

# J-1 Guide to Academic Training

**Disclaimer:** KGI OISS has prepared this guide to provide you with general guidance. However, any advice provided to you by our office, as well as the information in this document, should not be construed as legal advice. KGI OISS staff will provide regulatory and practice information as it stands at the time of the consult. Due to the fluid nature of governmental interpretation, individuals must understand that the US Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) office and the Department of State (DOS) may change its interpretation of established immigration laws/regulations and eligibility requirements for benefits at any time.

## **What is Academic Training?**

Academic Training is defined as work, training, or experience related to a student's full course of study. This training must be directly related to the major field of study. A specific description of the training is required in order to authorize the training on the DS-2019 and the ARO/RO must provide written authorization of this approval.

## **When must Academic Training begin?**

Academic training can be done at any time during your studies. KGI limits academic training during school sessions to 20 hours a week. Exceptions will be made on a case by case basis or for students in the doctoral dissertation writing stage who have no remaining coursework to complete. Upon completion of your degree requirements, academic training must be authorized for the day after your program ends and must be authorized continually until you will no longer use it or have reached the maximum limit (see below).

## **What are the Academic Training authorization limits?**

The length of time you can participate in academic training depends on your academic level and length of program.

### ***Students in Traditional Degree Programs***

Students in bachelor or masters degree programs are permitted an initial total limit of 18 months of academic training (full- or part-time, paid or unpaid), whether before or after completion of studies. However, the total time spent on academic training must be equal to or less than the total time spent in the degree program. Earning more than one degree does not grant you additional time – this limit is an aggregate total for all time spent in the US under any level.

#### **Examples:**

- A student has been studying in his degree program for 18 months. He is eligible for up to 18 months of academic training.
- A student has been studying in her degree program for 24 months. She is eligible

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for up to 18 months of academic training.

An exception to this time limit can be made for up to an additional 18 months, only if it is to “satisfy the **mandatory requirements** of his or her degree program in the United States.” The operative phrase here is *mandatory requirements* meaning that the extension cannot be granted without the training being a specific degree requirement. For example, if a masters in social work requires 24 months of supervised training, then the time limit can be extended to cover this requirement.

### **Postdoctoral Training**

After completion of a US doctorate degree, you are eligible for an additional 18 months if postdoctoral training, bringing the overall limit to 36 months. *This overall limit includes time used for academic training while studying in the degree program*, regardless of if this training is full-time or part-time. *This overall limit is reduced by any time already spent in academic training (i.e. at the master level)*. All post-doctoral training must commence within 30 days after the last day of courses. Training approved **after** completion of your program must be reduced by any **prior** periods of academic training and must be **paid**, unless specifically waived by the ARO/RO.

#### **Examples:**

- A student completed 6 months of academic training during her masters studies and continues on to a Ph.D. program. After completing her Ph.D., she is entitled to the remaining 12 months of academic training to complete the first 18 month limit. She may then be authorized for an additional 18 months of post-doctoral academic training, pending approval of the department and ARO/RO.
- A student completed 12 months of academic training *during* his studies. After completing his Ph.D., he is entitled to an extra 6 months of academic training to complete his first 18 months. He may then be authorized for an additional 18 months of post-doctoral academic training, pending approval of his department and ARO/RO.
- A student who has already done graduate work outside the US is able to complete her program in 2 years. She is not eligible for the 36-month time limit as the maximum time she spent in her program was 24 months. She is eligible for up to 24 months of post-doctoral training (18 months, with a possible extension of 6 months).

### **Student in Non-Degree Programs**

For students in a course of study in a non-degree program, the total stay may not exceed 24 months. This 24 months includes study time and any academic training.

### **What if I am authorized for a year of academic training but I have a temporary break in employment during the authorization? Can I reclaim this time?**

Unused time is not replaceable. This means that you have up to 18 months after your program to complete academic training (if authorized, with a possible extension of 18 months for doctoral students). Any time not used (for example, a 1-month break between jobs) cannot be “returned” to you; you will lose out on this training time.

### **Do I need Academic Training Authorization for an on campus job?**

No, however you DO need written permission from your J-1 Responsible Officer (RO or ARO) prior to participating in an on campus job. Please obtain a job offer letter from your prospective employer and meet with your RO/ARO to obtain work authorization. It is recommended that you provide your prospective employer with the Job Offer Letter Instructions found on the [Current Students](#) page under Career Planning to ensure that your job offer letter will contain all information needed to process the authorization.

### **How do I Obtain Academic Training Authorization?**

1. Obtain a job offer letter from your prospective employer that includes your job title, a brief description of the goals and objectives of your training program (your employment), the dates and location of the employment, the number of hours per week, and the name and address of your training supervisor. These details are **required**.
2. Give a copy of your employer's letter to your academic advisor or dean for use in completing the J-1 Academic Training Request form. You will find this form on the [Current Students](#) page under Forms.
3. When your academic advisor's recommendation and J-1 Academic Training Request Form is ready, provide these to your J-1 Responsible Officer, with a copy of the employer's letter. **NOTE:** Your DS-2019 may not be sponsored by KGI; check your DS-2019 to ensure you are corresponding with the proper authority.
4. Your J-1 Responsible Officer must evaluate the Academic Training program and decide whether it is warranted and appropriate. If so, you will be written a letter of approval and issued a new Form DS-2019 showing Academic Training. **You must keep both documents permanently for your records;** the written approval is the only work authorization you receive and a copy must be provided to your employer.
5. If you have not already obtained a social security number, you may do so once your academic training has been authorized. Please review the Guide to Working in the US for steps to apply for a number. You will find this form on the [Current Students](#) page under Informational Guides and Checklists.

### **NEVER WORK WITHOUT PROPER AUTHORIZATION**

Remember that employment without proper authorization is a serious violation of your status. Written approval from your J-1 Responsible Officer is necessary *in advance* of starting any kind of employment. Plan ahead to ensure you receive proper authorization well in advance of your employment start date.