

# INTERNATIONAL STUDENT & SCHOLAR SERVICES

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## PRE-ARRIVAL INFORMATION FOR NEW J-1 SCHOLAR AND STUDENT INTERN EXCHANGE VISITORS

*Congratulations on your offer to do an exchange program at UConn! Please read this pre-arrival guide and contact International Student and Scholar Services (ISSS) at [international@uconn.edu](mailto:international@uconn.edu) if you have questions related to your J-1 status prior to arrival.*

### DS-2019 INSTRUCTIONS AND VISA

Please review your Form DS-2019, Certificate of Eligibility for Exchange Visitor (J-1) Status. Carefully read Pages 1 and 2, sign and complete the EXCHANGE VISITOR CERTIFICATION at the bottom of Page 1. *Important! Please check your DS-2019 Certificate of Eligibility and notify ISSS immediately BEFORE you apply for your visa if there are any errors. We will send you a corrected DS-2019 to use to apply for your visa.*

Your J-2 dependents (if any) who are older than 14 years may sign their own Forms DS-2019 at the bottom of the form. Otherwise, you, as the J-1 principal, must sign on behalf of your young dependents.

### J-1 STUDENT INTERN CATEGORIES

If your J-1 Exchange Visitor Category is Student Intern (see box 4 on the Form DS-2019) then you will also receive with your DS-2019 a Form DS-7002, Training/Internship Placement Plan. It has been completed in part by your hosting department and the ISSS office. Please review the form for accuracy, and print name/sign/date in the "Trainee/Intern Signature" section on page 1. You will need to bring this completed form to your J-1 visa interview.

### SEVIS I-901 FEE

U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) charges a \$180 SEVIS I-901 fee to new J-1 exchange visitors. **This fee is IN ADDITION TO the visa fees charged by the U.S. consulate or embassy.** If you are outside the U.S., the SEVIS (Student and Exchange Visitor Information System) I-901 fee must be paid and you must print your payment confirmation before you apply for your exchange visitor visa. If you are in the U.S. and applying for a change of status, the SEVIS fee must be paid before you file your application to the USCIS. If you are transferring from another U.S. institution you do not need to pay the SEVIS fee again UNLESS your new Form DS-2019 lists a SEVIS ID number that is different from your prior Form DS-2019. Your J-2

dependents do not need to pay a separate SEVIS fee. The Form I-901 can be completed and the fee can be paid online by credit card at <http://www.fmjfee.com>, and you must print payment confirmation after completing Form I-901 and submitting payment. The fee can also be paid by check or money order after completing Form I-901 online, or by Western Union. See the ICE website at: <http://www.ice.gov/sevis/i901/index.htm>.

### APPLYING FOR YOUR VISA

If abroad, pay the SEVIS fee (see above) and consult the website of the closest U.S. embassy or consulate for instructions on applying for a J-1 visa stamp. The visa stamp is a travel document affixed to your passport that you will need to seek entry to the United States for the purpose of participating in an exchange program at UConn. You will need to complete the online Form DS-160 and most likely attend an in-person visa interview. The DS-160 will ask for your U.S. address; if you do not yet know where you will live, you can use your academic department or the ISSS address on the form. You will need to bring your passport that is valid at least 6 months into the future, your SEVIS fee payment confirmation, your proof of funding and any other required support documentation specified on the embassy/consulate website, to your visa interview. Please see the website of the consulate where you will apply for your visa for the full list of supporting documents needed for your visa interview. For links to all U.S. Embassies and Consulates worldwide, see:

<http://usembassy.state.gov/>

Citizens of Canada must have J-1 status to participate in an exchange program in the U.S., but they do not have to apply for a J-1 visa stamp in their passport before traveling to the U.S.: <http://travel.state.gov/content/visas/english/visit/canada-bermuda.html>. Citizens of Canada *do* need to pay the SEVIS fee and present the Form DS-2019, passport, SEVIS fee payment confirmation and proof

of funding when entering the U.S. to begin their exchange program as a J-1 exchange visitor.

Plan ahead, as the visa application process can take several weeks, and sometimes longer. Because most visa applicants are required to appear for a personal interview, it can take a long time to schedule an appointment, and security checks can delay visa issuance by several weeks or months. Current appointment and average processing times can be found here:

[http://www.travel.state.gov/visa/temp/wait/wait\\_4638.html](http://www.travel.state.gov/visa/temp/wait/wait_4638.html)

When you receive a visa, please IMMEDIATELY verify if the information on your visa is accurate before leaving the embassy/consulate (if picking up your passport), such as your name spelling/order, date of birth, expiration date, visa type, etc. If any errors are found, contact the consular office that granted your visa as soon as possible to fix them.

It is advisable to purchase your flight tickets only after your visa is granted.

*Other helpful websites:*

*J-1 Visa Program*

<http://j1visa.state.gov/>

*ISSS Visa Application Guidance:*

*iss.uconn.edu > International Students > New Students > Apply for a Visa*

*Visa Denials*

[http://travel.state.gov/visa/frvi/denials/denials\\_1361.html](http://travel.state.gov/visa/frvi/denials/denials_1361.html)

### **ARRIVAL TO THE U.S.**

After you obtain the visa you may travel to the U.S. no earlier than 30 days before the program start date indicated on box 3 of your Form DS-2019. You must arrive at UConn BEFORE the program start date. You should note the start date of your orientation program when making plans for arrival. See [www.iss.uconn.edu/orientation](http://www.iss.uconn.edu/orientation) for further details. Please contact your academic department and ISSS if you have extraordinary circumstances that prevent you from arriving by your program start date.

Please notify ISSS if you have received a Form DS-2019 from UConn but decide not to attend. You must mail the unused form back to ISSS.

During your flight, you will be given a customs declaration form as you near the U.S. On the customs declaration form, you must provide your

U.S. address as well as information found in your passport. Again, if you do not have a U.S. address, you may use the ISSS office. Be sure to print clearly. You must also declare on the form the amount of money you are bringing with you, but only if it is \$10,000 or more. Be sure to tell the truth. There is no penalty for bringing this much money but it MUST be declared. You must also include on the form the total value of any goods that you are bringing into the U.S. You don't have to be specific, you can use general terms (i.e. clothing, books, gifts). You can estimate the value of the items. You do not have to pay a duty fee on totals less than \$1,000.

When you travel please carry with you your Form DS-2019, passport, visa, I-901 SEVIS fee payment confirmation, admission letter or offer letter and funding documentation. **Do not pack these documents into your checked luggage.** Present your passport and Form DS-2019 to the U.S. immigration officer, who will stamp and annotate your documents with "J-1 (or J-2)" and "D/S" (Duration of Status). Be sure that the officer admits you as a J-1 exchange visitor by checking the entry stamp in your passport - if the officer stamps your passport with any other entry than J-1, or gives a specific expiration date (not D/S) please go back to have this corrected BEFORE you leave the immigration area.

*Self Service Kiosks or Global Entry Program:* If your immigration is processed through a self-service kiosk, you may need to elect the type of visa that you enter on. Pay special attention that you process your self-service admission using the correct visa/visa type. Please check the kiosk for any receipts issued to you upon processing your entry, and do not misplace this receipt!

### **I-94 Admission Record**

Upon admission, ALL exchange visitors must confirm the admission record online at: <https://i94.cbp.dhs.gov/i94/request.html> . **Please print out your online I-94 admission record and keep it for your records.**

If you travel through a land border by car you will receive a paper Form I-94 attached to your passport. This form must be annotated the same as your entry stamp: "J-1 (or J-2)" and "D/S".

### **ARRIVAL TO UCONN AND CHECK-IN**

**IMPORTANT! You must check in with ISSS by the program start date on your Form DS-2019.** ISSS must register your arrival in SEVIS, a U.S. Department of Homeland Security (DHS) database.

To check in, you must do the following AFTER arriving in the U.S.:

1) Come to ISSS during business hours and tell the front desk assistant you are a new visiting scholar or student intern, and you need to check-in.

2) Bring to ISSS the following documents for you and all accompanying dependents:

- Signed Form DS-2019s
- Passport with Visa Stamp/Entry Stamp
- I-94 Print Out
- Health Insurance Policy information (Policy name, ID number, dates effective)

Computers are available at ISSS for the purpose of printing your I-94. ISSS is located in room 183 of McMahon Hall at the main UConn campus in Storrs. **Failure to check in within 30 days of your program start date on the Form DS-2019 may result in losing your legal J-1 status.** The U.S. Department of Homeland Security is very strict about check-in requirements.

#### ORIENTATION

All J-1 scholars are required to attend a mandatory orientation about the J-1 visa regulations and life at UConn. Orientation sessions are held at ISSS on the first Friday of each month. ISSS will register you for orientation when you check in at the International Center.

#### REGIONAL CAMPUS SCHOLARS

J-1 scholars who are based at one of the regional campuses (Avery Point, Graduate Business Learning Center, Greater Hartford, School of Law, Stamford, Torrington or Waterbury) are also required to meet with ISSS staff to check-in and receive information on the J-1 regulations. Scholars may choose to come to Storrs campus and attend the orientation session here, or an International Advisor can meet with you individually at your campus. An International Advisor travels regularly to most of the regional campuses. You or your hosting department should contact ISSS to make arrangements for orientation and check-in with the regional campus international advisor.

#### HEALTH/TRAVEL INSURANCE

##### *Medical (Health) Insurance requirements*

The U.S. government requires all J-1 exchange visitors and their dependents to carry insurance for the duration of the exchange program as a condition of maintaining legal status. Please see <http://issu.uconn.edu/medical-insurance/> for full details of what your plan must cover to meet legal

requirements. These requirements also apply to all accompanying J-2 family members. Failure to maintain this insurance requirement constitutes a VIOLATION OF STATUS and your SEVIS record may be subject to termination if you do not have adequate coverage for yourself and all accompanying family members. **You may not begin your J-1 exchange program until you have insurance coverage that meets the requirements of the J-1 program. This is a mandatory requirement and no exceptions can be made. Your coverage must be effective during your entire J-1 program period on your DS-2019.** Finally, you may also be required under the government's Affordable Care Act to maintain health insurance coverage.

Please note that our office cannot review your plan to determine whether it meets the J-1 visa requirements. If you are unsure whether your plan is sufficient we advise you to contact the insurance company and ask if the plan covers the mandated benefits.

#### *Insurance Options*

J-1 scholars and student interns are eligible to purchase Insurance coverage under the University-sponsored insurance plan for students, which fully meets the J-1 visa insurance requirements. You may also choose another plan of your choice, however we strongly recommend that you purchase the University sponsored plan to ensure that your plan will meet all legal requirements, and that it may be accepted by local medical providers. You can only purchase the University-sponsored insurance after your arrival, so you will still need to purchase insurance to cover at least the first month of your stay to ensure that you have insurance before the University-sponsored plan becomes effective. Our website lists a number of temporary/travel insurance providers that offer short term insurance meeting J-1 visa requirements:

<http://issu.uconn.edu/medical-insurance/>. If you purchase your own insurance for temporary or long term coverage, it is important to understand how the plan works if you need service, e.g. must you pay for services up front and seek reimbursement from the company? Or can you send your bills directly to the insurance company for payment to your medical provider? Medical care in the United States is VERY expensive.

J-1 Scholars who are paid employees of UConn may opt to purchase the UConn employee health insurance plan. Please refer to your UConn offer letter to see if this option is available to you. However, please note the following:

- 1) UConn employee insurance coverage will not take effect until AFTER you have arrived and met with Human Resources to enroll for

benefits. You must purchase separate insurance coverage for you and your family until your UConn employee insurance becomes effective to ensure that you are meeting the requirements of the J-1 program.

- 2) UConn employee insurance does **NOT** meet all insurance requirements of the J-1 program. It does not provide coverage for medical evacuation or repatriation of remains. Therefore all scholars who plan to enroll for the employee insurance must purchase a separate plan to cover mandated minimum coverages for these items for the entire program period in the U.S.

### SOCIAL SECURITY NUMBER (SSN)

The Social Security Number is a number issued by the U.S. government for tax purposes. J-1 scholars who will be paid employees at UConn must apply for a Social Security Number after checking in with ISSS. At the start of each semester our office brings Social Security Administration officials to Storrs campus to take your SSN applications. Scholars who begin their programs in August or in January may apply for their SSN on campus during this event. Others must apply for the SSN at the Social Security Administration office in Willimantic or another SSN office close to your campus. You will not be eligible to receive an SSN until about two weeks after you have checked in with ISSS and your SEVIS record has been registered.

Please note that all scholars have also been assigned a “Temporary National ID Number”, which is recorded on the “Visiting Scholar Information Form” that you have received with your Form DS-2019. In University records, this number holds the place for your SSN (if you don’t have an SSN). This is not a Social Security Number and should never be given out as one. This “temporary” number is needed by your department to access your employee records and is given to you for this purpose only.

### HOUSING AND PUBLIC TRANSPORTATION

If you will be living in University housing at Storrs campus, all academic buildings and services are within walking distance. There is also a system of University buses to help students and exchange visitors get more quickly from one end of campus to another, as campus is quite large, and some housing is located further from the center of campus. See <http://transpo.uconn.edu/> for more information on University bus services.

Most visiting scholars and student interns live off-campus due to the limited availability of University housing for non-student populations. If you are living off-campus, it is HIGHLY RECOMMENDED that you find housing within walking or biking distance to campus. The Storrs area is very rural and public transportation is limited. Exchange visitors who live in or near the town of Willimantic (next to Storrs) may be able to meet basic transportation needs through the Windham Region Transit District bus system: <http://www.wrtd.net/>. The Storrs-Willimantic Bus and Route 195 Express Service buses all stop at UConn and are free to the UConn community with a Husky One Card. However, service is limited and schedules are subject to change, so it is safer to find housing that is within walking or biking distance to campus. Some long-term UConn visiting scholars purchase cars for better and more convenient mobility; however, basic on-and-off campus needs can be met within walking/biking vicinity to the UConn campus. See [www.offcampushousing.uconn.edu](http://www.offcampushousing.uconn.edu) for further resources on finding housing off-campus.

Scholars and student interns attending programs at UConn’s Hartford, West Hartford or Stamford campuses may find that public transportation is better in these more urban areas. See <http://www.cttransit.com/> for further details on city bus schedules.

### DRIVING

International scholars and student interns may drive in the U.S. with a foreign driver’s license used together with an official International Driver’s Permit (IDP) obtained in the home country. If you have a driver’s license from your home country, it is highly recommended that you obtain the IDP before your departure. If you do not have the IDP, you will be required to go through the regular process described below in order to legally drive in Connecticut and the U.S.

In the United States, each state issues a driver’s license for residents of that state. In Connecticut, the Department of Motor Vehicles (DMV) is the office that issues driver’s licenses. The process to obtain a Connecticut driver’s license is long and requires exchange visitors to first apply for a learner’s permit for 90 days, during which time you can only drive with an experienced, licensed Connecticut driver. If you have a license issued in another country, you can waive the learner’s permit stage of the application. Full license procedures are outlined at: [iss.uconn.edu/drivers-license/](http://iss.uconn.edu/drivers-license/). Exchange visitors can also apply for a CT non-driver’s identification card (CT State ID) if they wish

to have official ID recognized in the U.S. other than their passport.

In addition, international exchange visitors must have a CT driver's license or CT State ID in order to register a car you have purchased. You are required to register a car in order to drive it. Therefore, if you are planning to purchase a car, you should not do this until you have obtained your CT driver's license, or CT State ID. You will also be required to have auto insurance to register your car in Connecticut. If you plan to purchase a car and drive in the U.S., please budget accordingly.

Finally, in order to apply for a CT driver's license, you are required to submit multiple documents to the Department of Motor Vehicles to establish your identity. Some exchange visitors have needed to submit either a marriage certificate (translated into English) or if not married, an academic transcript from their University. The academic transcript can be a foreign University, but it must be translated into English. It may be wise to bring these documents with English translation if you are considering to apply for a CT driver's license.

#### **UNIVERSITY NET ID**

The University should be providing you either before or soon after your arrival with a Net ID, which will allow you to access the UConn computer system networks and apply for benefits such as your UConn One Card (a University-issued ID card), take books from the library, etc. Please check with your hosting department administrator to make sure they are applying for a Net ID on your behalf. Once you have a Net ID you can activate it at this website: <https://netid.uconn.edu/> You will need your temporary National ID to activate your Net ID (unless you have a U.S. SSN), so save the paper that was attached to your Form DS-2019 with this information.

#### **PURPOSE OF PROGRAM**

In accepting the J-1 visa, you obligate yourself to all terms and conditions stated on Form DS-2019 and will be admitted to the U.S. for the purpose of pursuing the exchange program stated on your Form DS-2019. You are eligible to pursue your exchange activity between the dates indicated on your Form DS-2019. Any changes to the terms of your appointment at UConn must be reported and updated on your Form DS-2019 after arrival. Please see the website of ISSS for further information on maintaining J-1 status after your arrival at UCONN: [iss.uconn.edu](https://iss.uconn.edu) > Visiting Scholars.

#### **THE HOME COUNTRY PHYSICAL-PRESENCE REQUIREMENT 212(E)**

Many (but not all) J-1 Exchange Visitors are subject to the "2-year home residence requirement; 212(e)." The purpose of 212(e) is to ensure the visitor's home country also benefits from the exchange visitor's experience. J-1 Exchange Visitors come to the U.S. for a specific objective, such as a program of study, research, or to teach. The requirement is intended to prevent a participant who is "subject" to this law from staying longer than necessary for the objective, and to ensure that he or she will spend at least two years in the home country before coming back to the United States for a long-term stay on an immigrant visa. For the terms of the requirement, please see item (a) page 2, of the Form DS-2019. If you have any questions about why you are or are not subject to the requirement, please raise them with the consular officer when you apply for your visa.

#### **J-1 VISA REGULATIONS**

There are many rules and regulations that you must follow in order to maintain your J-1 visa status after you have arrived in the U.S. ISSS is the only office on-campus responsible for advising exchange visitors on their visa and immigration matters. It is very important that you understand the terms of your exchange visitor visa and abide by those terms. ISSS has five International Advisors who serve the advising needs of all Storrs and regional campus exchange visitors. Please see [iss.uconn.edu](https://iss.uconn.edu) > About > Staff Directory to find your assigned international advisor.

#### **PRE-ARRIVAL CHECKLIST**

- Read thoroughly this material and your Form DS-2019.
- Sign your Form DS-2019.
- If you are a Student Intern and received a DS-7002 with your DS-2019, read, sign and date your DS-7002.
- Pay I-901 SEVIS fee.
- Apply for your J-1 visa and J-2 visas for accompanying dependents.
- Obtain travel insurance for at least the first 30 days of your stay that meets the requirements of the J-1 visa program. Be prepared to pay for medical insurance for the length of your visit after you arrive. The University-sponsored insurance is strongly recommended.

- Obtain an International Driver's Permit while in the home country.
- Contact ISSS ([international@uconn.edu](mailto:international@uconn.edu)) if you will be arriving after the program start date on your DS-2019
- Enter the U.S. with your J visa documents no earlier than 30 days before the start date on your Form DS-2019.

**POST-ARRIVAL CHECKLIST- FIRST THINGS TO DO**

- Upon arrival to the U.S., make sure you have been admitted in the correct visa status.
- Storrs campus exchange visitors:** Visit the Lodewick Visitors Center and ask for a campus map! <http://visitors.uconn.edu/>
- Check In at ISSS located in the McMahon Hall, main level, room 183 (above the Dining Hall). Bring your passport, DS-2019, and medical/travel insurance information and any of the same documents for accompanying family members.
- Attend mandatory J-1 orientation; offered on the first Friday of every month at ISSS.

Pursue the research/teaching activity that you have been invited to conduct at UConn.

Contact ISSS if there are any proposed changes to your J-1 program activity.

**WHAT NOT TO DO RIGHT AWAY UPON ARRIVAL:**

**Do not apply for a Social Security Number (SSN).** After your arrival, your immigration records will not yet have record of your status in the U.S., so Social Security Administration will not be able to process your application. You must wait until at least 2 weeks after you have checked in with ISSS (sometimes longer) before you may apply.

**Do not apply for a Connecticut Driver's License or Connecticut State ID.** In order to apply for a Driver's License or Connecticut State ID you must have a Social Security Number (SSN) or evidence from Social Security Administration that you are not eligible for a SSN (SSN denial letter). This can only be done after you have checked in with ISSS (see above). **This means you should consider transportation needs - do not commit to a housing arrangement where you will need a car/driver's license.**

**Do not purchase a car.** In order to purchase a car and legally drive it, you must have a CT driver's license or CT State ID (see above).