



Incidental Study for J-1 Scholars

What is Incidental Study?

Incidental Study is study that is **secondary** to an Exchange Visitor's (EV's) primary objective. J-1 Scholars (Research Scholars, Professors, Short-Term Scholars, Student Interns, and Specialists) are here primarily to teach or perform research. Although they are in a status designed for a purpose other than study, if authorized, they can engage in study that is incidental (secondary) to their program objective. Incidental study must be part-time and non-degree seeking.

General Guidelines for Incidental Study:

- As an EV, you are allowed to enroll in classes as long as the following conditions are met:
 - Enrollment is incidental (secondary) to your primary objective.
 - You continue to pursue your program objectives as listed on your DS-2019.
 - You are fulfilling the requirements of your J-1 visa category.
- If a program of study becomes your primary objective, your immigration status may be in jeopardy. It is a violation of your immigration status to enroll full-time in a degree-seeking program on a J-1 non-student visa. If you plan to pursue a degree, you should apply for a change of immigration status through USCIS or depart the U.S. and apply for a visa at a U.S. Consulate or Embassy in your home country that allows full-time study.

You are eligible for Incidental Study if:

- You are maintaining your current J-1 visa status.
- You are admitted to the University of Maine in a non-degree seeking program.
- You register for less than full-time study (11 credits for undergrad and 5 credits for graduate).
- You ensure that your study will not interfere with or delay your primary program objectives.

How to apply for Incidental Study:

Please submit [an email to umaineimmigration@maine.edu](mailto:umaineimmigration@maine.edu) with the subject line: Request for Incidental Study. [Include the following information in your email:](#)

- Course(s) you intend to enroll and the total credit hours
- Statement indicating that you understand that you will be enrolling as a non-degree student and that your J-1 scholar activities will remain your primary focus.

Please Note: This policy is for J-1 Scholars only (Research Scholar, Professor, Short-term Scholar, Student Intern, and Specialist).



Frequently Asked Questions:

1. Can I begin a program of study before receiving permission from ISSS?

No. Since engaging in a program of study can have an adverse impact on your immigration status, it is necessary to meet with a J-1 Scholar Advisor prior to enrollment to ensure that you will not violate your current immigration status.

2. Can I enroll in classes as a full-time, degree-seeking student?

No. Enrollment in a degree-seeking and/or full-time study program signifies a change in your primary objective.

3. How is it determined if study has become my primary objective for being in the U.S.?

Generally, if you register for full-time study or enroll in a degree-seeking program, your primary objective has changed. If your primary objective has changed, then your current J-1 category (Research Scholar, Professor, Short-Term Scholar, Student Intern, or Specialist) is no longer appropriate.

4. How long can I engage in incidental study while completing my primary objective of teaching or research?

You are allowed to engage in incidental study for the duration of your Exchange Visitor Program, as long as you continue to maintain status and follow the regulations of your J-1 visa category.

5. What if I want to change my primary objective and become a full-time degree-seeking student?

You may apply for a degree-seeking program through the appropriate Admissions office; if admitted to a degree-seeking program you must plan to change your immigration status, either by application through USCIS or by departure of the U.S. to apply for a visa at a U.S. Consulate or Embassy in your home country. For more information on a change of status, please schedule an appointment with a J-1 Scholar Advisor.

6. Can my dependent spouse and/or minor child enroll in classes?

Yes, your dependents can study full-time or part-time; however, spouses and children who derive their status from you as the J-1 primary may not remain in the U.S. beyond your program end date in order to continue a program of study. In most cases, children lose their derivative status at the age of 21 and must apply for a change of status to an F-1 or J-1 student visa if they wish to remain in the U.S. to continue their program of study.