

## J-1 Scholar Pre-Arrival Checklist

The following checklist will assist you in preparing for your arrival. Please contact your Rice University academic department or the OISS if you have questions.

- Check your mail for the DS-2019 and offer letter. Please review both documents for accuracy.
- Thoroughly read through all of information provided to you in the packet containing your DS-2019.
- Make sure your passport is valid. The U.S. usually requires visitors to have a passport with an expiration date at least six months into the future at the time of entry.
- Review the [Understanding the J-1 Visa Health Insurance Requirement PowerPoint](#) and OISS [Health Insurance webpage](#).
  - Purchase a health insurance plan to cover you for the duration of your program. At the time of your mandatory immigration check-in at OISS, you will be required to show proof of health insurance for you and your family.
- Pay the SEVIS fee. You will need your SEVIS number to do this. The SEVIS number is located in the upper right hand corner of your DS-2019 and starts with “N”. The SEVIS fee will cover you and any dependents. To pay the fee, please go to the following website: <https://www.fmjfee.com/>
- Apply for a US J-1 Visa.
  - Please check your local U.S. Embassy/Consulate website for required documentation to bring to your visa interview. Most require your passport, original DS-2019, financial documentation, photographs for the visa, dependent documentation, and verification of SEVIS fee and visa payment.
  - For information on estimated visa processing times, please visit the [Department of State website](#).
- Book your flight.
- Travel to the US. You may not enter the U.S. more than 30 days before the start date on your DS-2019. You cannot arrive more than 30 days after the start date on your DS-2019. Please work with your academic department contact for any changes in start date.
  - Houston has 2 airports: Bush Intercontinental Airport (IAH) and Hobby Airport (HOU)
  - Have passports and original DS-2019s for you and any dependents in your carry-on luggage. Do not put these documents in your checked luggage as you will need access to them throughout your travels.
  - Make sure to bring any prescription medications with you.
  - Bring emergency contact information (phone number, address, and email addresses).
  - Upon clearing immigration, **check the entry stamp** in your passport to ensure that it grants **J-1 for “D/S” (duration of status)**. For dependents it should **show J-2 status for “D/S”**. If the stamp is incorrect, return to the immigration officer so your entry stamp can be corrected.
- Research temporary housing in Houston. For more information, visit the [OISS website](#).
- Schedule a mandatory OISS check-in. The check-in usually lasts an hour. To schedule the check-in with OISS, please schedule through your academic department’s departmental coordinator or directly with OISS (713-348-6095 / [oiss@rice.edu](mailto:oiss@rice.edu)).

**Coming from another U.S. institution:** If you are currently working at another institution in the U.S. and will be transferring your J-1 SEVIS record to Rice, be sure to contact an OISS advisor to assist you in coordinating your transfer. Please be aware that timing is very important when transferring a J-1 SEVIS record from one institution to another, as you may not have gap in dates between jobs.

**Changing visa status to J-1 from another visa category:** If you are already in the United States on a different visa category and wish to change your status to a J-1 visa, you have two options: 1) travel and apply for a new visa abroad, or 2) request a change of status from USCIS without departing the U.S. Note that each process poses potential risks and processing times, so please speak with an OISS advisor about which process is most appropriate for you.

For more information on preparing for your arrival, please visit:

- [OISS Pre-Arrival Page](#)
- [Life in Houston](#)
- [Human Resources](#)
- [J-1 Health Insurance Requirements](#)
- [Information on Bringing your Dependents](#)
- [Public Transportation in Houston](#)

*Revised October 7, 2014*