

The University of Alabama in Huntsville is a proud J-1 program sponsor. The J-1 Exchange Visitor Program is for the express purpose of promoting international educational exchange of expertise and stimulating collaborative teaching and research efforts. A J-1 Scholar is a visiting researcher, professor, or specialist from a country outside of the United States who has been approved to enter the U.S. for a specific purpose and a limited amount of time. All foreign nationals who wish to enter the U.S. as a J-1 Visiting Scholar must first obtain a J-1 Visa stamp in their passport before beginning their scholarly activities at UAH. The Office of International Services manages the J-1 program based on its designation from the U.S. Department of State and has the authority to issue immigration documents on behalf of J-1 Exchange Visitors.

Visiting Scholars differ from international faculty and staff in that a J-1 visa should not be used in place of other employment based work authorization categories (H-1B, TN, and O-1). Typically, Visiting Scholars do not hold paid positions at UAH. In some instances, J-1 Scholars may hold paid positions at UAH. If the proposed Visiting Scholar will be paid by UAH funding, Departments or Centers should reach out to the Office of International Services to determine if the scope of the employment is appropriate under the J-1 program or if another employment based visa should be obtained.

Often, Visiting Scholars are either funded through personal funds or by their home institution, home government, or an external grant. Subject to proper review procedures, while at UAH, Visiting Scholars may be granted access to facilities and campus resources necessary to carry out their academic objectives.

Before initiating an invitation to a J-1 Visiting Scholar, the hosting Department or Center should follow these steps:

STEP 1: REVIEW APPROPRIATENESS OF PROPOSED COLLABORATIVE ACTIVITY

When reviewing a possible visiting scholar, please consider whether or not their activity is in line with normal Visiting Scholar activities and if Visiting Scholar's qualifications to qualify. At a minimum, the proposed Visiting Scholar should hold a Bachelor's degree or higher. Appropriate collaborative activities for a Visiting Scholar include:

- **Participation in collaborative research with faculty or staff**
- **Teaching or guest lecturing in appropriate classes or labs**
- **Delivering lectures on their area of research/expertise to UAH Students/Faculty/Staff**
- **Participation in departmental or interdisciplinary seminars**
- **Engaging in formal or informal discussions with graduate students**
- **Participation in co-curricular activities**
- **Participation in trainings/internships**

STEP 2: EVALUATE DEPARTMENT'S HOSTING CAPABILITIES

Prior to issuing an inviting to a Visiting Scholar, Departments or Centers should review the appropriateness for the visit as well as the department's resources for proper support.

Faculty may not host an Exchange Scholar while on Sabbatical nor should the activities of the Visiting Scholar be performed remotely or off-site. As a part of the evaluation of hosting capabilities, the Department/College should do the following:

- **Identify a department faculty host who will work with the visiting scholar and serve as the primary point of contact and for the visiting scholar and The Office of International Services.**
- **The faculty host should communicate with the scholar via phone/video prior to the invitation in order to discuss the nature, scope, and specifics of the prospective scholar's research project and/or teaching responsibilities.**
- **This communication can also serve as the basis of an evaluation of oral English proficiency. It is the responsibility of the faculty mentor to attest to the oral English proficiency of the prospective scholar.**
- **Prepare for other forms of needed support, such as:**
 - **Relocation assistance (finding housing is the scholar's responsibility, however faculty hosts are expected to help the scholar).**
 - **Arrival support (airport greeting and transport and anything else the hosts feel is appropriate to welcome and assist the scholar, including introductions, area and campus tour, etc.)**
 - **Arrange access to computers, libraries, and other facilities, as appropriate**
 - **Provide university office or workstation space, if available.**
 - **Provide administrative assistance, if possible.**

STEP 3: PREPARE A LETTER OF INVITATION (TYPICALLY REQUIRED IN ADVANCE FOR VISITING SCHOLARS APPLYING FOR INSTITUTIONAL, GRANT, OR GOVERNMENT FUNDING)

Many visiting scholars will require a letter of invitation from The University of Alabama in Huntsville in order to be able to secure their government, grant, or institutional funding that will support their visit.

Once the Department/Center has determined that it is able to host a visiting scholar, the Department or Center should provide a letter of invitation that communicates the nature and scope of the relationship, specifics of the prospective visitor's research project and/or teaching responsibilities.

The letter should explain the department's general willingness to serve as a host. The Office of International Services has template of a [sample invitation letter](#) that can be modified as needed by the Department/Center, although it should be on university letterhead and in English or accompanied by an English translation.

The letter should communicate:

- 1. Who is being invited**
- 2. Who or what department with which the scholar will collaborate**

3. What grant activities the scholar will pursue (e.g., discipline-specific research or special lecturing needs)
4. If the scholar is pursuing a combined teaching and research grant, both activities should be addressed
5. When and for what period of time the host expects the scholar at their institution
6. Why the host is interested in the scholar and/or their work
7. Why the scholar's proposed activity is a good fit
8. How the host expects to benefit from the scholar's project

STEP 4: INITIATE VISA SPONSORSHIP The process to initiate visa sponsorship involves coordination with the Office of International Services to obtain immigration form DS-2019 which will allow the proposed Visiting Scholar to schedule an appointment at a U.S. Embassy or Consulate abroad to obtain a J-1 Visa in order to enter the United States and pursue their scholarly activities at UAH. Departments and Centers should plan ahead. All requests to produce immigration form DS-2019 on behalf of a J-1 scholar require up to ten business days to review and process and visits should be planned a minimum of two months in advance.

In order to request immigration form DS-2019 for a Visiting Scholar, Departments or Centers should complete the following steps:

- Send the Visiting Scholar a [J-1 Exchange Visitor Information](#) form and ask them to complete the form and return it to the faculty host.
- Obtain a copy of the passport biometric page (picture page) and CV/Resume of the Visiting Scholar
- Pay the \$100 J-1 DS-2019 Request Fee via Transfer Voucher (directions are in the Kuali form)
- Complete a UAH Kuali form [Request to Host a J-1 Scholar](#) and attach the Budget Transfer Authorization, completed J-1 Exchange Visitor Form from the Visiting Scholar, and a copy of the Visiting Scholar's passport biometric page and CV or resume

Once the Request to Host a J-1 Scholar form goes through the Kuali work-flow and is approved, the Office of International Services will begin work on creating the immigration form DS-2019. After the immigration form is completed, the immigration form and a welcome packet of important visa and arrival information will be sent electronically to the faculty host who will be responsible for sending this information, along with any department instructions to the scholar via email.

Once the DS-2019 has been created, the scholar will have 30 days from the start date listed on the immigration form (DS-2019) to enter the U.S. AND report to the Office of International Services as part of a required and federally mandated check-in process. It is the responsibility of the faculty host to alert the Office of International Services if the

Visiting Scholar cannot arrive within this timeframe so that the immigration form may be updated. Failure to adhere to this timeline can result in the Visiting Scholar being barred from entering the U.S.

STEP 5: ORIENT AND ENGAGE WITH THE SCHOLAR DURING THE VISIT

- Soon after arrival, have the international scholar set an appointment with International Service as a part of their mandatory check-in and orientation process.
- Provide scholar with all pertinent university policies, such as safety trainings.
- Ensure that the scholar understands that they are expected to conform to the policies and standards of behavior which govern all UA Faculty and Staff.
- Engage in close collaboration or appropriate oversight, depending on the department and scholar arrangements/needs.
- Inform scholar of relevant conferences or meetings of professional associations held during the scholar's grant period.
- Invite visiting scholars to observe classes and attend faculty workshops and other academic events, when possible and appropriate.
- Share resources on extra-curricular activities (cultural, social, or community).
- Maintain frequent contact with the scholar throughout the duration of their stay on campus.
- **Contact Office of International Services immediately if there is a change to the dates of employment or an early departure for the scholar.**