Requesting a J-1 extension which exceeds the 3-year limit

The beginning date of a J-1 program is either the effective date of a change of status issued by the Immigration Service, or the date the individual first entered the U.S. as a J-1. This date may or may not match the “From” date in section 3 of his/her DS-2019.

A J-1 research scholar or professor has a time limit of 3 years. A J-1 short-term scholar has a limit of 6 months. Short-term scholars cannot extend beyond the 6-month limit. Research scholars and professors may obtain extra time.

To request six months or less beyond the three-year limit, send the Continuation Request Form to IFSA with two letters requesting the extra time—one from the J-1 and one from his/her supervisor or department head. The letters can be addressed to IFSA and should state how much extra time is being requested and why this time is needed to complete the J-1’s program objective. The reasons should relate to the needs of the J-1, not to the needs of the department. A six-month extension is processed by IFSA in a similar manner as other J extensions.

To request more than six months and up to two years beyond the three-year limit, send the Continuation Request Form to IFSA with two letters as described above, and a check for $198 payable to “Department of State”. In this case the letters can be addressed to: Department of State, Program Designation Branch, Washington, D.C. 20547. IFSA must request this extra time from the State Department via the SEVIS system and mail the payment to them. Once payment is received, the extensions are usually quickly approved. An e-mail is sent to IFSA notifying us that the extended DS-2019 can be printed.

Extensions up to the five-year limit are approved easily because new regulations have been proposed which will extend the normal J-1 limit for research scholars and professors to five years. Although a six-year extension is possible, it is likely to be denied.

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