



## ENTERING THE U.S. AS A J-1 EXCHANGE VISITOR AND ACCIDENT INSURANCE COVERAGE GUIDELINES

### Entering the U.S. as a New J-1 Exchange Visitor

Exchange visitors are eligible to enter the U.S. and check in with Foreign Visitors Program (FVP) as much as 30 days in advance of the program start date indicated on Form DS-2019. The FVP has the policy that to “validate” and maintain immigration status, J-1 participants must first check in with the FVP office within 10 days of entering the U.S., and no later than 20 days of the program start date indicated on Form DS-2019. **Please note! If the scholar misses this 30-day deadline, SEVIS will automatically terminate the scholar’s J program and the scholar’s official J status will be terminated.** It is imperative that each scholar physically checks in with FVP as soon as they arrive at their programs.

Occasionally, program start dates are delayed due to unforeseen circumstances or to delays in visa issuance. The department or the international scholar must contact FVP in advance to notify of any potential delays in arrival. It may be necessary to update the exchange visitor’s SEVIS record and to issue a new Form DS-2019.

### Procedure

The department must submit to the Foreign Visitors Program (FVP) a letter of presentation and an application form with all supporting documentation, at least two months prior to the anticipated start date of the research or activity program. FVP must receive all required documentation before it begins to process any appointment for the activity or category requested. The two month is necessary to allow the scholar sufficient time to submit the required documents for the petition. During this two months period prior to the scholar’s arrival, he or she should prepare the materials to present to the consulate or embassy, schedule an interview, undergo security clearance procedures, and obtain the actual visa.

Upon receipt of all required documentation, the FVP will evaluate the petition; create a record for the scholar and each family member in the U.S. Department of Homeland Security’s Student Exchange and Visitor Information System (SEVIS) and issue the official Form(s) DS-2019, the “Certificate of Eligibility for J Exchange Visitor Classification.” The FVP will send the forms along with the orientation letter and documents to the academic department. The academic department must mail the materials and Certificate of Eligibility DS-2019 to the international scholars in

their home country through a courier service (DHL or FedEx) paid by the host academic department.

All forms and certification for accident and health coverage may be found in <http://daarrp.uprrp.edu/pve>

### **Check-in, Orientation, and Reporting Responsibilities**

Federal regulations require that all J-1 exchange visitors report their arrival to the FVP upon arrival to the departments or unit. All J-1 Exchange Visitors are required to check in immediately with FVP with their own and their family members' passports, visa stamps, Forms DS-2019, and Forms I-94. Further, the Department of State requires that all J-1 exchange visitors attend an orientation upon arrival. The Director of the FVP will assign the visitor the date of the interview and orientation. During orientation, the Director or staff of the FVP provides information about immigration and insurance regulations and life in the area.

UPR-FVP is required to monitor and report the location and activities of the J-1 Exchange Visitor and their J-2 family members throughout their stay in the U.S. Therefore, the FVP, the host academic department and the international scholar each undertake specific responsibilities during the scholar's academic program with the University of Puerto Rico-Rio Piedras Campus. The academic department J-1 supervisor must immediately inform the FVP staff of any changes to the scholar's activity, including, but not limited to, changes in activity, remuneration, site of activity, length of activity, change in immigration status, and termination or completion of activity.

The J-1 scholar must agree to maintain health insurance coverage, maintain and comply with all J-1 immigration regulations, inform the FVP of any change in residential address, and notify the FVP of any changes to the activity and location of J-2 family members. Failure to comply with these regulations may jeopardize the lawful immigration status of the visitor and family members, as well as UPR's ability to sponsor international scholars in the future.

We remind you all international scholars on J-1 visas, non-immigrant status, are required by federal law to carry health and accident insurance for themselves and their families for the length of their J status and for the duration of their appointment at UPR. Proof of insurance coverage must be maintained in the department files.

### **Foreign Visitors Program's Policy on Mandatory Health Insurance**

UPR-FVP has a policy that requires all J-1 visitors and dependents to maintain accident and health insurance coverage throughout their stay at UPR. Because of the high cost of health care in the United States and to protect both visitors and the institution.

Regulations require all J-1 visitors and their J-2 dependent family members to have the following insurance coverage during their entire stay in J status:

- Medical benefits of at least \$50,000 per accident or illness
- Repatriation of remains in the amount of \$7,500
- Medical evacuation expenses in the amount of \$10,000
- Deductible not to exceed \$500 per accident or illness.

All exchange visitors and their family members must maintain proper insurance coverage as a condition of their participation in the J-1 Exchange Visitor Program. Regulations require Program Sponsors to terminate a J-1 student's participation in the Exchange Visitor Program if the student or a family member willfully fails to comply with the health insurance requirements.

The UPR sponsor pays for the policy as part of the sponsorship. The exchange visitor must pay the accident & illness coverage for his or her dependents. If the J-1 visitor does not have a policy that complies with the above requirements, he or she should purchase a policy in their home country (if available) or purchase a policy from the University.

UPR offers all visitors coverage through a policy which satisfies the government requirements. The fee for this insurance is pay by the departments.

**For faculty and researchers on J-1 visas:** Please verify with your department whether or not you are covered by employee health insurance or you have to pay the coverage directly to the company or it will be deducted from your salary. In most cases, the academic departments pay the health coverage for the visitor.

**For anyone present with dependant family members:** If you are in J status you are required to maintain insurance for your entire family. If you are in other nonimmigrant status we strongly recommend that you maintain insurance even though it will seem like a big additional expense. Sickness and accident care will cost even more! Please see staff at FVP for assistance with this requirement.

Non-compliance with insurance requirements will result in failure to maintain proper immigration status and could result in program termination.

We encourage departments, professor, participants or any other person interested in receiving more information to visit our webpage or to write or call our office. Also, you may contact the [jvisas@state.gov](mailto:jvisas@state.gov) for additional information.