

J-1 Exchange Visitor Information

A. WHAT IS A J-1 VISA?

Towson University has been approved by the U. S. Department of State as an Exchange Visitor Program sponsor. The J Exchange Visitor Program promotes interchange in the fields of education, arts and sciences, and enables foreign nationals to visit the U.S. to teach, study, observe, conduct research, train, consult, and demonstrate special skills. Responsibilities of a sponsoring institution are spelled out in federal regulations and include selecting appropriate visitors, providing pre-arrival information and arrival orientation, and monitoring of activities.

Towson University uses J-1 status for:

- Exchange students
- Visiting researchers
- Visiting faculty
- Temporary faculty positions

Some applicants for temporary and permanent positions may already be in the United States with J-1 status. The International Student and Scholar Office (ISSO) must determine their eligibility for a transfer to Towson University's exchange visitor program or H-1B status.

Further information about the Exchange Visitor Program is available from the State Department and U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services websites at:

<http://www.exchanges.state.gov/education/jexchanges/about.htm#background>
<http://uscis.gov/graphics/services/tempbenefits/exchvisit.htm>

B. HOW ARE EXCHANGE VISITS COORDINATED AT TU?

The International Programs Department provides administrative coordination for all international exchanges and visits, and financial assistance on a case-by-case basis. This is done in a three-step manner:

1. The Office of International Programs approves exchanges and issues invitation letters.
2. The **International Student and Scholar Office** (ISSO) provides visa-related information, visa documents, pre-arrival information in accordance with federal regulations, orientation packet upon arrival, SEVIS reporting, and other services.
3. The **Nonresident Alien Tax Office** determines the visitor's U. S. tax residency status and tax withholding requirements to ensure the university's compliance with Internal Revenue Service (IRS) regulations.

C. WHO MAY BE INVITED?

1. Professors, Research Scholars, Short-term Scholars*

| WHO | PRIMARY FUNCTION | <i>LENGTH OF STAY</i> | ACADEMIC OR OTHER REQUIREMENTS |
|---|--|---------------------------------|---------------------------------------|
| Professors | Teaching, lecturing, observing, consulting, conducting research | 3 weeks (minimum) to 3 years | Master's degree** |
| Research Scholars | Conducting research, observing, consulting on specific research projects | 3 weeks (minimum) to 3 years | Master's degree** |
| Short-term Scholars May be a professor, research scholar or specialist (an expert in a field of specialized knowledge or skill). | Observing, consulting or demonstrating special skills, or to promote mutual enrichment and further exchanges | 1 day to a maximum of 6 months. | Master's degree** |

**Exchange visitors may teach or lecture in one or more academic departments.*

***Unless the prospective visitors are a group coming for an advanced professional training program.*

2. *Students*

| <u>Who</u> | <u>Requirements</u> | <u>Academic Requirements</u> | <i>Other</i> |
|------------|--|--|---|
| Students | <p><u>Sponsorship</u>: Must be sponsored (i.e., source of financial support is neither personal nor family funds)</p> <p><u>Formal Exchange</u>: Must be participating in a formal exchange between Towson University and another institution.</p> | Must be pursuing a full course of study and registered at Towson University. | May be in a non-degree status at Towson University if participating in a “prescribed course of study” which is less than 24 months in duration. |

Towson University policy prohibits a sponsoring faculty member from providing housing to an international student.

3. *VISITORS FROM NON-EXCHANGE INSTITUTIONS*

If you would like to invite foreign nationals from institutions with which Towson has no exchange, use of Towson’s Exchange Visitor Program could still be appropriate, depending upon:

- The type of proposed activity, and
- The expected benefit to Towson faculty and/or students.

4. Exceptions for Research Scholar and Professor

The Research Scholar and Professor categories may not be available to individuals who have been in the U.S. with J-1 status for all or part of the 12-month period immediately preceding the proposed visit. The ISSO will evaluate based on the individual’s history of prior J-1 visits.

D. WHAT ARE THE FUNDING REQUIREMENTS?

1. **Exchange visitors** may be funded by:
 - Towson University
 - Their own university or institution
 - Government funds, or
 - A combination of the above.
2. **Personal funds** may also be used toward the required minimum support level, but cannot be the sole source of support unless the visitor is coming from an institution with which Towson has an exchange agreement.
3. The **minimum required financial support** is currently:
 - \$1,500 per month
 - The cost of airfare
 - Adequate health insurance.

If the visitor brings immediate family, additional amounts are:

- \$750/month for spouse
- \$375/month for each child

If necessary, documents can be submitted to evidence in-kind contributions from a sponsoring faculty member (such as provision of room, board, and/or transportation to campus). **NOTE: Towson University policy prohibits a sponsoring faculty member from providing housing to an international student.**

4. **Any type of payments that will be made** to or on behalf of the visitor must be discussed and cleared in advance with the Nonresident Alien Tax Office to ensure the University remains in compliance with IRS regulations.

E. CAUTION!

U.S. law does not permit the Exchange Visitor to take up any type of employment other than the employment specified by the terms of the exchange and written into the visa documents. This permitted employment will generally take the form of teaching or providing guest lectures on campus.

Any other expected employment should be clearly described in the department's sponsorship documentation, as scholars and professors can be permitted to engage in occasional short-term activities of the same nature at other institutions. However, such employment permission must be given in writing **prior to** accepting other lectures or guest appearances.

The U.S. Bureau of Citizenship & Immigration Services uses a very broad definition of employment in its strict regulations: employment is the rendering of services on either a part-time or full-time basis for compensation, financial or otherwise.

*Room and board cannot be provided in exchange for sharing domestic tasks.

*Towson University policy prohibits a sponsoring faculty member from providing housing to an international student.

D. WHAT ARE THE HEALTH INSURANCE REQUIREMENTS?

1. United States Exchange Visitor Program Regulations regarding health insurance – Exchange Visitors are required to have medical insurance in effect for themselves and any accompanying spouse and/or dependents on J visas.
 - (a) Minimum Coverage – At a minimum, insurance shall cover:
 - Medical benefits of at least \$100,000 per accident or illness
 - A deductible not to exceed \$500 per accident or illness
 - Repatriation of mortal remains in the amount of \$25,000
 - Expenses associated with medical evacuation in the amount of \$50,000.
 - (b) Additional Terms – A policy secured to fulfill the insurance requirements shall not have a deductible that exceeds \$500 per accident or illness, and must meet other standards specified in the regulations.
 - (c) Maintenance of Insurance – Exchange Visitors must maintain the required insurance during the duration of their program.
2. The exchange visitor must sign the Compliance Agreement to acknowledge an understanding of the health insurance requirements and to agree to provide evidence of adequate insurance upon arrival in the U.S. This form is available at: <http://www.towson.edu/facultystaffprograms/invitefn.asp>.
3. Information about purchasing supplemental health insurance is available on the International Programs website at: <http://www.towson.edu/facultystaffprograms/invitefn.asp>