

OFFICE OF CAREER SERVICES

WORK AUTHORIZATION FOR PAID INTERNSHIPS IN THE US FOR INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS in J-1 STATUS

Definition: Employment integral to an exchange visitor's academic program which may occur during and after the completion of studies. Such training may include - but is not limited to - internships, practical, and/or fieldwork.

Eligibility and Requirements to Engage in Academic Training (AT):

- Your Certificate of Eligibility (form DS-2019) must be unexpired.
- You must be in good academic standing.
- You must participate in AT that is directly related to your field of studies.
- You must have a firm offer of employment before completion of studies.

You must receive written approval, in advance, from your exchange visitor visa supervisor (sponsor).

Please Note: Columbia University's J-1 program for fulltime students (P-1-00381) is supervised by the International Students and Scholars Office (ISSO) or the International Affairs Office (IAO). If you are under the sponsorship of any other exchange visitor program (i.e., IIE, AMIDEAST, etc.), you should contact your program sponsor for AT policies, application forms and instructions.]

AT During a Course of Study: Academic Training is normally part-time during the academic year, but can be full-time under some circumstances. When classes are in session, you must maintain full-time registration with the University no matter how many hours a week you devote to AT. During vacation periods, you may engage in AT full- or part-time without being registered. Please note that all AT is counted as full time toward your total length of eligibility, irrespective of the number of hours that you work.

You may engage in AT following one term of full time enrollment at Columbia University. Academic training is permissible from the first term only in the M.S. program of the School of Social Work. In all other cases, AT may not exceed the time earned as a full-time enrollee. For example, a student enrolling in the fall semester would have four months "credit" at its completion. Therefore, he or she could do four months of AT in the spring term.

Time Limitations: For those studying at the undergraduate or pre-doctoral level, AT may be granted for a maximum of 18 months, inclusive of any prior academic training in the U.S. as an exchange visitor, or the period of the full course of study in the U.S., whichever is shorter. For example, if you have studied in the U.S. only in a nine-month program, such as the LL.M. or the M.S. in Journalism, your period of AT is limited to nine months. Post-completion AT authorization begins when you complete your studies, even if the employment does not begin until a later date. Speak with an adviser if you were in another program of study in the U.S. immediately preceding the current one.

Special (non-degree) students may not presume eligibility. Please consult an ISSO or IAO adviser to determine whether you will be eligible for AT if you register as a Special Student.

Post-doctoral AT can be granted in increments of 18 months with a maximum period of 36 months. A new form DS-2019 will be issued for each 18-month period. You must apply for and receive the second 18-month period before your work authorization letter and DS-2019 expire.

To Obtain Authorization to Engage in AT During the Academic Year: You must submit the documentation listed below to the ISSO at least 10 business days before the anticipated start date. You must always apply for and receive AT authorization before the completion date noted on part 3 of your DS-2019 or before the completion of your program, whichever is earlier. Once this form expires, you are no longer considered to be in valid J-1 program status, and will have to apply for reinstatement to J-1 status from the United States Department of State (DOS) which administers the J-1 Exchange Visitor Program. Approval for reinstatement is highly uncertain.

To Obtain Authorization to Engage in AT Following Completion of your Program: You must submit the documentation listed below to the ISSO or the IAO up to 60 days before completing your program and before the extension of your DS-2019. Please note that you must have a firm offer of employment to apply for AT. The regulations state that employment for AT must begin no later than 30 days after completion of studies. However, guidance from the Exchange Visitor Program Services dated 5/6/93 indicates that with a firm offer of employment, one is eligible to apply for AT; the employment itself may actually begin a bit later.

Completion of studies is defined as the date on which all requirements for the program have been met, not when the degree is actually conferred. For doctoral programs, the completion date may be:

- the date you defend your doctoral dissertation
- the date you deposit your dissertation, if it is within three months of the defense date, or
- the graduation date, if it is within three months of the defense date.

You must apply for AT before completion of your program and the expiration of your DS-2019. The Exchange Visitor Program will not allow application to be made during the 30-day grace period you are allowed to stay in the United States upon completion of your program of study. Please refer to the section above on Time Limitations to determine the total number of months of AT for which you may be eligible.