

Off-campus Employment for J-1 Students: Academic Training

What is Academic Training?

Academic Training is a period of employment authorization for J-1 students who are studying in the United States. It permits students to gain work experience in their field of study while still maintaining J-1 visa status. Academic Training can take place either on- or off-campus.

Who is eligible to apply?

A student may be authorized to participate in academic training programs “during the academic program or commencing not later than 30 days after completion of studies” if the student is:

- ✓ Primarily in the US to study rather than engage in Academic Training.
- ✓ Participating in Academic Training that is directly related to his/her major field of study.
- ✓ In good academic standing with the University of Wisconsin-Madison.
- ✓ Receives written approval in advance from ISS for the duration and type of Academic Training.
- ✓ Students on certain government J-1 programs (for example, US AID) may **not** be eligible for Academic Training, either before or after completion of studies.

How long is the Academic Training period?

The total training period may not exceed the amount of time spent in the full course of study.

- ✓ If you are in a non-degree program (i.e., an exchange student, university special student), you can only participate in Academic Training for a period of time equal to that of your exchange program.
- ✓ If you are in an undergraduate or pre-doctoral degree program, you can be authorized for Academic Training for up to 18 months (in aggregate) which may be used before or after completion of studies.
- ✓ If you complete a PhD, you can apply for a second 18 month period, provided the period of full-time study has been at least three years.

Do I have to wait until I finish my degree to request authorization for Academic Training?

No. Academic Training is available either before or after completion of studies. You can begin Academic Training while you are taking classes. That means that if you are authorized for Academic Training while you are taking classes, you will have less time available for Academic Training after you graduate.

When should I apply for Academic Training?

Academic Training may be authorized any time during your studies, but **no later than** 30 days after you complete all degree requirements for your program. Applying for the authorization paperwork at least two weeks in advance of the first day of employment is recommended. You will need to complete the *Academic Training Application for J-1 Students* packet available at ISS. The approval of your academic advisor and a job offer are required in order to apply for Academic Training.

May I complete all of my Academic Training after I graduate?

Yes. You need to request approval for Academic Training within 30 days after completion of your degree; otherwise, you lose the opportunity to apply. DS-2019 forms issued **specifically** for Academic Training will be issued only for up to 18 months at a time. If you are a post-doctoral student intending to use all 36 months of Academic Training after you graduate, you will need to request a DS-2019 form for each 18-month period.

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Can post-doctoral Academic Training be extended beyond 18 months for a teaching position, or for training in a corporation?

Yes. Post-doctoral Academic Training can be extended to the maximum of 36 months for research positions at an academic or research institute, for a faculty appointment, or work in private industry.

Must the Academic Training be paid?

Academic Training **during** the degree program may be paid or unpaid. Academic Training **following** completion of a degree must be paid. If you are sponsored by your home government, or are on an official exchange program between the UW and your home institution that provides for a work experience, it is sometimes possible to be authorized for an unpaid work experience following program completion; see an ISS advisor for details about your specific case.

What if I want to change my Academic Training employer?

If you wish to change employers, you must get a new authorization letter from ISS; authorization letters for Academic Training are job-specific. ISS must also update your SEVIS record and produce a new DS-2019 listing your Academic Training employer on your new form. To do so, you must resubmit the *Academic Training Application for J-1 Students* including a revised letter from your academic advisor supporting the new training and a letter of offer for the new position. In order to change employers, you must have continuous employment (that is, you must move directly from one employer to another). ISS cannot authorize work with a new employer if you never commenced your employment or have ceased employment with the currently approved employer.

What if I want to extend my current period of Academic Training?

If you wish to extend your Academic Training, you must complete the application process again, as you did for the initial application. Please see the handout titled *Academic Training Application for J-1 Students*.

Can I travel outside the US during my academic training?

Yes. During the period of authorized Academic Training, you are still considered to be in J-1 student status. You will need to carry the same documents which a full-time student carries **plus**:

- ✓ A letter from your academic training employer outlining the beginning/ending dates of the employment and salary;
- ✓ A letter from your J-1 program sponsor authorizing academic training.