

About “Academic Training”

This info is for international students who have the J-1 visa.

Academic Training is work, training or experience related to an international student’s field of study. It is the J-1 visa holder’s way of doing an internship in the U.S. You can do Academic Training during your study program or afterwards.

Two important things to know for your planning purposes:

- You must receive **PRIOR** permission before you can start Academic Training. There is an approval process for Immigration that you must complete first.
- You must be approved before your current DS2019 expires and before your study program at ISU ends.

Contact Stephanie Gonzalez about what to do:
sgonzal@ilstu.edu, (309) 438-5112

☉ Who Is Eligible?

You may be eligible for Academic Training if:

1. Your primary purpose in the United States is studying not doing Academic Training.
2. You are in good academic standing at ISU and are earning good grades.
3. Your proposed employment is directly related to your major field of study.
4. The employment would be done with a specific employer at a specific location.
5. Throughout your “Academic Training” you must continue to obey immigration laws for the J-1 visa. (If you have any questions about what these laws are, ask Stephanie Gonzalez at 438-5112.)
6. You are approved for AT **before** your study program ends and your DS2019 expires.
7. You receive written approval **in advance** of starting your employment from your Immigration advisor.
8. You maintain health insurance coverage for yourself and any J-2 dependents throughout your “Academic Training.”
9. “Academic Training” during your study period may be paid or unpaid employment, but Academic Training after your study program must involve paid employment.
 - If a position is unpaid, you must provide financial documentation showing that you are capable of meeting your living expenses while on Academic Training. We recommend \$1,055 per month for the Bloomington-Normal area (or we can negotiate what would be a realistic figure in a particular place).

Ⓢ How to Apply

Step ①: Talk to Stephanie in I-Studies

Step ②: Letter from Employer

Ask your potential employer to prepare a letter with all of the following information:

- Your job title
- A description of the goals and objectives of your training program; and what your duties will be
- Why doing the Training is an essential or vital part of your academic program and how it relates to your major field of study
- The dates that your job will start and end
- The location where you will work
- The number of hours per week you will work
- How you will be paid, and the amount that you will earn in total.
- The name, job title and address of your training supervisor

Step ③: Letter from Academic Advisor

Give a copy of the employer's letter to your academic advisor. Then ask your academic advisor to write a letter that recommends you for the Academic Training. The letter should include:

- Your job title
- A description of the goals and objectives of your training program; and what your duties will be
- Why doing the Training is an essential or vital part of your academic program and how it relates to your major field of study
- The dates that your job will start and end
- The location where you will work
- The number of hours per week you will work
- How you will be paid, and the amount that you will earn in total.
- The name, job title and address of your training supervisor

Step ④: Proof Funding

You must prove enough funding to cover your expenses during your Academic Training. This includes funding for housing, food, transportation, and miscellaneous personal and living expenses.

If you do your training in Bloomington-Normal, you should prove at least \$1,055 per month. If you live in Chicago or another big city, you will need to prove more.

You can ask your bank for a letter (or your parents' bank) that says you will have \$_____ available to cover your expenses. You may also complete a "Declaration of Finances Form" and have it stamped by your bank or your parents' bank. (Please see Stephanie for a Declaration of Finances Form.)

Step ⑤: Proof of J-1 Insurance

You must prove that you have maintained your J-1 health insurance (mandatory for all J-1/J-2 visa holders) and you will have coverage throughout the time of your Academic Training. Please provide documentation from your insurance company. (To see if you may be eligible for ISU Student Insurance, please contact the Student Health Insurance Office.

Step ⑥

Give your Immigration Advisor the following items: original copies of the letters noted above in Steps 1 and 2; proof of funding; and proof of insurance.

Step ⑦

Your Immigration Advisor will evaluate the AT to decide whether it is necessary and appropriate. If so, s/he will write you a letter of approval, and will then amend and extend your DS2019 to show that you have been approved for Academic Training.

⦿ How Long Can You Do Academic Training?

This depends on:

- Whether you have done Academic Training before (either at ISU or another U.S. school); and
- Whether you are an undergraduate student or a Ph.D. student.
- How long you have studied in the U.S.;
 - Your Academic Training (AT) may not be longer than the time you have studied at ISU, or longer than 18 months, whichever is shorter. For example, if you have studied at ISU for 18 weeks (about 4.5 months), you are eligible to do academic training for 18 weeks.
- Non-degree seeking students may not stay in the U.S. longer than 24 months, including the time for their study program and Academic Training.
 - If you are a pre-doctoral student, you may only receive approval for extra Academic Training (more than 18-months), if this extra time is necessary to complete your degree.
 - Doing AT employment on a part-time schedule counts just the same as if you were employed full-time.
 - If you earn more than one degree, this does not mean that you can do Academic Training twice.

For Graduate Doctoral Students:

- If you receive a Ph.D., your “post-doctoral training” may last as long as 36 months. If your study program was less than 36 months, however, you would be granted AT for the lesser time period. You must first receive approval for the first 18 months, and then reapply for a second 18 months.

⦿ Other Important Things to Know

Before you can begin your Academic Training, you must have a permission letter from your Immigration Advisor!! Working before you have this letter will mean you are working illegally. This would be very serious.

VERY IMPORTANT: Remember that before you start any kind of employment, you must first consult your Immigration Advisor, whose written approval is necessary in advance. After you are officially approved for Academic Training, you may NOT change to another employer or Academic Training location without first receiving written permission from International Studies.

You will need a Social Security Number/Card so that your employer can pay you. (Everyone who is employed in the United States needs a Social Security Number.) If you have any questions about getting a Social Security Card, please contact Stephanie Gonzalez.

On the first day of your Academic Training job, **you and your employer must complete an I-9 Form.** The form requires you to prove your identity and work authorization according to directions on the back of the form. You and your employer (who will keep your I-9 Form) must update your information any time you receive a renewal of permission for Academic Training.

As a J-1 student you will be exempt from Social Security (F.I.C.A.) taxes for your first five years in the United States, as long as you continue to declare non-resident status for tax purposes (see Internal Revenue Service Publication 519, “U.S. Tax Guide for Aliens.”)

Unless you qualify under a tax treaty between the United States and your home government, your earnings as a J-1 student will be subject to applicable federal, state, and local taxes, and employers are required by law to withhold those taxes from your paychecks. By April 15 you must file a federal income tax return and a “Required Statement” covering the prior calendar year to determine whether you owe more taxes or have a refund coming.

Sample Letter from Employer/Supervisor

OCEAN BLUE, INC.
1492 Santa Maria Drive
Atlantic City, New Jersey 07777
Tel: 201-555-1212

February 22, 2007

Name of Student
10 Water Street
Death Valley, California 92655

Dear (Student's Name):

I am pleased to offer you a position as a _____ (*add JOB TITLE*) at _____ (*name of company*). The location of your training program will be (*give the address(es) where the student will be working*).

This training program will begin on _____ (*start date*) and end on _____ (*end date*). You will be employed for _____ (*number*) hours per week, and you will earn a salary of \$_____ (*if the student will be paid*). Your training will be performed under the supervision of _____ (*name of supervisor; his/her work address; and phone number*).

The goals and objectives of this employment training program are _____ (*describe in detail*).

Your training program relates to your major course of study and is an integral and critical part of your exchange visitor program because _____.

Your duties will include: _____ (*describe what job duties will be.*)

On behalf of the company, I welcome you to _____ (*name of company*).

Sincerely,

Supervisor's Name and Title

Sample Letter from the Academic Advisor

(to be printed on ISU Department's Letterhead)

March 17, 2007

Stephanie Gonzalez
 International Student and Scholar Advisor
 Office of International Studies and Programs
 308 Fell Hall, Campus Box 6120
 Normal, IL 61790-6120

Dear Ms. Gonzalez:

This is to confirm that Mr./Ms. _____ (**name of student**) will complete his/her academic exchange visitor program at ISU on _____ (**date**).

The student has received an offer to do professional employment/academic training in his/her major field of study. The employment will run from _____ (**beginning date**) to _____ (**ending date**). The job title will be _____ and will involve the following responsibilities (**please list responsibilities**):

The employer is _____ (**name of company**) and the student will conduct his/her academic training at _____ (**address**).

The name of the supervisor is _____. His/her title is _____. His/her phone number is _____.

The main goals and objectives of this academic training will be:

_____.

The academic training will relate to the student's major field of study in the following ways:

_____.

This training is an integral and critical part of the student's academic program at ISU because:

_____.

Sincerely,

Academic Advisor's Name, Title, Department