

Academic Training (AT) for J-1 Students

What is Academic Training?

Academic Training (AT) is *off-campus* employment training or practical experience related to a J-1 Student's field of study in order to supplement your academic program in the U.S. Once you have completed one full semester at the University of Utah, AT is available at any point in your academic program (either while you are enrolled in courses or after you complete your program of study), as long as you are maintaining your J-1 status and follow the appropriate application process.

AT may involve sequential or simultaneous activities, can be either paid or unpaid, and can involve one or several employers. Application and approval procedures must be followed for each employer and activity. AT "time limits" for your degree-level must not be exceeded.

To participate in AT, the ISSS office must evaluate the effectiveness and appropriateness of the academic training in achieving its stated goals and objectives in order to ensure the quality of the training program.

Eligibility for Academic Training:

- Your primary goal in the U.S. should be to study rather than engage in Academic Training.
- You must have completed at least one full semester at the University of Utah to be eligible to apply.
- The AT position must be directly related to the major field of study that is listed on your Form DS-2019.
- You must receive approval in advance from ISSS before you begin your AT position.
- You must submit your AT Request E-form to ISSS **at least two weeks before** your Program End Date or proposed AT position start state, whichever comes first.

Pre-Completion vs. Post-Completion Academic Training

- AT can be completed before your Program End Date (Pre-Completion AT) or after your Program End Date (Post-Completion AT).
- Both Pre-Completion and Post-Completion AT will subtract from your maximum AT duration, dependent on your degree-level (see below).

Time Limitations on Academic Training:

You may participate in AT before and/or after the completion of your program of study, however, you must have completed at least one semester at the U of U to be eligible to apply. The duration of AT must meet the following requirements and be approved by ISSS before the employment begins:

- **Undergraduate and Pre-doctoral training:** You are eligible for one month of AT for each month of study, up to a maximum of 18 months. For example, if your exchange program is one semester (4 months), you are eligible for 4 months of post-completion AT. If your program is 36 months, you are eligible for the maximum 18 months.
 - **Non-degree seeking students:** Your combined duration of study and AT may not exceed a total of 24 months.
 - More than 18 months can be approved at the undergraduate and pre-doctoral level only if it is necessary for you to meet the requirements of your degree program in the U.S.
- **Post-doctoral training:** Your AT cannot exceed 36 months including all prior AT you have completed.

- **Note:** If you have used any AT at another institution or in a prior J-1 program, the amount used will be subtracted from your allowable total. For example, if you used 12 months of AT during your Bachelor's degree, if you continue in a J-1 Master's program, you will only have 6 months of AT left available.
- **Special J-1 STEM Extension** available for Academic Years 2021-2022 & 2022-2023: This allows a possible 36 month maximum for Bachelor's/Master's STEM graduates with degrees on the [STEM Designated Degree Program List](#) (your specific degree code is listed in the Subject/Field Code section of your DS-2019). See the [Department of State Announcement](#) for more details and their FAQs. This extension is available for a total of 36 months *or for a period equal to the length of the study of program, whichever is shorter*. For example, if you are in a STEM eligible field and in a program for 24 months, you may be eligible for the traditional 18 months of AT and then an additional 6 months. If you are only in a program for 18 months or less, you are not eligible for the extension.

How to apply for Academic Training:

1. Obtain a **job offer letter** from your potential employer, which includes:
 - a. Company name and location
 - b. Official job title
 - c. Name, address, e-mail address, and phone number of your training supervisor
 - d. Number of hours per week
 - e. Start and End dates of training
 - f. Description of the goals and objectives of your Academic Training
 - g. Compensation (if applicable)
2. Meet with your Academic Advisor to discuss the Academic Training opportunity and E-Form process.
3. **At least two weeks before** your Program End Date or proposed AT position start state (whichever comes first): Fill out the "**J-1 Academic Training Request E-form**" through [UAtlas](#). Upload your current DS-2019 and AT Offer Letter, and input your Academic Advisor's contact information, and submit. **Note:** If you transferred from another university, you must also submit a screenshot of the AT Information from your SEVIS record. This will need to be obtained from your previous institution.
4. Once approved, the ISSS office will notify you by email when your new DS-2019 with Academic Training authorization is ready to pick up. Please allow two weeks for processing.

Frequently Asked Questions for Academic Training:

1. When do I need to apply for AT?

You must apply for AT at least two weeks before the Program End Date on your DS-2019 (for Post-Completion AT) or at least two weeks before your proposed AT position start date (for Pre-Completion AT). For Post-Completion, your AT start date must be within thirty (30) days after completion of your program.

2. How many hours am I allowed to work?

You may participate in Academic Training part-time (less than 20 hours per week) while enrolled in classes and full-time (up to 40 hours per week) after completion of your exchange program. You may also participate in full-time AT during authorized school breaks and vacation semesters.

Note: Your total amount of AT is calculated by month, not by hour. Accumulating two months of part-time AT is the same as accumulating two months of full-time AT.

3. Does the job I have while on AT have to be paid employment, or can it be unpaid?

AT may be paid or unpaid. Please note that whether paid or unpaid, interning or volunteering in a position directly related to your academic field is considered “employment” for the purposes of AT, and requires authorization in advance.

Note: If you plan to participate in an unpaid AT, you will be required to submit financial documentation for the duration of your AT as evidence that you will be able to cover your living expenses during this time.

4. Can I change employers during my AT?

Yes, you may have more than one employer during your Academic Training. However, there may not be a gap in employment – there is no “unemployment time” while on AT. If you wish to change employers, you must submit a new AT request for each employer at least two weeks before beginning your new position. Each AT position must be approved by ISSS before you may begin the position. Additional employment cannot exceed your AT time limitation.

5. How can I apply for the AT STEM Extension?

Please contact the ISSS J-1 advisors at internationalscholars@utah.edu. They can help to determine whether you are eligible for the AT STEM Extension. If eligible, they can help you with the application process. Please see the [Department of State website](#) for the eligibility criteria.