



EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITIES FOR J-1 STUDENTS

J-1 students are eligible for two types of work opportunities established by the US Department of State: “student employment” and “academic training.”

Contacting Your J-1 Responsible Officer (“RO”)

Whatever type of employment you are considering, you must obtain written approval from your RO, who represents your J-1 sponsor and issues your Form DS-2019. Before approving, the RO is legally obligated to evaluate the proposed employment in the context of your program and your personal circumstances and then decide whether employment would be appropriate.

If UAB is your sponsor, your RO is in the ISSS office. If your J-1 sponsor is an agency, and if you are uncertain how to reach your RO, ISSS can help you contact them.

Definition of “employment”

“Employment” is any type of work performed or services provided in exchange for money, tuition, fees, books, supplies, room, or any other benefit. If you receive no pay or other compensation for work performed, the activity is not “employment” but is rather “volunteer work.”

There are two categories of employment available to J-1 students:

Category 1: Student Employment

J-1 “Student employment” is limited to 20 hours per week except during school breaks and annual vacation. Your RO can approve student employment for up to one year at a time.

Type 1: Employment required by a scholarship, fellowship, or assistantship. This kind of work usually occurs on-campus, with the school as the employer. In certain circumstances, however, the work can be done elsewhere for a different employer. You might work in a government or private research laboratory, for example, if your major professor had a joint appointment there and would be supervising you in work that would count towards your degree.

Type 2: On-campus jobs unrelated to study. The regulations allow for on-campus jobs unrelated to study, and they stipulate only that the work be done “on the premises” of the school. That means that the school does not have to be the employer, and that you could work for a commercial company, such as a food service, in its operations on your campus.

Type 3: Off-campus jobs. These are jobs which become “necessary because of serious, urgent, and unforeseen economic circumstances” that arise after your arrival in the US as an Exchange Visitor, or after your change of status from within the US to J-1 status.

Category 2: Academic Training

“Academic training” is employment in the field of your academic program in the US. To determine the number of months of academic training for which you are eligible, see “Pre-completion” and “Post-completion” below. When counting months of employment authorization, part-time academic training counts the same as full-time.

Pre-completion: With permission for academic training, you may work part-time while classes are in session and full-time during vacation periods before you complete your program of study. Under certain circumstances, you may interrupt study to work full-time, for example while you are writing a thesis. The limit is 18 months or the time that you have been a full-time student (whichever is shorter), unless the employment is a degree requirement.

Post-completion: If you can show your RO a written offer of eligible employment no more than 30 days after completing your degree program, you will be eligible for academic training. The limit is 18 months or the time that you were a full-time student (whichever is shorter), minus any previous academic training. If you earn a doctorate at the conclusion of your J-1 student program, you are eligible for three years (minus any academic training undertaken before the doctorate was awarded) of “postdoctoral training,” such as research.

How to apply: To apply for academic training, submit the following documents to your RO at least 2 weeks prior to beginning employment:

- Offer letter from employer (see sample below)
- Letter of recommendation/support from supervising professor/academic advisor (or a completed Recommendation for J-1 Academic Training form)

Summer Employment for Students Transferring from One J-1 Program to Another

If you intend to transfer programs between academic years and you want to work at your previous institution during the summer, you must obtain employment authorization from the J-1 Responsible Officer at your previous institution and delay the transfer procedure until after your employment concludes. The Form DS-2019 from your previous institution must remain valid (see the dates in item #3) throughout your employment. To work at the new institution, you must first transfer in and then apply for employment authorization from the new RO. The new institution’s Form DS-2019 must take effect (see item #3) by the beginning date of your employment authorization.

Authorization to Work

Social Security Number. To add you to the payroll, your employer will need your Social Security number, which you can obtain by applying for a Social Security card. Take your passport (if you are Canadian you may use another form of photo identification), I-94 card (download and print online), the pink copy of your Form DS-2019, and your RO’s written work authorization to an office of the Social Security Administration. Your Social Security card may be stamped “Not Valid for Employment.” The stamp will not make you ineligible to work; it means only that no funds will ever go into the Social Security account attached to that number.

Form I-9, Employment Eligibility Verification. When you begin work, you and your employer must complete Form I-9, which requires you to document your identity and work authorization according to the directions on the back of the form. Of the various items acceptable as documentation, you may find that the most convenient combination is your DS-2019 plus your RO's written work authorization. Your employer, who retains your Form I-9, will copy the documents you submit and return the originals to you. The Form I-9 must be updated each time your work authorization is extended or renewed.

Caution!

As a J-1 student, you are eligible for a variety of work opportunities in the US, but unauthorized employment is a serious violation of your immigration status. Consult your RO before accepting any employment, since the RO must provide written approval in advance.



INTERNATIONAL STUDENT & SCHOLAR SERVICES

The University of Alabama at Birmingham

RECOMMENDATION FOR J-1 ACADEMIC TRAINING

The University of Alabama at Birmingham
International Student and Scholar Services
SL 1720 2nd Ave. South
Birmingham, AL 35294-1150

Dear J-1 Responsible Officer:

_____, a University of Alabama at Birmingham J-1 student majoring in _____, wishes to engage in the academic training program discussed below.

1. DESCRIPTION OF TRAINING PROGRAM.

Location: _____

Job title: _____

Name and address of the training supervisor:

Number of hours per week _____ Training dates: From _____ to _____

2. SPECIFIC GOALS AND OBJECTIVES OF THE TRAINING PROGRAM.

3. HOW DOES THE TRAINING RELATE TO THE STUDENT'S MAJOR FIELD OF STUDY?

4. WHY IS THE TRAINING AN INTEGRAL OR CRITICAL PART OF THE STUDENT'S ACADEMIC PROGRAM?

As the student's Academic Advisor or Dean, I have set forth the nature and details of the academic training program. I approve the amount of time requested as necessary to complete the goals and objectives of this training. With this letter, I recommend that you authorized this student to participate in the academic training program that I have described above.

Sincerely,

Signature of Academic Advisor or Dean

Date

Name and Title of Academic Advisor (please print or type)

SAMPLE EMPLOYER LETTER FOR J-1 ACADEMIC TRAINING

[Company]
[Company street address]
[Company phone and email]

[Date]

[J-1 student name]
[J-1 student address]

Dear [J-1 student name]:

This is to confirm that [Company] is offering you employment as a [job title] for ___ months starting _____. This employment will serve as academic training following completion of your [degree level] program in [degree field] at the University of Alabama at Birmingham.

The goals and objectives of your training with us will be practical experience in computer programming through serving as a software engineer.

The location of your training program will be at the address listed above.

[Name, title] will be your training supervisor at [Company]. His address and telephone number appear above the letterhead.

You will be expected to work 40 hours each week. On behalf of the company, I welcome you onboard.

Sincerely,

[HR Director or Hiring Manager]