

F-1 & J-1 Comparison

Every full-time degree-seeking student at UW-Madison is eligible for the F-1 visa and the majority of UW-Madison international students hold this visa status. Some students may also be eligible for the J-1 student visa, an exchange visitor option. The J-1 visa is part of a larger U.S. Department of State mission to foster cultural and educational exchange between countries. To be eligible for the J-1 student visa, a substantial portion of your financial support (51% or higher) must be from a source other than your personal assets. This can include UW-Madison funding or scholarship from another organization.

Students with only personal or family funding are NOT eligible for J-1 status. There are a few basic differences between the F-1 and J-1 visa types, which are outlined in the chart below.

	F-1 Status	J-1 Status
Source of Funding	No funding source requirements. Can be funded through personal, UW-Madison, or independent scholarships. You must demonstrate that you have sufficient funding to cover one year's tuition and living expenses.	A substantial portion of funding (51% minimum) must be from a source other than personal funds. You must demonstrate that you have sufficient funding to cover the length of the program of study. ISS will review and approve submitted funding.
On Campus Employment	Part time (up to 20 hours/week) when school is in session, full time during periods of recess.	Part time (up to 20 hours/week) when school is in session, full time during periods of recess. Prior permission must be obtained from ISS.
Off Campus Employment	Optional Practical Training (OPT)- up to 12 month period per degree level of training directly related to their studies. No job offer required prior to application.	Academic Training – Duration equal to length of study or 18 months whichever is shorter. PhD students eligible for up to 36 months. Graduating students must have job offer within 30 days of graduation. Employment

OPT STEM Extension- additional 24 month period after approved OPT period. Employment must be directly related to earned STEM degree. Employment offer and training plan with E-verify employer required.

experience must be directly related to the program of study.

Curricular Practical Training (CPT)- training during your studies that is directly related to the program of study and tied to a credit-bearing course (or required of the declared degree program.)

Dependents

F-2 dependents are not eligible for employment.

J-2 dependents are eligible to apply to USCIS for permission to work in the US after their arrival and must renew permission annually.

F-2 dependents are allowed to study part time.

J-2 dependents are allowed to study part time or full time.

Requirement to Return Home upon program completion

Non-immigrant intent visa; must prove strong ties to the home country. No requirement to return home upon program completion.

Non-immigrant intent visa; must prove strong ties to the home country. Some Exchange Visitors and their dependents may be subject to the two year home country physical presence requirement upon program completion.

Change to Another Visa Status

Not eligible to change to F status in the United States if you are subject to two year home country physical presence requirement if you wish to change status in the U.S.

Change of Major (Program of Study)	No restriction.	Program objective must remain consistent.
Change of Education Level	No restriction.	Cannot move from non-degree to degree-seeking, or vice versa. Cannot change to lower degree level (i.e. PhD to Masters)
Transfer to Another U.S. Institution	No restrictions	Program objective (field of study) must be consistent.
Bar to J-1 Scholar Status	None	J-1 students completing an academic program will be subject to a 12 month wait before they are able to use the J-1 research scholar/professor category.

Adapted from Yale University: <https://oiss.yale.edu/immigration/f-1-students/f-1-j-1-comparison>

A student will be asked to select a visa type as part of the admissions process. If you choose to be considered for a J-1 visa, you must also select one of the following alternatives in case you do not meet the requirements for a J-1 visa.

- Stay on current visa (i.e. H4). Verify that you are eligible to study on your current visa.
- UW-Madison will issue an F-1 visa
- UW-Madison will not issue any visa documentation

Important information regarding funding for J-1 students and hosting departments

- The funding must be **guaranteed** for the length of the program. Funding possibilities include, but are not limited to:
 - UW-Madison assistantship
 - UW-Madison fellowship

- Third party organization sponsorship/fellowship
- ISS will review funding and determine eligibility for J-1 visa
- If the J-1 student is employed on campus, employment permission must be renewed every year
- The J-1 student cannot change or add a major if it deviates from the program objective
- The J-1 student cannot change from a higher to lower degree level
- The J-1 student cannot move from degree-seeking to non degree-seeking or vice versa