This handout is designed specifically for students in J-1 Exchange Visitor status sponsored by Boston University. The information is intended to provide a basic understanding of some of the most important obligations you have as a J-1 exchange visitor in the United States (U.S.) in relation to regulations of the U.S. Department of State (DOS) and U.S. Department of Homeland Security (DHS). The International Students & Scholars Office will provide additional information, counseling and assistance to help you maintain your lawful immigration status and achieve your educational goals while at Boston University. As regulations and procedures do change from time to time, we recommend that you contact us and refer to the ISSO website at www.bu.edu/isso any time you have questions related to your J-1 program at BU.

INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS & SCHOLARS OFFICE

The International Students & Scholars Office (ISSO) provides professional expertise on immigration and employment, and helps ensure student, scholar, and institutional compliance with federal regulations. ISSO staff members are available to guide students and scholars through the often complicated requirements for foreign nationals studying and working in the United States. We strongly advise you to contact us any time you have a question pertaining to your J-1 immigration status, your BU program or if you intend to travel and reenter the U.S.

J-1 EXCHANGE VISITOR PROGRAM OVERVIEW

The J-1 Exchange Visitor Program in the U.S. is administered by the Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs under the U.S. Department of State (DOS). The program implements the Fulbright-Hays Mutual Educational and Cultural Exchange Act of 1961, which promotes mutual understanding between the peoples of the United States and other countries by means of educational and cultural exchange. The Exchange Visitor Program provides eligible foreign nationals with opportunities to participate in exchange programs in the United States and then return home to share their experiences.

J-1 PROGRAM TERMINOLOGY

Program Sponsor: DOS grants authority to certain approved institutions to serve as designated J-1 Program Sponsors, with permission to host exchange visitors participating in activities that foster mutual understanding and enhance international cooperation. Your program sponsor is the institution listed in item #2 of your Certificate of Eligibility for Exchange Visitor (J-1) Status (Form DS-2019). The program sponsor has legal authorization to grant you certain benefits, assist you in applying to the DOS or DHS for other benefits, and assist you in fulfilling your responsibilities.

Note: This handout is written with the assumption that Boston University is your program sponsor. If Boston University is not your program sponsor and another agency or organization has issued your Form DS-2019, you should substitute the name of your program sponsor each time you read “ISSO” throughout this handout and should consult with your program sponsor to report your arrival, communication any changes and in order to take full advantage of your immigration status benefits.

Category: The J-1 Exchange Visitor Program currently includes 13 different exchange program categories. Your J-1 program category appears in item #4 of your Form DS-2019 and should be marked as "student."

Subject/Field Code (also known as Program Objective): The subject/field code, found in item #4 of the DS-2019, specifies the degree program and area in which you came to the U.S. to study. It is also known as your program objective because it indicates the primary purpose for which you came to the U.S. The activities you engage in while in this country must be directly related to your program objective.
1. IMMIGRATION DOCUMENTS

The following immigration documents must be kept valid throughout your program at BU:

- **Passport** – (should be valid for a minimum of 6 months into the future)
- **Form DS-2019** - (Certificate of Eligibility for Exchange Visitor [J-1] Status)
- **U.S. Entry Stamp or Form I-94 Arrival/Departure Record** - either document can serve as proof of U.S. admission as a J-1 Exchange Visitor. You can obtain your I-94 arrival/departure information at www.cbp.gov/I94.

In addition, the following document is required each time you wish to enter the United States after travel abroad:

- **J-1 visa** (must be valid for entry to U.S. but can expire while you remain in the U.S.)

Please keep your original documents in a safe place. If any of your documents are lost or stolen, you should take the steps to replace them as quickly as possible. Contact the ISSO if you have any questions about your immigration documents and/or how to replace them. Please bring all of these documents with you each time you visit the ISSO and be sure to send us copies of any replaced or renewed documents so that we can have the most up-to-date information in our records.

2. SEVIS – ELECTRONIC REPORTING SYSTEM

The U.S. Department of Homeland Security (DHS) and U.S. Department of State (DOS) utilize an electronic database and reporting system called the Student and Exchange Visitor Information System (SEVIS) to "track" international students and exchange visitors. All U.S. schools are required to use this system to report information on J-1 students and their J-2 dependents through secure, encrypted internet transmissions.

Boston University reports to the government only the information required by federal law. This includes all the information on your Form DS-2019 and information on "reportable events" that affect your immigrant status. These events include but are not limited to:

- Physical or residential address in the U.S.
- E-mail address
- Telephone number
- Primary site of activity
- Completion or early termination of your studies
- Change in funding
- Program extensions or amendments
- Transfer to a new program sponsor (school)
- Violations of J-1 immigration status

In addition, Boston University is required to report information related to any dependents in J-2 status:

- Email address for each dependent
- Departure from the U.S. of any J-1 dependent who leaves the U.S. permanently prior to the completion of the J-1 program of study.

Since SEVIS is an electronic reporting system, it is important that your information on record at the ISSO and in the University Information System (UIS) remain up-to-date. The ISSO will report information about your status from the University’s records to DHS through SEVIS. Failure to maintain accurate records with the University may result in technical violations of your status. If you fall out of status, and your violation is reported to DHS, your J-1 status could be immediately invalidated and you may lose all J-1 status benefits.

3. OVERVIEW OF J-1 RESPONSIBILITIES

To ensure that you maintain lawful immigration status, you must comply with the following:

- **Orientation & Check-In**
  
  As a J-1 student, you are required to attend an orientation program provided by the ISSO at the start of your program of study. Additionally, you must complete an immigration check-in at the ISSO, providing your original immigration documents, in order for the ISSO to validate you SEVIS record.
✓ Reporting Current Address, E-mail and Telephone Number
When you arrive in the United States, and within 10 days of any change, J-1 regulations require that you inform the ISSO of your current address, e-mail and telephone number. You must do so by updating the **Immigration-U.S. Address** field online through the BU Student Link. The changes will then be reported electronically to DHS through the Student & Exchange Visitor Information System (SEVIS). The **Immigration-U.S. Address** will be used to report to DHS your **physical residence** only. Your physical residence is defined as where you live, not your school, lab, or a P.O. Box. You may report a separate mailing address for use by Boston University using the **Local Address** or **Home Address** fields in Student Link. You must also report any change to your J-2 dependent’s email or physical address.

✓ Registration, Attendance and Course of Study Requirements
You must register for classes and attend school full-time each fall and spring semester. You do not have to enroll during the summer unless it is your first term of enrollment or if you are completing your program of study during the summer.

**Course Load:** You must register for a full course load unless:

3. You need less than a full course load to complete your studies by the end of the current school semester.
4. You have obtained advance approval by the ISSO staff (recorded in SEVIS) for a reduction in course load due to a medical condition or academic difficulty.
5. You are authorized for and working on a period of "Academic Training" after completion of your program.

**Undergraduate Students:** You must register for a minimum of 12 credit hours each fall and each spring semester.

**Graduate Students:** You must register for a minimum of 12 credit hours each fall and each spring semester. An exception may be made for graduate students who qualify to be “certified full-time” by their academic department, including students who are receiving a graduate assistantship or teaching fellowship, or students at the thesis/dissertation stage of their degree. Failure to be certified full-time in a timely manner will jeopardize your immigration status.

**Non-Degree Students:** If the "program objective" in item #4 of your Form DS-2019 is not an academic degree from Boston University, you must be engaged in a "prescribed course of study" as defined and approved by the ISSO. For most non-degree students at BU, a 12 credit registration minimum is required per semester. You are limited to a maximum of twenty-four months as a non-degree exchange visitor student.

**Interruption of Study:** If you fail to register for or withdraw from a fall or spring semester, you are no longer maintaining lawful J-1 status and are not eligible to remain in the United States. Applying for and obtaining an official "leave of absence" from Boston University does not preserve your lawful J-1 status. Please contact the ISSO immediately if you believe you must interrupt your studies. The only interruptions permitted by the DOS regulations are leaves of absence due to a medical condition, when pre-approved by the ISSO.

**Holidays and Vacations:** You may remain in the U.S. and will be considered to be maintaining J-1 status during holidays and vacation periods observed by Boston University, including summer, provided:

- You are eligible and intend to continue your studies for the next school term, and
- The end date in item #3 of your Form DS-2019 will not be reached before you resume your studies.

✓ Medical Insurance
You are required to maintain health insurance which covers you (and your spouse and children if they are in the U.S. in J-2 status) for illnesses and accidents during the time you are at Boston University or under its J-1 program sponsorship. Coverage must meet both Department of State and Boston University requirements. The BU student medical insurance plan meets these requirements.

✓ Transfer to Another School
If you wish to cease enrollment at Boston University and transfer your program sponsorship to a different school, you must obtain ISSO permission and follow proper immigration transfer procedures before you begin studies at your new school.

✓ Failure to Comply with Responsibilities
If you fail to comply with your responsibilities under DOS and DHS regulations, you may face severe penalties based on U.S. immigration regulations. You should work closely with ISSO staff to make certain that you comply with all J-1 regulations.
6. **DEPENDENT FAMILY MEMBERS**

If you are married and/or have children, you may be eligible to have your spouse (husband or wife) and/or children, under the age of 21, visit you temporarily or join you for the duration of your period of study at BU. Dependent spouses and children who accompany or follow-to-join a J-1 student must each be issued an independent SEVIS Form DS-2019 in order to apply for a J-2 dependent visa. J-2 dependents are allowed to remain in the U.S. only as long as the J-1 student maintains legal J-1 status in the U.S. J-2 dependents are permitted to study part-time or full-time, either as non-degree or as degree-seeking students, and are also permitted to apply for employment authorization. An ISSO advisor will be pleased to advise you on the application process for J-2 employment authorization.

The ISSO is required to report the e-mail address of each of your dependents to SEVIS. In addition, if your J-2 dependents will depart the U.S. prior to the end date listed on your Form DS-2019, you should notify the ISSO as we are required to report this information via SEVIS.

7. **CROSS-CULTURAL COMPONENT OF EXCHANGE**

Program sponsors are responsible for providing orientation programing and access to cross-cultural experiences that give participants the opportunity to learn about U.S. society and culture outside of their academic program. Exchange visitors are also encouraged to participate in activities to share their own language, culture or history with Americans.

From your arrival in Boston – a city of U.S. cultural and historical importance, and an academic, scientific and medical hub – you will receive broad exposure to U.S. culture, to the U.S. higher education experience, and to scientific and research collaborations. This exchange occurs organically in city and campus life and is enhanced by the extensive array of targeted university support services, activities and programs.

Programming and support is offered through the ISSO as well as through departmental, school-specific, and university-wide programs and offices, including among others, Student Affairs, Office of Orientation, Residence Life, Student Activities, Marsh Chapel, Educational Resource Center, etc. In addition, BU’s online Calendar of Events communicates campus-sponsored activities, lectures, seminars, sporting events, outings, community service opportunities. We encourage you to take advantage of all that the city of Boston, Boston University and the surrounding area have to offer.

8. **J-1 EMPLOYMENT OPTIONS**

You must have prior authorization from the ISSO in order to be lawfully employed in the U.S. Both on-campus and off-campus employment must be authorized in SEVIS as follows:

**On-Campus Employment:** You are eligible to begin work on-campus at Boston University after (a) your employment is approved by an ISSO advisor in SEVIS for up to one calendar year at a time; and if (b) you complete a Form I-9 (Certificate of Employment Eligibility) at the ISSO prior to or within three days of the start of your employment.

Once you have on-campus employment permission, you can work for up to 20 hours each week during fall and spring semesters, and more than 20 hours during BU holidays and vacation periods, including summer if you will return in the fall.

**Off-Campus Employment Due to Economic Necessity:** You are eligible to apply to the ISSO for off-campus employment authorization if you suffer from an unforeseen economic hardship and have an urgent financial need to work. You may not be employed off campus without first obtaining written authorization from the ISSO.

**Academic Training Employment Authorization:** Academic Training authorization is given for work which is directly related to your major field of study. It may occur either before or after completion of your studies, may be either part-time or full-time, may be performed anywhere in the U.S., and may be approved for a maximum of 18 months. (Postdoctoral students may have up to 36 months.) Before you can begin work, you must apply to and receive written permission from the ISSO.

**Dependent Employment:** Dependents in J-2 status may apply to the USCIS for employment authorization. ISSO staff will offer information, guidance and assistance to dependents interested in applying for this benefit.

**Employment Rights of Temporary Workers:** In order to better understand your rights and protections as a temporary worker in the U.S. additional information is available in several languages on the U.S Bureau of Consular Affairs website at: [http://travel.state.gov/content/visas/english/general/rights-protections-temporary-workers.html](http://travel.state.gov/content/visas/english/general/rights-protections-temporary-workers.html).
9. TRAVEL

We encourage you to contact the ISSO anytime you plan to travel outside of the U.S. so that we can provide you with up-to-date travel advice and information and insure that you have the proper documentation to return to your program at BU.

Travel Within the U.S.: You (and your J-2 dependent family members) may travel within the U.S. provided you maintain your lawful J status and have a valid passport and Form DS-2019 in your possession.

Travel Outside the U.S.: You may leave the U.S. at any time. If you leave, you are permitted to return to the U.S. in J-1 status only if you have a valid passport, a valid J-1 visa stamp (except Canadian citizens) and a current Form DS-2019 that has been signed for travel by an authorized staff member at the ISSO. A travel signature is valid for one year or until the end date listed on your Form-DS-2019.

If you travel to Canada, Mexico or certain islands near the U.S, you may be eligible to reenter the country even if the J-1 visa stamp in your passport has expired, provided your visit does not exceed 30 days. You should consult with the ISSO before making any trips outside the country.

Travel Abroad After Completion of Studies: The date you officially complete your studies (see "Completion of Studies" section below) is very important to your ability to travel and re-enter the U.S. If you attempt to return to the U.S. using your current Form DS-2019, you may be denied the right to re-enter the country unless you have been authorized to engage in "Academic Training" employment. Upon your arrival back in the country, you must present to the CBP inspector a valid Form DS-2019 which has been (1) issued to you by the ISSO for the purpose of engaging in "Academic Training" and (2) endorsed for travel by the ISSO. We also recommend that you travel with an offer letter from your employer and the Academic Training authorization letter issued by the ISSO.

Application for a New J-1 Visa During Travel: A valid J-1 visa is required for reentry to the U.S. (except for Canadian citizens). You are allowed to remain in the U.S. with an expired J-1 visa, provided that you continue to maintain your lawful status and your passport and Form DS-2019 are valid. However, it will be necessary to apply for a new visa during your next trip abroad.

If you need to apply for a new visa during a trip abroad, please contact the ISSO so that we can review your documents and provide you with current information on visa processing. Students from certain countries and in certain areas of specialization may be required to undergo an extensive security clearance prior to visa issuance, which can slow the process significantly. If you plan to apply for a visa in Canada or in a country other than your home country consult with the ISSO.

Please refer to the ISSO’s most current Travel Advisory for information on recent travel and visa application changes. Upon re-entry to the U.S., we recommend that you review your I-94 arrival/departure record and entry stamp to ensure proper entry to the U.S. If you are unsure as to whether or not you were properly admitted, please contact the ISSO immediately.

10. COMPLETION OF STUDIES

Department of State regulations state that your lawful J-1 status automatically ends thirty days after you officially complete your studies unless you take some action to remain lawfully in the U.S.

Length of Time You May Remain in the United States
You may stay at Boston University until you complete your program of study or until the end date in item #3 of your Form DS-2019, whichever occurs first. If you need more time than allowed by your Form DS-2019, you must contact the ISSO before the expiration date in item #3 to request an extension of your Form DS-2019. Extension request applications are available on the ISSO website.

Undergraduate Students and Graduate Students Who are not in Thesis or Dissertation Programs. You officially complete your studies on the day of the graduation ceremony which is held at the end of your last semester of enrollment.

Graduate Students in Thesis or Dissertation Programs. Your official date of completion will be the day of the graduation ceremony of the semester in which you submit your thesis/dissertation. You must be enrolled in that semester, as well.

Prior to the expiration of your Form DS-2019, you must
1. Apply, if eligible, for "Academic Training" employment authorization
2. Apply, if eligible, to move from one program to another at Boston University or transfer to another institution
3. If eligible, change to a different immigration status

After completing your program of study, if you do not plan to remain in the United States by following one of the procedures above, you must depart the U.S. within 30 days of your DS-2019 program end date.
11. TWO-YEAR HOME RESIDENCE REQUIREMENT – 212(e)

The J-1 Exchange Visitor Program was established to promote mutual understanding and cultural and educational exchange, with the assumption that participants would return to their home countries and share knowledge gained during the program. In certain instances, visitors in J status are required to return and reside in their home country or country of legal permanent residence for two years before they may return to the U.S. in H, L, or K classification, or as a lawful permanent resident (“green card” holder). In addition, exchange visitors who are subject to this requirement are not eligible to apply for change to any non-immigrant classification from within the U.S.

Exchange Visitors are subject to the two-year home residence requirement – also known as 212(e) – if:

- They come to the United States to participate in medical residency under J-1 Alien Physical category OR
- If they have received direct government funds for the purposes of international exchange OR
- If, as a J-1 Exchange Visitor, they are acquiring a skill that is in critical demand in their home country, according to the U.S. government’s “Exchange Visitor Skills List.”

A notation about whether you have been found subject to the two-year home residence requirement can be found on the bottom left side of your DS-2019 and in the notes section of your J visa. The requirement can affect exchange visitors in any J classification, including J-2 dependents.

If you are subject to the two-year home residence requirement the ISSO advises you to factor this requirement into your long-term plans. The staff of the ISSO can provide you with more information about understanding this obligation.

12. WHEN TO CONTACT THE ISSO

To ensure that you maintain lawful immigration status, you must contact the ISSO if any of the following events occurs:

- If there is a change to your legal name, U.S. address, country of citizenship, immigration status, or source of funding, or to your J-2 dependent’s email or address
- If you or any of your J-2 dependents intend to travel outside the U.S. and need a travel signature on your Form DS-2019 or if you will apply for a new visa before reentering the U.S.
- Whenever any of your immigration documents are lost or stolen
- If you intend to change your immigration status
- If you intend to transfer to another program sponsor
- If you want to have your dependent spouse and/or children join you in J-2 status
- To apply for employment authorization for either on- or off-campus employment, even if the employment is considered a requirement of your academic program
- If you expect to complete your J-1 Exchange Visitor program prior to the date listed on your current Form DS-2019
- If any of your J-2 dependents depart the U.S. permanently prior to the end date listed on your current Form DS-2019

As your J-1 Exchange Program sponsor, the ISSO advising staff is always pleased to provide you with additional information, advising and assistance regarding your immigration status so that you may achieve your academic and exchange goals while at Boston University.

A list of International Student Advisors (all approved J-1 Alternate Responsible Officers) can be found at: 
http://www.bu.edu/isso/contact/student-advising/index.html

We look forward to working with you during your time on campus!

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