Student Visa: F-1 versus J-1

All full time, degree seeking international students are eligible for an F-1 visa. Most University of Michigan international students hold F-1 visa status, however, some students may be eligible for both a J-1 visa and F-1 visa. In this case you may have to choose which one is best for you.

Who is eligible to choose between F-1 and J-1 visa?

To be eligible for a J-1 visa at least 50% of your total financial support must be from a source other than personal or family funds. This financial support may be a scholarship, fellowship, or assistantship from an external funding source such as your home government, a corporate sponsor, or the University of Michigan. Students with only personal or family funding are NOT eligible for a J-1 visa.

Basic differences between F-1 and J-1 student visas

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<tr>
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<th>F-1 Visa</th>
<th>J-1 Visa</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Source of Funding</strong></td>
<td>Supported by personal/family funds, outside funds, or a combination of both</td>
<td>More than 50% of funding is from an outside source such as a scholarship, fellowship, or government sponsorship</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Proof of Funding</strong></td>
<td>Student must show U-M and the U.S. consulate proof of sufficient funding for his /her first year of study</td>
<td>Student must show U-M and the U.S. consulate proof of sufficient funding for the entire duration of his/her academic program</td>
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Off Campus Employment

Two authorization options:
Curricular Practical Training (CPT) for working off campus during studies. This work authorization is approved one semester at a time.
Optional Practical Training (OPT) for working off campus, usually after the completion of studies. This is a 12 month work authorization. Student in STEM fields may be authorized for an additional 17 months.

Both CPT [1] and OPT [2] are only available to students who have completed one academic year of full-time enrollment in the U.S. For complete details please visit the employment section of our website.

Dependents

Dependents in F-2 status may study part time and are not eligible for employment.

Dependents in J-2 status may study full time and may apply for employment authorization.

Long Term Implications of a J-1 visa

Two-Year Home Country Physical Presence Requirement

J-1 students may be subject to the two-year home country physical presence requirement. This requirement applies to you if:

- You receive any funding (including nominal travel grants) from your home government or an U.S. government agency; or
- Your degree/program of study is on the Exchange Visitor's Skills List [4]. This is a list of fields with specialized knowledge and skills that are deemed necessary for the development of your home country.

If the J-1 student is subject to the two-year home country physical presence requirement so are his/her J-2 dependents. More information about two-year home country physical presence requirement and potential waiver is available on the J-1 Students [5] portion of our website.

12 Month Bar After Previous J-1 Participation

J-1 students who have studied in the U.S. for more than 6 months may not return as a J-1 Research Scholar (another J-1 visa category, often used for post-doctoral research) until at least 12 months have passed. This 12 Month Bar [6] is separate from the two-year home country physical presence requirement listed above. J-2 dependents are also subject to this bar.

Source URL: https://internationalcenter.umich.edu/f1-versus-j1-student-visa

Links
[1] https://internationalcenter.umich.edu/students/f1-students/cpt
[2] https://internationalcenter.umich.edu/students/f1-students/opt
[3] https://internationalcenter.umich.edu/students/j1-students/academic-training
[6] https://internationalcenter.umich.edu/scholars/j1-scholars/12-and-24-bars