

Visa Options for International Associates

The following information clarifies which U.S. visas may be used by NRC Research Associates during tenure. Any questions not answered here should be directed to the Visa Officer.

Due to the status of NRC Research Associates as guest researchers who are not employees of the National Academies or the host federal laboratories, **Research Associates may not hold H-1B, O-1, L-1, TN, or other such employment- based visas during their tenure.**

The following visa classes are acceptable for non-U.S. Research Associates, depending on the specific requirements of the participating host federal laboratory:

- J-1 research scholar or J-1 short term scholar
- J-1 student approved for postdoctoral academic training (AT)
- J-2 dependent spouse with employment authorization
- L-2 dependent spouse with employment authorization
- U.S. lawful permanent resident (immigrant visa)
- Pending U.S. permanent resident with employment authorization
- F-1 student authorized for post-completion optional practical training (OPT)
- Asylee or refugee, or applicants for asylee or refugee status

J-1 Visas

J-1 research scholars are sponsored by the National Academy of Sciences (NAS) through SEVIS (Student and Exchange Visitor Information System). Research scholars are allowed a maximum stay of **60 months** in J-1 status.

Eligibility: Current J-1 research scholars in the U.S. may transfer their sponsorship to the NAS for tenure of their award. Persons living outside the United States are eligible to apply for a J-1 visa at a U.S. embassy or consulate. If they previously held a J-1 or J-2 visa, there are certain conditions that may affect when they can qualify for a new J-1 program.

Requirements: Many J-1 exchange visitors and their families are required to return to their home country or country of legal residence for at least two years after completing their J-1 program before changing to certain other visa statuses. It is possible to apply for a waiver of that requirement. All J-1 visa holders are required to hold certain levels of health insurance for themselves and each member of their family, and to engage in cross-cultural and educational activities outside the laboratory. J-1 research scholars may be subject to a 12- or 24-month bar following a previous J-1 program before beginning tenure as an Associate.

J-1 short-term scholars are usually more senior researchers, observers, or consultants sponsored by the NAS who come to the U.S. for occasional visits for a maximum stay of **6 months**. Short term scholars are also required to hold prescribed levels of health insurance during their stay and to pursue cross-cultural experiences. They are not subject to the 12- or 24-month bar but may be subject to the two-year home-country physical presence requirement.

J-1 students on academic training are sponsored by their U.S. academic institution. With the written approval of the university's international office and an updated Form DS-2019, J-1 students may stay for up to 36 months for postdoctoral research and/or employment in the field of their degree discipline.

J-2 and L-2 Visas

J-2 exchange visitor spouses may hold an NRC Research Associateship if they have an employment authorization document (EAD) from the U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS). Time available for the Associateship is limited to the time available in their spouse's J-1 status.

L-2 intracompany transferee spouses may hold an Associateship if they have work authorization. Details similar to the J-2 section above.

Permanent Residents

U.S. lawful permanent residents hold a Resident Alien Card ("green card") and/or an I-551 stamp in their passport. They must provide a copy of the Resident Alien Card or the I-551 stamp to the NRC before they begin their tenure at the laboratory. The Academies does not sponsor green cards on behalf of NRC Research Associates.

Pending U.S. permanent residents waiting for adjustment to lawful permanent resident status are eligible if they hold an EAD (Employment Authorization Document). They are authorized to work or receive a fellowship stipend in the United States until lawful permanent resident status is approved by USCIS and are eligible for NRC Research Associateship tenure.

F-1 Visas

F-1 students who have graduated from U.S. universities may begin tenure if they hold an Employment Authorization Document (EAD) issued by USCIS for **post-completion optional practical training (OPT)** in their academic discipline. Authorization to work or receive a stipend is limited to 12 months and is non-renewable.

Please note that the 24-month STEM extension of OPT does not apply to NRC Research Associates because they are not employed while on tenure.

Asylees and Refugees

Asylees and refugees, and pending asylees and refugees, who hold an Employment Authorization Document (EAD) may participate in the NRC Research Associateship Program. In some cases, refugees may begin tenure on the basis of the notation on their I-94 Arrival-Departure Card until an EAD is obtained.

For any immigration questions in connection with the NRC Research Associateship Programs, please contact:

Peggy Wilson
Visa Officer, Fellowships Office
Tel: 202.334.2762 | Email: pwilson@nas.edu