ACADEMIC TRAINING (AT)

OVERVIEW

WHAT IS ACADEMIC TRAINING (AT)?

Academic Training (AT) is an employment authorization program that allows **J-1 international students** to gain practical experience in their field of study.

AT can be requested for an internship, practicum, cooperative education program, and other training-related employment.

The total time available for AT is 18 months, or a period equal to the length of the student's program of study, whichever is less. For instance, J-1 bachelors and master's students in non-STEM fields cannot exceed a cumulative of 18 months total of AT before and after graduation.

- ☐ **Doctoral students** in any major field whose degrees have been conferred are eligible for an additional 18 months of academic training totaling 36-months of AT, or the period of their full course of study in the United States, whichever is less. (22 CFR 62.23(f)(4))

- ☐ **J-1 non-degree students** attending MSU on an exchange program through the American Semester Program (ASP) must complete one academic semester at MSU to be eligible for academic training. J-1 non-degree students are eligible for AT equal to the length of their program of study. However, they are not eligible to apply for the special STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics) academic training extension.

IMPORTANT THINGS TO CONSIDER BEFORE APPLYING FOR AT:

- ✳ **Academic training cannot be fully remote.** Per the US Department of State, in-person engagement must be at least 60% per week of their total engagement (e.g. 3 days per work week).

- ✳ **AT approved prior to the completion of the program of study will reduce the number of AT months available after graduation.** Example: If you are eligible for up to 18 total months of AT and use 6 months of AT for internships before graduation, then you have 12 months of AT remaining to use after graduation.

- ✳ **Both part-time and full-time AT authorization count the same as the total academic training time.** If you requested part-time AT during summer for two months, two months of AT will be reduced from your total AT. Example: If you requested part-time AT during the summer for two months, that reduces your remaining AT eligibility by two months.

- ✳ **AT eligibility for degree-seeking students is cumulative across multiple degree levels**. If you earn more than one degree at more than one degree level, your total AT eligibility is 18 months across all degrees. Students completing a doctoral degree gain an additional 18 months of AT eligibility upon conferral of the doctoral degree.

WHEN CAN I ENGAGE IN AT?

Pre-completion AT:

- ☐ Complete at least one full-time semester at MSU before requesting AT.
- ☐ Can be requested during a student's program of study and before completing their degree.
- ☐ Can be paid or unpaid.
- ☐ Can be requested as part-time (1-20 hours per week). However, part-time AT counts toward the 18 or 36-month limit as full-time employment.
- ☐ Students should exercise caution when applying for a full-time AT during academic semesters unless the AT is supported by the academic or faculty advisor or is a mandatory program component of their degree. Students should meet with an OISS J-1 advisor before requesting a full-time AT during an academic semester (spring or fall semesters).
- ☐ During academic semesters full-time enrollment is required.
- ☐ If a student only needs to be enrolled in a less than full-time course load to complete their degree and wants to apply for AT, a Reduced Course Load (RCL) request through the MyOISS portal is needed.
- ☐ Graduate students who have an assistantship *may* be able to apply for AT to work on-campus for nine additional hours if the student meets the AT eligibility criteria.
- ☐ Students *may* be able to maintain J-1 status with AT authorization and no course enrollment during an academic semester. Please contact a J-1 advisor for more details.

Post-completion AT:

- ☐ Start date must be within 30 days from the date the degree or program requirements have been completed. Note that enrollment is typically required until the date of program completion. Master's students with a thesis requirement and doctoral students should contact a J-1 advisor for more details about enrollment requirements at the end of your degree program.
- ☐ Can be paid or unpaid. If an unpaid AT request is submitted, the student will need to provide additional proof of funds for the duration of the AT. Refer to this page for funding requirements.
- ☐ A minimum of 20 hours per week is required.
- ☐ AT requests must be submitted a minimum of 8-10 business days prior to the DS-2019 end date.
- ☐ AT must be authorized before the DS-2019 end date.
- ☐ AT must be authorized before any travel is taken outside the U.S.
- ☐ Students who have graduated and departed the country cannot return to the U.S. to apply for post-completion AT, even if the DS-2019 dates are still valid.

ELIGIBILITY

WHAT DETERMINES ELIGIBILITY FOR ACADEMIC TRAINING?

- ☐ Must have a job offer letter from an employer or training hat is integrally or critically related to the student's major field of study.
- ☐ AT must prioritize academic objectives. Such objectives must not be driven by the labor needs of a host organization (*the host organization is the site of activity at which the J-1 student will conduct the academic training*). Students may not perform unskilled labor that does not align with their education.
- ☐ Must be in good academic standing and have an unexpired DS-2019 Form.
- ☐ Must meet with academic or faculty advisor to discuss how the AT is integral to the student's curriculum.

HOW TO APPLY

Note: Before students can engage in AT, they must receive an ***AT work authorization letter*** and an ***updated DS-2019*** from OISS. These documents will be provided once the AT application is reviewed and approved.

AT requests must be submitted in the MyOISS portal at least 8-10 business days before the desired AT start date.

SUBMIT THE AT REQUEST IN MYOISS:

- ☐ Go to MyOISS portal
- ☐ Select J-1 Student Services
- ☐ Select J-1 Academic Training Application > Start a new request
- ☐ The e-form is divided into **three sections**: *AT Attestations and Insurance Information*, *AT Biographical Uploads and Address Verification*, and *Application and Recommendation for AT Authorization*:

1 SECTION 1: AT ATTESTATIONS AND INSURANCE INFORMATION

In this section, you will provide information about any previous AT positions and health insurance information.

If your employer will provide you with health insurance, please provide the name of the insurance company. If your employer will not provide you with health insurance, you can purchase MSU Student Health Insurance Program (SHIP) coverage. Click here for more information.

If the AT will be unpaid, you will be required to upload personal bank statements in this section to meet minimum funding requirements.

2 SECTION 2: AT BIOGRAPHICAL UPLOADS AND ADDRESS VERIFICATION

In this section, you will upload a copy of your passport biographical page and your most recent I-94 and provide your current physical address and phone number.

3 SECTION 3: APPLICATION AND RECOMMENDATION FOR AT AUTHORIZATION

In this section, you will provide:

- ☐ Site of Activity (location of employment),
- ☐ Supervisor Information,
- ☐ AT details (such as employment letter and Third-Party Host Agreement - see below), and
- ☐ Academic/Faculty Advisor name and email address

Your *employment letter* must include the following:

- ☐ Written on the company's letterhead
- ☐ Position title
- ☐ Start and end dates of the training
- ☐ Wage/salary (*noted if an unpaid position*)
- ☐ Hours per week
- ☐ A brief job description
- ☐ Location of employment (*specific site location where the AT will take place*)
- ☐ Must be signed by hand or with electronic or digital signature

Letters missing information will ***not*** be accepted.

Share with your employer the OISS website to review their responsibilities as a host of your AT and have them sign the *Third-Party Host Agreement* (*unless the employer is MSU*).

HOW TO APPLY CONTINUED

Upon submission of the AT request, your Academic/Faculty Advisor will receive an email with a temporary link to MyOISS to review your AT application.

After your Academic/Faculty Advisor completes their section, the AT request will be routed to a J-1 OISS Advisor for review. Upon completion of the review and approval, OISS will send you an updated DS-2019, listing the AT information, and an AT Work Authorization Letter via MyOISS.

Please Note: If you are close to the end of your academic program and wish to extend your DS-2019 with AT, the AT request must be submitted and approved before the end-date of your current DS-2019 Form. Please note that OISS requires 8-10 business days to process an AT application.

Please schedule an appointment with a J-1 advisor to talk about the details of your application

REQUIREMENTS DURING AT

IN-PERSON REQUIREMENT:

AT must be in-person or hybrid with no more than 2 days of remote work per week.

HEALTH INSURANCE:

Students must have health insurance coverage during academic training.

Students who request Pre-completion AT will maintain their student health insurance while they are enrolled in classes.

Graduated students who are receiving Health Insurance as a benefit of their employment must make sure the employer's health insurance meets minimum health insurance requirements stated by federal regulations, which can be found online at 22 CFR 62.14

Most US employer health insurance policies lack Medical Evacuation and Repatriation coverage, which are both required by J-1 regulations. It is possible to buy this coverage separately. Contact ihealth@msu.edu for assistance.

Most US employer health insurance policies have a deductible that is larger than the $500 limitation in the J-1 regulations. **If your employer policy has a deductible larger than $500, it is NOT compliant.** You can still use this policy, but you must also have a second health insurance policy with a deductible of $500 or less. Contact ihealth@msu.edu for assistance.

You are eligible to continue to purchase coverage from the MSU Student Health Insurance Program (SHIP) during your J-1 Academic Training. Refer to this website and learn more about how to purchase health insurance from MSU. You may also contact ihealth@msu.edu for more information.

SOCIAL SECURITY NUMBER:

When beginning a paid employment authorization with AT, you must apply for a social security number if you do not already have one. Click here for more information on how to apply for an SSN card.

EXTENDING CURRENT AT:

If you are eligible for an AT extension, a new AT application is required and must be submitted a minimum of 8-10 days prior to the end-date of the current AT.

REPORTING CHANGES IN EMPLOYMENT:

Changes to your current Academic Training Plan could include:

- ☐ Change in working hours (part-time versus full-time)
- ☐ Change in job title
- ☐ Change in job description/duties
- ☐ Change in work location address
- ☐ Change in supervisor information

Submit a new AT request if you are changing employers.

The new AT request must have a start date within 30 days from the last day of the previous AT if you are not enrolled in full-time classes at the time your AT segment ends.

REQUIREMENTS DURING AT CONTINUED...

CHANGING YOUR RESIDENTIAL ADDRESS:

You must report all changes in personal information within 10 days of the change. Update your address and/or phone number at student.msu.edu

TRAVEL:

If traveling internationally, you must request a Travel Signature for your DS-2019. Submit the request in the MyOISS portal, under the J-1 Student Services link.

To re-enter the U.S., you will need the following documents:

- ☐ A valid passport (six-months into the future)
- ☐ A valid J-1 visa stamp
- ☐ An unexpired DS-2019 with a travel signature and AT authorization
- ☐ An AT job offer letter

If you are not enrolled in full-time classes and you plan to travel after the completion of your current AT, you will not be allowed to enter the U.S. unless you submit and obtain approval of a new AT before your departure, (if eligible).

If your AT has ended and you are not enrolled for full-time classes, you cannot exit and re-enter the U.S. in J-1 status, even if the DS-2019 still appears valid.

Important: Do ***not*** attempt to reenter the United States on a B visa or visa waiver. Doing so automatically ends your J-1 status, and you forfeit your AT work authorization.

ENDING ACADEMIC TRAINING

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You must notify OISS of any changes to your J-1 status that would result in the end of your academic training. These changes may be:

- ☐ Changing of Visa Status
- ☐ Changing to a New Education Level
- ☐ Permanent Departure

Please complete and submit a Notice of Departure form through the MyOISS portal.

COMPLETING TRAINING EVALUATIONS:

You must submit an Academic Training evaluation before the completion of the AT. You may submit any evaluation provided by your employers such as an internal form or letter, or you may use the OISS AT Evaluation template.

GRACE PERIOD:

There is a **30-day grace period upon completion of your J-1 academic program**. During this time, you may stay in the U.S. for leisure purposes. **You are not permitted to work**.

Please submit a **Notice of Departure** form in the MyOISS portal to notify OISS about your US departure plans.

If you plan to leave the United States after completing your program of study and reenter the US for AT, **you must obtain AT employment authorization before you leave**.

If you do not take action to extend your J-1 program or change status, you must exit the US before the end of the grace period.