



SEVIS Fee Requirement: J-1 Exchange Visitor Students and Scholars at Rice

Office of International Students & Scholars

Revised March 25, 2015

The U.S. Department of Homeland Security (DHS) requires the collection of a one-time SEVIS fee of \$180 ⁽¹⁾ from certain J-1 Exchange Visitor students and scholars as per **8 CFR 103.7(b)(1)**. This fee is being collected to fund operation of the Student and Exchange Visitor Program Office, which has oversight over SEVIS - the Student and Exchange Visitor Information System. This fee is in addition to the visa application fee and will not be refunded if J-1 students and scholars are not granted a visa or choose not to come to the U.S. after their visas are granted.

Who must pay the SEVIS fee:

The following exchange visitors are required to pay the SEVIS fee if they are:

- ☛ An individual applying for a J-1 visa for initial participation in a program **8 CFR 103.7(b)(1)**
- ☛ An individual in the U.S. applying for a change of status to J-1 **8 CFR 103.7(b)(1)**
- ☛ An exchange visitor who is in a U.S. government sponsored program and who is transferring to a non-U.S. government sponsored program **8 CFR 103.7(b)(1)**
- ☛ An exchange visitor applying for a change of category (example – J-1 student to J-1 researcher) **8 CFR 103.7(b)(1)**
- ☛ A J-1 exchange visitor applying for reinstatement for a substantive violation. **8 CFR 103.7(b)(1)**

When must the SEVIS fee be paid:

A J-1 student or scholar, who is subject to payment of the SEVIS fee, must remit the fee directly to DHS by completing Form I-901 electronically using the Internet or by mail as follows:

1. Applying for the J-1 visa abroad: The SEVIS fee should be processed by DHS at least **3 business days** prior to the consular interview. **Fees will not be payable at the consulate.** The following steps are a guideline for obtaining a J-1 visa from abroad:
 - a. Receive DS-2019 from the Exchange Visitor Program.
 - b. Make visa appointment with U.S. Embassy/Consulate.
 - c. Submit SEVIS fee payment in time to allow DHS to process payment at least 3 days prior to visa interview.
 - d. Print SEVIS fee payment receipt from Internet *or* wait to receive form I-797 receipt from DHS via mail *and* submit receipt with visa application.
 - e. Receive J-1 visa stamp in passport from U.S. Embassy/Consulate.
 - f. Enter U.S. up to 30 days **PRIOR** to the start date indicated on the DS-2019 and no later than 30 days **AFTER** the start date indicated on the DS-2019.
 - g. Report to the Office of International Students & Scholars (OISS) to validate program no later than 30 days **AFTER** the start date indicated on the DS-2019.
2. Entering U.S. by individuals exempt from the visa requirement: The SEVIS fee should be processed at least **3 business days** prior to applying for admission at a U.S. port-of-entry by non-immigrants, who are exempt

from the visa requirement (i.e., citizens from Canada, Bermuda, and other island countries listed in 8 CFR 212.1).

3. Change of J-1 category: A J-1 student or scholar applying for a change of category within the U.S. (e.g., J-1 student to J-1 research scholar) must pay the SEVIS fee prior to the Exchange Visitor Program approving a change of category
4. Changing status to J-1: A non-immigrant in the United States seeking a change of status to J-1 student or scholar must pay the SEVIS fee prior to submitting the application to USCIS for change of non-immigrant status.
5. Applying for reinstatement: A J-1 student or scholar, who is applying for reinstatement after a substantive violation or who has been out of program status for longer than 120 days, but less than 270 days during the course of his or her program, must pay the SEVIS fee prior to applying to the Exchange Visitor Program for reinstatement to J-1 status.

Exchange Visitors Not Required to Pay the SEVIS fee:

- ✦ J-1 students and scholars, who have previously paid the SEVIS fee prior to obtaining his or her current status, are not required to pay a new SEVIS fee in connection with:
 - a) An application for an extension of stay in the current program.
 - b) An application to transfer between programs in the same exchange visitor category where no differential fee exists (i.e., transfer between two non-fee-exempt exchange visitor programs or transfer between two fee-exempt exchange visitor programs).
 - c) A re-application for a J-1 visa following denial of visa application by consular officer, as long as the re-application occurs within 12 months of the original denial notice.
 - d) A motion to re-open a change of status application, which was previously denied for reasons other than failure to pay the SEVIS fee, as long as the motion occurs within 12 months of the original denial notice.
- ✦ J-1s sponsored by the U.S. federal government: No SEVIS fee is due for a J-1 exchange visitor who is coming to the United States as a participant in an exchange visitor program sponsored by the U.S. federal government (e.g., Fulbright).
- ✦ J-2 dependents: J-2 dependents are not required to pay a separate SEVIS fee in order to obtain J-2 status or during the time the J-2 remains in that status.

Procedures for payment of the SEVIS fee:

The fee can be paid to the DHS by mail or online and must be accompanied by a Form I-901. It can be paid by you or by a third party (such as a friend, family member, or other interested party) inside or outside the US. It cannot be paid at a U.S. embassy/consulate or at the port of entry.

To Pay Online

1. Find the Form I-901 at www.FMJfee.com.
2. Complete the form online and supply the necessary Visa, MasterCard or American Express information. *Be sure to write your name exactly as it appears on your DS-2019 form.
3. Print a copy of the online receipt.
4. Be sure to make copies of your receipt, and keep it with your other important immigration documents.

To Pay By Mail

1. Obtain a Form I-901 "Fee Remittance for Certain F, J, and M Non-immigrants."
 - ✦ Download the form from www.FMJfee.com
 - ✦ Request the form by phone at 1-800-870-3676 (inside the US.)
2. Complete the Form I-901. Be sure to write your name exactly as it appears on your DS-2019 form.
3. Prepare a check, international money order or foreign draft (drawn on US banks only¹) in the amount of \$180 USD, made payable to "The Department of Homeland Security."

4. Mail the completed I-901 and payment to the address listed on Form I-901.
5. A Form I-797 receipt notice should be mailed within 3 days of processing the fee. Be sure to make copies of your receipt, and keep it with your other important immigration documents

Special Note: Many foreign banks are able to issue checks or money orders drawn on a U.S. bank. You may therefore obtain a check from: a) a bank chartered or operated in the United States; b) a foreign subsidiary of a U.S. bank, or c) a foreign bank that has an arrangement with a U.S. bank to issue a check, money order, or foreign draft that is drawn on a U.S. bank.

A Note About Processing Times and Payment Verification:

If you pay the SEVIS fee online, your payment is processed immediately and, at the time you make payment, you can print a receipt directly from your computer. This computer-generated receipt can be used to verify you have paid the fee at an embassy, consular post, or port of entry. Mailing the SEVIS fee does not constitute payment. The fee is processed when it is received by DHS. If you mail your payment rather than pay online, it can take a considerable amount of time for payment to be received and for you to receive a receipt by return mail.

Whether you choose to pay the fee online or by mail, a paper receipt will be mailed to the address you provide on Form I-901. You may choose to have this receipt sent to you either by regular mail or, at an additional charge, by express delivery.

A paper receipt is not required in order for you to be issued a visa or to be admitted at the port of entry. Embassies and consular posts will be able to verify your fee payment without a receipt in most circumstances if you pay the fee far enough in advance of your visa interview. Electronic payments must be submitted at least 3 business days in advance of the interview if you will rely on electronic fee verification at the consulate. Mailed payments must be sent in a manner that assures arrival at the DHS address listed on the I-901 at least 3 business days before the scheduled interview.

^[1] Note: The fee for some exchange visitors categories is \$35. Those categories are (1) summer work/travel program, (2) au pair program, and (3) camp counselor program.