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Human Resources: Student Exchange Visitor Information System (SEVIS)

What is SEVIS?

SEVIS is a web-based database mandated by federal laws and regulations to electronically monitor and report all foreign academic students (F-1 visa holders); technical or vocational students (M-1 visa holders); and exchange visitors, professors, researchers, etc. and their dependents (J-1 and J-2 visa holders) in the United States. WHOI sponsors J-1 and J-2 visas for Research Scholars and Short-term Scholars only. Every institution with foreign students and exchange visitors (J-1 and J-2 visa holders) must comply with this mandate of enrollment, reporting, updating personal information, and document generation by January 30, 2003. Once SEVIS is implemented, issuance of all Form DS-2019s through SEVIS is mandatory. The DS-2019 is the form issued to foreign nationals by Human Resources, which allows them to apply for their J-1 or J-2 visa. The new Form DS-2019, generated through SEVIS, will include a barcode for security, authentication, and identification purposes. When a Form DS-2019 is issued using SEVIS, the information will be accessible over a broad range of systems within INS and across agency boundaries.

**As SEVIS is a real-time, interactive system, no actions can be back-dated. This is why it is important that communications with Human Resources occur in a timely fashion. It is the only way to ensure data entry within time limits set by the government.

Who in Human Resources is responsible for maintaining SEVIS and issuing Form DS-2019s?

Ann K. Sweck, Responsible Officer/Employment Specialist and Tina Betti, Director of Human Resources & EEO Officer are the only WHOI employees authorized by the government to issue Form DS-2019s and to enter information into SEVIS on behalf of the Institution.

What if Human Resources has already issued a Form DS-2019 prior to SEVIS implementation?

Non-SEVIS Form DS-2019s will continue to be accepted for admission as long as the form was issued prior to January 30, 2003. DS-2019s that were issued to a J-1 prior to January 30, 2003 do not need a new form to travel and may continue to travel on this form with proper endorsement of the Foreign National Advisor until August 1, 2003. By August 1, 2003, Human Resources must enter information on all participants of the Exchange Visitor Program into SEVIS. When this information is entered, new DS-2019s will be generated and issued to all J-1 and J-2 visa holders who do not currently hold a SEVIS-generated DS-2019. This data will then be transmitted to the U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) (formerly known as the Bureau of Citizenship and Immigration Services and Immigration & Naturalization Service) and the Department of State. Various agencies will be able to access this information.

Are there any special changes effecting dependents of J-1 visa holders (J-2)?

On or after January 30, 2003, each dependent (J-2) must be issued a separate Form DS-2019 even if they are planning to enter the U.S. at the same time as the J-1 visa holder. DS-2019s that were issued to a J-2 prior to January 30, 2003 do not need a new form to travel and may continue to travel on this form with proper endorsement of the Foreign National Advisor until August 1, 2003.

What do exchange visitors (J-1 and J-2 visa holders) need to do upon their arrival to WHOI?

Foreign nationals must check-in with the Foreign National Advisor within 3 days of their arrival. We are required to report that an exchange visitor has begun his or her program participation as scheduled within 30 days. An exchange visitor who fails to check in with the Foreign National Advisor shall be terminated from the Exchange Visitor Program and their visa will be considered invalidated by USCIS.

What are the responsibilities of the foreign national and WHOI Sponsors for communicating with Human Resources?

It is now absolutely critical for foreign nationals and WHOI Sponsors of foreign nationals to be timely in their communications with Human Resources regarding appointment information and/or changes in personal information, etc. Visa processing times have increased significantly. If a WHOI department needs J-1 visa arrangements for a foreign national, they should notify Human Resources at least one month in advance. Other types of visas may require longer processing times. Departments and foreign nationals must plan accordingly.

A change in Personal Information (Including Address and Telephone Changes):

Exchange visitors (J-1 and J-2 visa holders) must contact the Foreign National Advisor within 10 days when they have a change of address, telephone number, etc. Such changes are required to be entered into SEVIS. Foreign nationals, other than J-1 or J-2 visa holders, are required to notify the USCIS on Form AR-11 within 10 days of changing their address. This form can be obtained at: http://www.uscis.gov/graphics/howdoi/address.htm. These foreign nationals must also notify the Foreign National Advisor within 10 days of the change in address.

What if J-1 visa holders need an extension of their visa?

The request for an extension must be requested, and if approved, issued before the current DS-2019 expires. Again, timely communication with the Foreign National Advisor is critical in these instances.

Who should I contact if I have any questions regarding this information or any other immigration-related issues?

Ann K. Sweck/Responsible Officer, is available to provide guidance and advice in this area. You can reach her at fna@whoi.edu or by calling ext. 2704.

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