should be entered into PennWorks.**
  - Visitors may be classified under the following codes (note, job class codes may indicate benefits):
    - Job Class Code: *246040 Visiting Scholar*  
*(Limited eligibility of medical benefit, may be in a cost share option and dependent on grant/department funding. It is not guaranteed)*
    - Job Class Code: *246000 Visiting Professor (eligible for benefits)*
    - Job Class Code: *246010 Visiting Assoc. Professor (eligible for benefits)*
    - Job Class Code: *246020 Visiting Assistant Professor (eligible for benefits)*
    - Job Class Code: *246030 Visiting Associate (eligible for benefits)*
    - Job Class Code: *246050 Visiting Executive Professor (eligible for benefits)*
    - Job Class Code: *217500 Postdoctoral Researcher (supported from a research grant)*
    - Job Class Code: *217603 Postdoctoral fellow (supported by a private foundation, non-profit charitable organization, or other source)*
    - Job Class Code: *217703 NRSA-postdoctoral fellow (supported by an individual or institutional National Research Service Award)*

Self-funded J-1 Scholars are not required to be included in the Penn payroll system and should not be entered into PennWorks. They are considered guests.

- **Departmental Orientation:** Provide J-1 Exchange Visitors and dependents with orientation to the department, staff, work & expected outcomes, work ethics & timelines, facilities, equipment (phones, computers, lab equipment), etc. Provide phone lists and email lists. Also provide emergency contacts and procedures and provide a greater orientation to Penn systems, facilities and opportunities for the J-1 Exchange Visitor and dependents within the greater community.



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- **Supervision:** Who will be in charge? Establish a point person or persons as a resource for the J-1 Exchange Visitor who will orient new arrivals and answer practical questions about the Department, School or University. Additional people should be designated to assist with handling crises and in liaising with ISSS as needed.
- **Cultural Exchange:** Provide opportunities for J-1 Exchange Visitor to network with faculty and otherscholars and to integrate effectively into the life of the Department, School and University.
- **Monitor Activities and Program Dates:** Keep abreast of the J-1 Exchange Visitor's adjustment and activities to ensure educational and cultural exchange program goals are being met. Check in regularly and make time for the J-1 Exchange Visitor to ask questions or raise concerns. Department representatives should take note of the end date on the J-1 Exchange Visitors DS-2019 and take care to submit any extensions in a timely manner via eform and notify ISSS via email of any early departures.
- **Respond to ISSS requests for J-1 Scholar Verification.** Verifications must be performed within 30 days of the J-1 Scholars' arrival, and every 6 months thereafter. They can be accessed via the department representative's "Your iPenn Case List" in iPenn or via the reminders sent from ISSS to the administrator associated with the J-1 Scholar.
- **Departure Report:** Be sure to notify ISSS of the J-1 Exchange Visitor's departure.
- **Beyond two years:** Sponsored programs beyond two years will need to be reviewed for compliance with ACA medical insurance. Scholars whose sponsorship was transferred to Penn and who have been in the U.S. over two years, will also need to have their medical insurance reviewed for ACA compliance.

## 6. Administrative Resources

Penn Departments	Resources
Benefits	<a href="https://www.hr.upenn.edu/PennHR/benefits-pay">https://www.hr.upenn.edu/PennHR/benefits-pay</a>
Financial Training Department	<a href="#">Payroll/PennWorks Classes</a>
Human Resources	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <a href="#">Manager's Toolkit</a></li> <li>• <a href="#">New Hire Checklist</a></li> <li>• <a href="#">Onboarding Staff</a></li> <li>• <a href="#">Onboarding Checklist (domestic)</a></li> </ul>
International Student & Scholar Services: Insurance Requirements	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <a href="#">Pre-selected Gallagher Plan Portal</a></li> <li>• <a href="#">Waive out of Gallagher Scholar Plan</a> (evidence of comparable or better insurance coverage)</li> <li>• <a href="#">ISOS</a> evacuation and repatriation rider options Use Penn's member ID (11BSGC000012) for discounted rates</li> </ul>
Penn Postdoctoral Trainee Program	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <a href="#">Policy for Postdoctoral Trainees at Penn</a></li> <li>• <a href="#">Policy for the Appointment of Foreign Nationals Under Postdoctoral Trainee Program</a></li> <li>• <a href="#">Biomedical Postdoctoral Programs</a></li> </ul>
Tax Resources	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <a href="#">Payroll Tax</a></li> <li>• <a href="#">Foreign Nationals</a></li> </ul>