

F-1 Status vs. J-1 Status: What's the Difference?

International students who are admitted to a degree-seeking program at Vanderbilt University and who need to apply for a student visa could consider two visa types: F-1 student or J-1 exchange visitor. All degree-seeking students are generally eligible for an F-1 visa, but not all are eligible for a J-1 visa. Below is some general information to help you determine which visa category (or categories) you are eligible for, and which one would be more suitable for you.

	Document Issued	Eligibility	Funding Requirements	Employment Options	Dependents	Other Considerations
F-1 Student	I-20	Be accepted into a degree-seeking program	At a minimum, must show enough funding for one academic year of study. Funding can be primarily or entirely from personal or family sources.	<p>On-campus: no prior authorization needed.</p> <p>Off-campus:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Employment must be directly related to your major. - Curricular practical training (CPT) for experiences that satisfy an academic component of your program - Optional practical training (OPT) for up to 12 months per degree level. STEM-designated majors may be eligible for a 24-month extension. 	<p>F-2 dependents may study part-time, but not full-time.</p> <p>F-2 dependents are not permitted to work.</p>	<p>No home residency requirement or waiting period before transitioning to another visa category.</p> <p>Pre- or post-completion OPT can allow self-employment if the opportunity is directly related to your major.</p> <p>No job offer is needed to apply for pre- or post-completion OPT, but it is required to apply for STEM OPT. There are limits on the</p>

						<p>number of days you can be unemployed.</p> <p>Changing educational levels upwards or downwards is allowed.</p>
J-1 Exchange Visitor	DS-2019	Be accepted into a degree-seeking or non-degree seeking program. Substantial portion of funding must be from non-personal or family funds.	At a minimum, must show enough funding for the full duration of your program. Funding cannot be primarily or entirely from personal/family sources; a substantial portion must be from non-personal/family sources – such as a university or government sponsor.	<p>On-campus: must have prior authorization to begin working.</p> <p>Off-campus: Eligible for academic training (AT) for experiences directly related to your major.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Bachelor's/Masters: eligible for up to 18 months (additional time may be available for STEM majors) - PhD: eligible for up to 36 months - Must have a job offer to apply for academic training. Cannot apply for academic training after the program end date on your DS-2019 has passed. 	<p>J-2 dependents may study (full- or part-time).</p> <p>J-2 dependents are eligible to apply for work authorization.</p> <p>J-2 dependents must have health insurance that complies with Department of State requirements.</p>	<p>Some exchange visitors may be subject to a 2-year home residency requirement before they can transition to certain immigrant visa statuses (H-1B, permanent resident, etc.).</p> <p>12-month waiting period before starting a program in the J-1 research scholar/professor category if the J student program was longer than 6 months).</p>

						<p>Health insurance is required for full duration of the program; insurance must comply with Department of State requirements.</p> <p>Self-employment is not suitable for academic training.</p> <p>"Reverse matriculation" (i.e., going from a higher degree to a lower degree) is not allowed.</p>
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