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.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Document Issued</th>
<th>Eligibility</th>
<th>Funding Requirements</th>
<th>Employment Options</th>
<th>Dependents</th>
<th>Other Considerations</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>F-1 Student</strong></td>
<td>I-20</td>
<td>Be accepted into a degree-seeking program</td>
<td>At a minimum, must show enough funding for one academic year of study. Funding can be primarily or entirely from personal or family sources.</td>
<td>On-campus: no prior authorization needed. Off-campus: - 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.</td>
<td>F-2 dependents may study part-time, but not full-time. F-2 dependents are not permitted to work.</td>
<td>No home residency requirement or waiting period before transitioning to another visa category. Pre- or post-completion OPT can allow self-employment if the opportunity is directly related to your major. Changing educational levels upwards or downwards is allowed.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>J-1 Exchange Visitor</strong></td>
<td>DS-2019</td>
<td>Be accepted into a degree-seeking program</td>
<td>At a minimum, must show enough funding</td>
<td>On-campus: must have prior authorization to begin working.</td>
<td>J-2 dependents may study</td>
<td>Some exchange visitors may be subject to a 2-</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| seeking or non-degree seeking program. Substantial portion of funding must be from non-personal or family funds. | 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. | Off-campus: Eligible for academic training (AT) for experiences directly related to your major.  
- Bachelor’s/Masters: eligible for up to 18 months  
- PhD: eligible for up to 36 months | (full- or part-time).  
J-2 dependents are eligible to apply for work authorization.  
J-2 dependents must have health insurance that complies with Department of State requirements. |

year home residency requirement before they can transition to certain immigrant visa statuses (H-1B, permanent resident, etc.).

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).

Health insurance is required for full duration of the program; insurance must comply with Department of State requirements.

Self-employment is not suitable for
academic training.

"Reverse matriculation" (i.e., going from a higher degree to a lower degree) is not allowed.