Visiting Scholar Program Information  
Calvin Theological Seminary  

Calvin Theological Seminary is pleased to offer a Visiting Scholar Program to professors and pastors who would like to spend a study leave of one or more months on the Calvin Seminary campus. Calvin Seminary neither charges, nor provides financial assistance to, visiting scholars for participation in the program.

Visiting scholars from outside the United States should begin the application process for the Visiting Scholar Program no earlier than six months prior to their anticipated arrival in the United States by submitting a one-page Statement of Purpose to the Dean of International Student and Scholar Services, Sarah Chun (sc038@calvinseminary.edu). The Statement of Purpose should include your official name, birthdate, nationality, exact dates you plan to be in the United States, and a brief description of the research you expect to be engaged in during the time you are at Calvin Seminary.

The approval process is as follows:
1. Once Calvin Seminary has received your one-page Statement of Purpose, the Dean of International Student and Scholar Services issues a letter of invitation that contains your name, birthdate, nationality, and the exact dates that you plan to be in the United States.
2. Calvin Seminary then asks you to fill out and return a Declaration of Finances form. The Declaration of Finances form is available online at https://semlink.calvinseminary.edu/student-life/international-students/international-student-forms/ and must be completed and returned no later than two months prior to your intended arrival in the United States.
3. If everything is in order, Calvin Seminary will provide the documentation you need to present to a U.S. consulate or embassy abroad in order to enter the United States as a visiting scholar on a J-1 Visa.

Calvin Seminary also accepts visiting scholars from the United States. Interested persons should submit a one-page statement of purpose to the Dean of International Student and Scholar Services, Sarah Chun (sc038@calvinseminary.edu).

Important Additional Information:
1. Calvin Seminary typically provides a visiting scholar with a study carrel in the Hekman Library of Calvin College and Seminary. For that purpose we encourage the visiting scholar to be in touch with the seminary’s theological librarian, Paul Fields (pfields@calvin.edu).
2. Visiting scholars may attend one course per academic term as a visitor (not for credit) during their time at Calvin Seminary. Typically, the visiting scholar contacts the Registrar, who gains the permission of the instructor before the visiting scholar attends any classes.
3. Ordinarily, CTS is not able to provide housing for visiting scholars, since seminary housing is typically reserved for seminary students. It is possible, however, and it does
happen occasionally, that an unfurnished student apartment is available and that the Housing Office allows a visiting scholar to rent that apartment. To find out if this is a possibility, the visiting scholar should contact the Housing Director, Mr. Tim Bruinsma, at housing@calvinseminary.edu. If no such apartment is available, the visiting scholar can often find off-campus housing reasonably close to the seminary. Many visiting scholars from South Korea have sought the services of the President of the Korean Student Association to help them find housing in the neighborhood – with good results. The name and email address of the KSA president is available upon request from the International Student Office.

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WHAT IS A “RESEARCH SCHOLAR”?  

The Department of Homeland Security states that a research scholar is “an individual primarily conducting research, observing, or consulting in connection with a research project at research institutions, corporate research facilities, museums, libraries, post-secondary accredited educational institutions, or similar types of institutions. The research scholar may also teach or lecture, unless disallowed by the sponsor.”

Research scholars cannot be a candidate for a tenure track position at Calvin Seminary.

CHECKLIST FOR ENTERING THE UNITED STATES AS A J-1 RESEARCH SCHOLAR

1. A valid (unexpired) passport with at least 6 months left before expiration.
2. Form DS-2019 issued by the school (Canadians must show Form DS-2019 at the port of entry to obtain J-1 status).
3. A J-1 visa issued by a U.S. Consulate (except for Canadians who do not need visa stamps to enter the United States).
4. A receipt that you have paid the $220 SEVIS fee.
5. Research scholars are expected to have appropriate academic or similar credentials.

CHECKLIST FOR MAINTAINING J-1 RESEARCH SCHOLAR STATUS

1. The SEVIS record must be validated no later than 30 days after the program start date.
2. Maintain a: 
   - valid DS-2019 
   - valid passport with 6 months left before it expires 
   - copy of the I-94 (can be accessed at www.cbp.gov/I94)
3. Unauthorized employment is a violation of program status. The scholar’s participation in the J program is subject to termination when the scholar engages in unauthorized employment.
4. Show proof of health insurance for the scholar and all family members for the entire stay in the United States. The law requires the following minimum coverage: 
   - medical benefits of at least $100,000 per accident or illness;
   - repatriation of remains in the amount of $25,000;
   - expenses associated with medical evacuation of the exchange visitor to his or her home country in the amount of $50,000; and
   - a deductible not to exceed $500 per accident or illness
5. Notify DHS of any change in residence within TEN days by completing Form AR-11. The AR-11 form can be picked up from the International Student Adviser’s office or it may be completed online at https://egov.uscis.gov/crisgwii/go?action=coa. Please bring a copy of the completed form to the International Student’s Office for our records.
6. J-2 dependents must apply for and obtain an Employment Authorization Document (EAD) before beginning employment. It normally takes several months to obtain this authorization. J-2 dependents, unlike J-1 students, are subject to Social Security taxes and federal and state income taxes.

7. Have a permanent address in the scholar’s home country.

8. Have the Responsible Officer (RO) or the Alternate Responsible Officer (ARO) sign your Form DS-2019 before you leave the United States and re-enter. (To be absolutely sure the endorsement is recent enough, make certain it will be no more than 6 months old the Scholar leaves the United States.)

**EMPLOYMENT**

1. Research scholars shall conduct their exchange activity at the location listed on the Form DS-2019 which could be at the location of the exchange visitor sponsor or the site of a third party facilitating the exchange.

2. Research scholars may participate in occasional lectures and short-term consultations, unless disallowed by the sponsor. Such lectures and consultations must be incidental to the exchange visitor’s primary program activities. They must be directly related to the objectives of the participant’s program and must not delay its completion date.

   These lectures or consultations must be approved in advance and in writing by the RO, and all such sites of activity must be entered into SEVIS.

   If wages or other remuneration are involved, the exchange visitor must present to the RO:

   a. a letter from the offeror setting forth the terms and conditions of the offer to lecture or consult, including the duration, number of hours, field or subject, amount of compensation, and description of such activity.

   b. a letter from his or her department head or supervisor recommending such activity and explaining how it would enhance the exchange visitor’s program.

   The RO must review these letters and make a written determination whether such activity is warranted.

   This letter from the RO confirming that the activity meets the requirements will serve as authorization of this employment for the exchange visitor’s and the employer’s records. No Form I-9 should be required of the exchange visitor by the outside employer, because the visitor is acting as an independent contractor. (The term “independent contractor” is used for I-9 tax purposes.)

**ENROLLING IN CLASSES**

Visiting scholars may attend one class per academic term as a visitor during their time at CTS. The visiting scholar contacts Joan Beelen, the Registrar, who gains the permission of the instructor before a visiting scholar attends any classes. If enrollment in classes or a degree program becomes the primary objective, J-1 status as a research scholar is no longer appropriate.
It is important that the research scholar continues to pursue the objectives for which he or she came.

**LIMITATIONS AND EXTENSION OF STAY: FIVE-YEAR MAXIMUM, THREE-WEEK MINIMUM**

The minimum program duration for a Research Scholar is three weeks.

A Research Scholar may be authorized to participate in the Exchange Visitor Program for the length of time necessary to complete his or her program, provided such time does not exceed five years.

The five-year period is not an aggregate of five years. It is a continuous five-year period given to a participant on a “use or lose” basis. The five-year period begins on the program begin date identified in SEVIS at the time the SEVIS record is validated.

This establishes a fixed five-year eligibility window, during which a Research Scholar can participate in one or more programs. The maximum of five years as a Research Scholar is counted continuously during any uninterrupted stay, regardless of how many programs the visitor participates in, or for how long he or she actually participates in them.

Within the five-year window of eligibility, transfers and extensions are possible and must occur before the program end date.

Research scholars are not eligible for repeat participation as a research scholar for a period of two years following the completion of the five-year period. This two-year bar does not affect eligibility for other J categories such as short-term scholar or J student.

**TWELVE-MONTH BAR AFTER PREVIOUS J PARTICPATION**

You may only be selected for participation as a research scholar if:

1. You have not been physically present in the United States as a nonimmigrant for all or part of the twelve month period immediately preceding the date of the program commencement set forth on your DS-2019 unless:
   a. you were in the USA less than six months; or
   b. you were previously here as a short-term scholar; or
   c. you are transferring from another J-visa sponsor’s program to the CTS program.

2. Only time spent in any J status, including J-2 dependents status, counts towards the twelve-month bar calculation.

**TWENTY-FOUR–MONTH BAR ON REPEAT PARTICIPATION**

An individual who participates in the Exchange Visitor Program as Research Scholar becomes subject to a twenty-four-month bar on “repeat participation” in those categories after completing his or her program. Under Department of State interpretation, the twenty-four month bar applies under two circumstances:
1. If the Research Scholar completes a full five years of program participation with one or more sponsors, or

2. If, before the full five-year period is over, the Research Scholar completes his or her program. In this case, the continuity of the five-year period is broken, the five-year window is “closed,” the individual is not eligible to access the remaining unused time, and the individual must wait for two years before beginning a new program as a J Research Scholar.

**J-2 DEPENDENTS**

**Employment**

J-2 dependents are permitted to apply for an Employment Authorization Document (EAD) from United States Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) in order to be employed in the USA. The J-2 may begin employment only AFTER receiving the EAD card.

J-2 dependents are eligible to apply to USCIS for employment authorization so long as the employment is not for the purpose of supporting the J-1:

“Income from the spouse’s or dependent’s employment may be used to support the family’s customary recreational and cultural activities and related travel, among other things. Employment will not be authorized if this income is needed to support the J-1 principal alien.”

**Application Procedure**

Application materials for an EAD (Form I-765) can be picked up in the International Student Office or on the U.S. Citizenship and Immigration (USCIS) website at [www.uscis.gov](http://www.uscis.gov). (At the top of the screen click on Immigration Forms and scroll down to I-765. You can print a hard copy, complete it, and send it in, or you can follow the instructions for filing electronically.)

**Documentation and Length of Employment Authorization**

If permission for employment is granted, an EAD is issued and is valid for any kind of full-time or part-time employment for the period of time stated on the EAD.

USCIS practice is to limit issuance of all EADs to no more than 1 year. In any case, the J-2’s employment authorization may NOT exceed the program duration indicated on the J-1’s DS-2019. In addition, the J-2 employment authorization is valid only if the J-1 is maintaining status.

**Extending J-2 Employment Authorization**

A J-2 must file Form I-765 with all supporting documents each time an extension of employment authorization is necessary. Since the EAD cannot be issued for longer than the validity of the DS-2019, any necessary extension of stay of the J-1 must be processed prior to the application for extension of J-2 employment authorization.
In order to avoid interruptions in J-2 employment authorization, it is important to file Form I-765 for extension sufficiently in advance so that the extension application is approved before the expiration of the current EAD. It takes about 2 months for EAD applications to be adjudicated. The J-2’s employment authorization expires with the expiration of your EAD, and the mere filing of an application of new authorization does not permit the J-2 dependent to work during the adjudication process. If the EAD expires, the J-2 dependent must quit working until the new EAD is approved.

**Social Security and Other Taxes**

J-2 dependents are subject to Social Security taxes. They are also subject to federal income taxes, and where applicable, state income taxes.

**Obtaining a Social Security Number**

A J-2 dependent will not be able to obtain a Social Security Number unless they are in possession of an EAD.

**Study in J-2 Status**

As of July 2014 there is some confusion as to whether J-2s can pursue a course of study without first changing their status. Until this is resolved there is no restriction on study for J-2 dependents.

**TRAVEL ABROAD AND REENTRY**

Both the J-1 and J-2s may travel outside the USA for a temporary visit. To reenter the country proper documentation is needed:

1. A valid passport valid for 6 or more months and a valid visa.

2. A valid SEVIS Form DS-2019, properly endorsed for travel by the RO/ARO. This must be done at least a few days before you leave because there are times when the RO/ARO are out of the office. The Research Scholar will not be allowed to reenter the USA if the DS-2019 is not endorsed. It should be done at least once a year and preferably every half year.

**TWO-YEAR HOME RESIDENCY REQUIREMENT – REGULATION INA 212(e)**

The exchange visitor and his or her dependents are subject to the two-year home country physical presence requirement if either of these conditions apply:

- If the exchange visitor’s participation in the Calvin Seminary exchange program was financed directly or indirectly by the US government or a foreign government for the purpose of exchange; or

- If the skills that the exchange visitor is coming to develop or exercise are in a field which the exchange visitor’s “home” government requested be included on the State Department’s skills list.

This requirement is noted on the DS-2019 on the second page of the DS-2019.
The statute requires exchange visitors who are subject to the two-year home residence requirement to return to their home countries and be physically present for an aggregate of two years before being eligible to return to the US in immigrant (permanent resident/green card) status, H status (temporary workers & dependents), or L status (intracompany transferees and dependents.)

Note: Canadians are exempt from this requirement.

**DEADLINES OUR OFFICE MUST MEET IN SEVIS**

The International Student Office must validate the Research Scholar in SEVIS within 30 days of the start date on the DS-2019. To validate the record in SEVIS a current address is necessary. Also, if the Research Scholar moves to another address, he or she must complete an AR-11 form **within 10 days of the move**. Please bring a copy of the completed AR-11 form to the International Student’s Office.

The AR-11 Form can be picked up in the International Student Office or on the USCIS website at [www.uscis.gov](http://www.uscis.gov). (At the top of the screen click on Immigration Forms and scroll down to the first form on the list – AR-11.) If the form is completed online, the scholar must provide a copy to International Student Office so it can be filed and the SEVIS record updated.

Questions about immigration matters, should be directed to Sarah Chun at 616-957-6015, or by fax at 616-957-6102, or by e-mail at sc038@calvinseminary.edu.