



University at Buffalo
The State University of New York

Office of International Education
International Student and Scholar Services

The New SEVIS Fee Requirement: **What J-1 Exchange Visitors Need to Know**

What is the SEVIS fee?

Beginning on September 1, 2004, a new U.S. Department of Homeland Security (DHS) rule went into effect. This rule requires J-1 visa applicants to pay a one-time fee of \$100 to cover the costs of the Student and Exchange Visitor Information System (SEVIS).

The following information specifically addresses SEVIS fee issues for J-1 Exchange Visitors.

Who must pay the SEVIS FEE?

- **Prospective Exchange Visitors with “Begin new program” DS-2019s issued on or after September 1, 2004 who are applying for an initial J-1 visa outside the U.S.**

Note: The fee cannot be paid at a U.S. Embassy or Consulate.

- Since **Canadian citizens** are not required to get a U.S. visa stamp, they will be required to pay the fee before going to the port of entry. *Note: The fee cannot be paid at a port of entry.*

- **Prospective Exchange Visitors with “Begin new program” DS-2019s issued on or after September 1, 2004 who are applying within the U.S. for a change of status to J-1 from another visa category.**

Note: The fee cannot be paid at a USCIS Service Center.

- **Continuing Exchange Visitors who were on a J-1 program sponsored by the U.S. government (e.g. with a program designation number of G-1, G-2 or G-3) and who are now transferring to a J-1 program that is not sponsored by the U.S. government.**
- **Continuing Exchange Visitors who are applying for a change of category within the U.S.** (unless they are changing to a program sponsored by the U.S. government).
- **Continuing J-1 Exchange Visitors who are applying for reinstatement after a substantive violation, or who have been out of program status for more**



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than 120 days but fewer than 270 days during the course of his or her program.

Note: *The fee cannot be paid at a USCIS District Office.*

Who does NOT have to pay the fee?

Continuing J-1 Exchange Visitors do not have to pay the fee unless circumstances change so that they fit one of the categories mentioned above.

What about my J-2 dependents?

J-2 dependents do not have to pay the fee, even if the “dependent DS-2019” was issued on or after September 1, 2004

Do I have to pay the SEVIS fee if I transfer to another program or request a program extension?

The SEVIS fee is not required when continuing J-1 Exchange Visitors transfer to another J-1 program, change to another degree program or level or request a program extension.

Do I have to pay the SEVIS fee if I travel outside the US or renew my visa?

The SEVIS fee is not required when renewing a J-1 visa or traveling outside the U.S. (as long as you are still in J-1 status).

Do I have to pay the SEVIS fee if I apply for J-1 benefits such as Academic Training?

The SEVIS fee is not required when applying for J-1 benefits such as Academic Training.

When do I pay the fee?

- **If you are applying for an initial J-1 visa at a U.S. Consulate outside the U.S., you must pay the fee prior to applying for your J-1 visa. *You can pay the fee online, by mail or at a Western Union agent location using the “Quick***



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Pay” service. If you do not pay the fee online, we encourage you to pay it a few weeks in advance.

Note: *The fee cannot be paid at a U.S. Embassy or Consulate.*

- **If you are a Canadian citizen and, therefore, do not need a J-1 visa, you must pay the fee prior to entering the U.S.** *You can pay the fee online, by mail or at a Western Union agent location using the “Quick Pay” service. If you do not pay the fee online, we encourage you to pay it a few weeks in advance.*

Note: *The fee cannot be paid at a port-of-entry.*

- **If you are applying for a change of status to J-1, you must pay the fee prior to submitting a change of status.**

Note: *The fee cannot be paid at a USCIS Service Center or District Office.*

How do I pay the fee?

The fee can be paid either **online, by mail** or **at a Western Union agent location using the “Quick Pay” service** AND **must be accompanied by Form I-901**. It can be paid by you or by a third party, inside or outside the U.S.

- **To Pay Online**

1. **Find Form I-901** at www.FMJfee.com
2. **Complete the form online**
3. **Pay the fee** by supplying the necessary Visa, MasterCard or American Express information
4. **Print a copy** of the online receipt.

- **To Pay By Mail**

1. **Obtain Form I-901** by downloading the form in pdf format from <http://www.ice.gov/graphics/sevis/pdf/I-901.pdf>
2. **Complete Form I-901**
3. **Prepare a check, international money order or foreign draft** (drawn on U.S. banks only) in the **amount of \$100 USD**, made payable to **“I-901 Student/Exchange Visitor Processing Fee”***

** 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*



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arrangement with a U.S. bank to issue a check, money order or foreign draft that is drawn on a U.S. bank.

Note: It is also possible for someone else to pay the fee on your behalf.

4. **Mail the completed Form I-901 and payment** to the address listed on Form I-901. There is an option for expedited delivery at a cost of US\$30 each way. For complete details, please see the USICE website: <http://www.ice.gov/graphics/sevis/i901/faq.htm>
5. **Wait for a Receipt.** A receipt will be mailed to you within 3 days – 2 weeks of processing the fee.

- **To Pay by Western Union Quick Pay**

1. **Print out a copy of the “Western Union Quick Pay instructions for J Visas”** from the SEVIS Fee website:
http://www.ice.gov/graphics/sevis/i901/wu_instr.htm
2. **Go to a local participating Western Union Agent location. Be sure to bring the “Western Union Quick Pay Instructions for J Visas” with you.**
To find the nearest Western Union Agent location, go to <http://www.payment-solutions.com/agent.asp> or call the telephone number of the Western Union Commercial Services Network Agent in your country as listed in your phone book.
3. **Request and fill out the blue form at the Western Union Agent location.**
Follow the “Western Union Quick Pay Instructions for J Visas” when filling out the blue form.
4. **Get a receipt for your payment.**

***** Be sure to make copies of your receipt, and keep it with your other important immigration documents *****

Can I pay the SEVIS fee at a university, U.S. Embassy or Consulate or U.S. port of entry?

No. At this time the SEVIS fee can only be paid via mail or the Internet.

What do I need to do to apply for a J-1 visa or change of status to J-1 student or scholar status?

1. Obtain the appropriate Form DS-2019 from your school.
2. Pay the SEVIS fee online, by mail or by Western Union “Quick Pay” service.
3. Print your receipt or wait for it to arrive by mail.



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4. Submit a copy of your receipt with your visa or change of status application. If you are exempt from U.S. visa requirements (i.e. Canadians), take a copy of the SEVIS fee receipt and present it with your DS-2019 at the port of entry. *(Please remember: It will not be possible to pay the fee at the port of entry).*

What happens if I pay the SEVIS fee for one program and then decide to transfer to another program? Is my paid SEVIS fee transferable?

Yes, the SEVIS fee is transferable as long as it is in the same Exchange Visitor category.

What if my J-1 visa application is denied?

The SEVIS fee will not be refunded. However, if you reapply for a new J-1 visa within 12 months of the denial, you will not have to pay the fee again.

Will the DHS keep a record of my SEVIS fee payment on file?

Fee payments should be entered into your permanent immigration (SEVIS) record, but it is strongly recommended that you retain a copy of your receipt.

For more information on the SEVIS fee, please see:

<http://www.ice.gov/graphics/sevis/i901/faq.htm>

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