

Ask the U.S. Embassy

April 10, 2013

I am a university student, and I would like to participate in the Summer Work Travel program in the United States this summer. How do I apply for a visa for this program?

The J-1 Summer Work Travel program offers post-secondary students an opportunity to experience U.S. culture and gain work experience during the summer holiday. This program is open to students who are attending a college or university accredited in Jamaica and who have completed at least one semester of post-secondary studies.

Before applying for a J-1 visa, students must first obtain an employment offer from a participating U.S. company. A list of participating sponsors is available online at <http://j1visa.state.gov/programs/summer-work-travel>.

After receiving their job offers, students should schedule appointments to visit the U.S. Embassy to apply for a J-1 visa. Instructions for scheduling a nonimmigrant visa are available on the Embassy's website, <http://kingston.usembassy.gov>. In many cases, sponsors will assist students with scheduling an appointment. Students must gather the following documentation before their appointments: the DS-2019 form provided by the employer, proof of health insurance that is valid in the United States, and a school transcript. Students must also pay the Student & Exchange Visitor Information System (SEVIS) fee online at <https://www.fmjfee.com/i901fee/index.jsp> or at Western Union.

On the day of the visa interview, students should be prepared to clearly discuss their studies, their summer plans, and their ties to Jamaica. Most students are qualified to receive a J-1 visa. However, students who fail to demonstrate that they are invested in their studies and their life in Jamaica will not meet the legal qualifications to receive a J-1 visa.

The Consular Section encourages J-1 program participants to schedule their visa appointments as soon as possible after gathering all required documentation. Visa processing typically takes approximately one week, and emergency appointments will not be granted to students who fail to properly plan ahead.

