

UW GME Visa Policy

- Scope:** Foreign national physicians who require visa sponsorship in order to participate in a clinical training program at the University of Washington. This includes all residents and fellows participating in ACGME-accredited training programs, and senior fellows/senior fellow trainees without a concurrent acting instructor title participating in non-ACGME-accredited training programs, and who require J-1 visa sponsorship.
- Policy:** Foreign nationals participating in clinical training programs who require visa sponsorship must obtain a J-1 visa sponsored through the Educational Commission for Foreign Medical Graduates (ECFMG). Trainees may be considered for, but are not assured of, H-1B visa sponsorship and only with prior approval from GME and UW International Scholars Operations (ISO)/Academic Human Resources (Academic HR). To be considered for H-1B sponsorship, the applicant must meet one of the following four exceptions:
1. Applicant is currently under UW H-1B sponsorship as faculty, or a resident or fellow in another UW program, or is currently under H-1B visa sponsorship applying for extension of H-1B status to continue in the same program.
 2. Applicant will be a U.S. medical school graduate and is currently in F-1 visa status
 3. Applicant is currently engaged in training at another institution in H-1B status, and will transfer to a UW residency or fellowship program
 4. Applicant has filed an adjustment of status with a current priority date
- Procedures:** Programs considering a foreign national applicant who will require visa sponsorship must contact the GME Office during the recruitment process to discuss their individual circumstances for visa eligibility.

J-1 Visa: The J-1, or Exchange Visitor visa, is a temporary non-immigrant visa sponsored by the ECFMG, and administered through its [Exchange Visitor Sponsorship Program](#), for foreign national physicians participating in graduate medical education training in the United States. The duration of participation for J-1 physicians in graduate medical education is the "time typically required" to complete the program, and duration is further limited to seven (7) years, provided that the J-1 physician is advancing in an approved program of graduate medical education or training. The J-1 visa holder is further obligated to return to their country of most recent legal permanent residence for at least two (2) years immediately following the completion of their training. See the [Selected Federal Regulations for J-1 Physicians for a list of key regulations for J-1 physicians participating in clinical training programs](#).

The Training Program Liaison (TPL) in the GME Office administers the J-1 visa sponsorship application process through the ECFMG for residents and fellows in accredited training programs, as well as senior fellows in non-ACGME fellowships.

- **Applications:** Applications for J-1 visa sponsorship are initiated with the ECFMG by the TPL, following receipt of a signed offer letter from the Program. Programs are advised to contact the TPL as soon as the offer has been accepted. Applications will be completed by the TPL and exchange visitor via the ECFMG's online application system; however, the GME Office requests that all application documentation be submitted directly to the TPL for review and submission to the ECFMG. It is ultimately the responsibility of the applicant and the training program to ensure the timely submission of required documents to the GME Office. The ECFMG does not

under any circumstances expedite review of any J-1 applications, regardless of applicant's program start date.

- **Processing Time:**
 - **ACGME Programs:** ECFMG reserves 4-6 weeks from the time all required documentation is received for review and processing. It is therefore recommended that at least three (3) months be allowed for processing the application.
 - **Non-ACGME Programs:** ECFMG reserves 6-8 weeks from the time all required documentation is received for review and processing. It is therefore recommended that at least four (4) months be allowed for processing. Applications for sponsorship in a non-ACGME program require documentation of American Board of Medical Specialties (ABMS) member board approval for the training, and review and approval of the program by the Graduate Medical Education Committee (GMEC) as an initial step in the application process.
 - **Appeals to the Department of State (DoS):** Applications for J-1 category changes, extensions in training beyond 7 years, and advisory opinions will take additional time for review by the ECFMG and DoS beyond the time allowed for standard applications, and may take up to six (6) months.
- **Fees:** Exchange Visitors are responsible for all application fees and other registration costs.

H-1B Visa: The H-1B, or Temporary Professional Worker visa, is a non-immigrant visa intended for employment purposes. In very rare circumstances, and only with advanced approval by the GME Office and UW International Scholars Operations (ISO)/Academic HR, may prospective trainees be considered for H-1B sponsorship by the UW while participating in a UW residency or clinical fellowship program.

Requests for H-1B visa sponsorship of a prospective resident or fellow are reviewed on a case-by-case basis and must be approved by the GME Office and ISO/Academic HR prior to ranking of the applicant in a national matching program or extending an offer for appointment to the applicant. UW H-1B visa sponsorship is not guaranteed for applicants who have already been accepted into a program without prior approval by the institution.

Refer to the Requests for Consideration of H-1B Visa Sponsorship: UW ACGME Residents and Fellows guidelines for requirements on submitting these requests.

UW H-1B visa sponsorship is only applicable for approved UW training program activities. Foreign national residents on an H-1B at UW may engage in moonlighting activities only if:

1. The foreign national maintains their full time appointment with UW.
2. The foreign national is able to obtain an appropriate – secondary – H-1B.

F-1 Student Visa: Foreign nationals who attended a US medical school on an F-1 visa may apply for a year of Optional Practical Training (OPT) through their medical school. Processing typically takes 3 months. The OPT year provides students sponsored on an F-1 visa with an opportunity for hands-on work experiences complementary to their academic field of study for up to 12-months. During this period the trainee will still be considered an F-1 student and will be issued an Employee Authorization Document (EAD) card. Prior to the end of 12-month OPT period, the trainee will need to apply for another type of visa in order to continue in the training program.

If an H-1B is to be expected following the year of OPT, the program must submit a request for consideration of H-1B sponsorship (as referenced above) prior to ranking/offering a position to a candidate.

Exclusions: Permanent Residence: The University will not provide sponsorship of permanent residence for foreign nationals in GME training programs under any circumstances.

Reporting and

Compliance: Programs are responsible for notifying the GME Office of any changes to a J-1 or H-1B resident/fellow appointment as soon as the planned change is identified in order to provide accurate reporting of visa status to the ECFMG, US Citizenship and Immigration (USCIS), and other government agencies, as applicable. This includes extended leave, adjustments to appointment end dates, and petitions for changes to visa status including approval of permanent residency.

Resources: [Educational Commission for Foreign Medical Graduates \(ECFMG\)](#)
[Exchange Visitor Sponsorship Program \(EVSP\)](#)
[UW H-1B Temporary Worker Resource Page](#)
[Requests for Consideration of H-1B Sponsorship](#)