Evidence of Residence Abroad

The consular officer may not issue a J-1 visa unless satisfied that the applicant:

1. has a residence abroad,
2. has no intention of abandoning that residence, and
3. intends to depart from the United States upon completion of the exchange program.

Applicants generally establish their ties abroad by presenting evidence of economic, social, and/or family ties in their homeland sufficient to induce them to leave the United States upon completion of their program. Being subject to the two-year foreign residency requirement will not in itself convince a consular officer that an applicant intends to return to the residency abroad.

Evidence of English Proficiency

The consular officer must also determine if the applicant has sufficient knowledge of English language to participate in the particular program. The officer must conduct the visa interview in English and may require the applicant to read aloud from an English-language book, periodical, or newspaper, and to restate in English in the applicant’s own words what was read.

In the event that the applicant’s language proficiency appears marginal, the officer may refer the applicant for language testing. Tests for this purpose will ordinarily be carried out by appropriate local groups, such as qualified host-country facilities. If the latter are used, the consular officer should be satisfied that the testing standards are sufficiently strict. However, if the local situation requires the consular officer to determine the language proficiency of applicants, materials such as the Test of English Language Proficiency (TEPL) may be available at the post. If not, they may be requested from the U.S. Department of State, through the post’s Public Affairs Officer.

Determining Financial Status

The phrase “sufficient funds to cover expenses” referred to in 22 CFR (9 FAM) 41.61(b)(2) means the applicant must establish the unlikelihood of either becoming a public charge or of resorting to unauthorized U.S. employment for financial support. An applicant must provide documentary evidence that sufficient funds are, or will be, available to defray all expenses during the entire period of stay. The consular officer must require credible documentary evidence that the applicant has enough readily available funds to meet all expenses for the length of the program.

Review of SEVIS Information

The consular officer will verify that the DS-2019 was issued through SEVIS by checking the SEVIS data that appears in the consular office’s database. The officer will also verify that the exchange visitor paid the SEVIS fee.

If you receive financial assistance from the university, please be advised that no money can be disbursed before you get a federal Social Security number, and this normally takes approximately three weeks. Thus, you should bring with you enough money to cover your expenses for your immediate needs for the first month. A good estimate would be 3,000 United States dollars.