

Important Visa Documents Guide

***It is very important that you take good care of all your documents and do not lose them.

Passport

This is the most important document of all. Your passport allows you to travel to foreign countries. During your Visa application, you will be asked to hand your passport to the US Embassy officer. If your J1 visa is approved, your passport will be returned to you with the Visa attached inside.

When you are in the States, you don't need to carry your passport everywhere. However, you will be required to produce your passport to prove that you are over 21 to purchase alcoholic drinks in grocery stores or in pubs. You won't be allowed to purchase alcohol if you fail to produce your passport.

Job Offer Letter/EOAF

If you passed your employer interview (you usually will!), you will be given this document. The Job Offer Letter, or the Employment Offer Agreement Form, is a document to show that your employer agrees to employ you, and that you agree to be bound by their terms of employment.

The Letter contains information about your employer, including your employer's name, company address, contact number, pre-agreed wage, and your predetermined work start and end date. The details of this letter will be needed before you can apply for your J1 Visa.

J-1 Visa

The J-1 Visa is a non-immigrant Visa issued by the United States to exchange visitors for cultural exchange purposes. The Visa is issued and attached to your passport if your visa application is successful. The Visa states the maximum period in which you are allowed to work in the United States. After the Visa is expired, you are strictly prohibited from working.

After the Visa is expired, you have a grace period of 30 days to travel the United States. However, you are not allowed to visit other countries during this grace period as you won't be allowed to enter the United States again.

DS-160 (Online Non-Immigrant Visa Application)

This is the first step of applying for your J1- Visa, which is done online. The DS-160 is the online visa application which you will have to complete prior to your Visa interview at the U.S. Embassy.

After you have received your Job Offer Letter, you will have almost all of the information required to complete this process. You will have to complete the most parts of the online application yourself. But there are some details which you might not have the information to complete yet. Please visit “Online DS-160 Application Instructions” for more details.

DS-2019

The DS-2019, also known as the “Certificate of Eligibility for Exchange Visitor (J-1) Status” is a document controlled by the Department of State. It can only be produced through the SEVIS system (see below). The DS-2019 is a basic but important document required to support your J-1 Visa application. It provides details of the participant, sponsor, nature of the program and program start/end dates. It also contains a SEVIS identification number which is required to complete your DS-160.

The DS-2019 is required during your Visa interview at the US Embassy. However, unlike your passport, it is not handed to the officer. It has to be in your possession at all times. We recommend that you keep a few photocopies, and provide your family with a copy.

During the stipulated start/end dates of your program, you are able to travel outside the country. However, you must send your DS-2019 to your sponsor to be signed and stamped, before you are allowed to leave the United States.

SEVIS

SEVIS, or the Student and Exchange Visitor Information System, is a database developed by the Department of Homeland Security to monitor and collect information from J Visa holders. It records participant statuses on complying with Department of State regulations, regarding entry/exit dates, checking-in, program extensions/early departures, or dismissal from the Work and Travel Program.

Your sponsor will register you on SEVIS, before issuing you the DS-2019. Each student has a unique SEVIS ID number, written on the top right-hand corner of your DS-2019. When you have arrived at the States to start your program, you have to register with SEVIS within one day of your arrival. Visit “Arriving U.S. Port of Entry” for more details.

I-94

I-94 is a form for non-immigrant visitors entering the States with a visa. It will be given to you on flight before entry into the U.S. For example, if your flight is from Malaysia > Singapore > Hong Kong > Chicago, it will be given to you on your flight from Hong Kong to Chicago. You must complete the I-94 before presenting it to the customs officer.

There are two perforated sections to the I-94. The upper section is the arrival record, which will be retained by the customs officer. The officer will return the bottom section of the I-94 together with your passport. The bottom section is a departure record which you must keep with your passport at all times. DO NOT lose the I-94 card as it will be very time-consuming (3-4months) and costly (around 400USD) to replace it. The departure record is returned to the customs officer upon your departure from the States.

“Dear Social Security Officer” Letter

This is a letter required for your Social Security Number application. It will be given to you together with your DS-2019 when you collect your documents from our office. DO NOT lose this document as you are unable to apply for a SSN without it.

SSN

The Social Security Number (SSN) is a nine-digit number issued to U.S. citizens, permanent residents, and temporary working residents. The SSN is required for tax purposes, and opening a bank account.

You will be applying for it once you have started work at a nearest social security office. Your SSN card should read “Valid for Work only with DHS Authorization” which means you only have temporary work authorization in the U.S., as permitted by your J-1 status.

Do not lose your social security card, as a lost or stolen SSN can be used in identity theft. If you lose your social security card, you have to report immediately to the police.

I-9

The I-9, also called the Employment Eligibility Verification form, is used to verify the eligibility of an employee to accept employment by the employer. This form will be given to you together with the W-4 to fill out during the start of your employment.

W-4

The W-4 is an Internal Revenue Service (IRS) Tax Form used for tax purposes. This form will be given to you to fill out together with the I-9 Form at the beginning of your employment. In this form, you will be filling out your personal details in Malaysia, instead of your U.S. placement details. This is for your employer to know where to mail your W-2 form for tax return purposes, after you have returned to Malaysia.

W-2

This form will be given to you AFTER you have returned to Malaysia at the end of your program. This document marks the final process of your program – filing for tax return. The W-2 form shows your wages earned and the amount of taxes withheld from your paycheck. You will need this document when calculating your tax returns.