

Intern Work and Travel Programme: 12 month US visa for Irish graduates



January 2018

What is the 'Intern Work and Travel Programme'?

The Intern Work and Travel (IWT) Programme is a scheme that allows Irish and US **students and recent graduates** to participate in internships and travel in each other's countries for a period of **up to twelve months**.

The scheme allows Irish citizens who are eligible for the programme to enter the US on J-1 Exchange Visitor visas and to live and work in any part of the US for up to 12 months.

Who can apply?

The Intern Work and Travel Programme is available to current post-secondary level students and recent graduates only.

To be eligible for the programme you must meet all of the following criteria:

- You must be a **citizen of Ireland**.
- You must either be **currently enrolled and participating in a post-secondary college or university course, or you must have recently graduated** from such a course (within 12 months of the start date of the proposed internship).
- The course you are doing, or that you recently graduated from, can be full-time or part-time, but it must lead to a degree or other qualification that is recognised as equivalent to **Level VI or higher on the National Framework of Qualifications Ireland**.

What other conditions and requirements apply?

- You do not need to have a job or internship lined up before you travel to the USA. **The job or internship you take up must be related to your field of study**, and it must be for a **minimum of 32 hours per week**.
- You **cannot work in unskilled or casual labour positions, or in positions that require or involve childcare, elder care** or any kind of position that involves **medical patient care or contact** and the **internship must not require more than 20 percent clerical or office support**.
- You **cannot hold any other employment** apart from your internship while you are in the US. As a participant in this programme you are not allowed to take up another part-time position, such as bar work or waitressing to subsidise your living costs. This applies even if the job or internship related to your study is unpaid.
- You must have **travel or health insurance** in place by the time you enter the US that meets the specific requirements of the US State Department. You should check these requirements with your sponsoring organisation.
- You must be able to provide **proof of sufficient financial resources** to support yourself while looking for a job, throughout the exchange visitor program, and to get home.
- You **must not be accompanied by your spouse or other dependents**.

How do I apply?

The programme is open for applications all year round. If you are an Irish citizen who wishes to travel to the US under this Programme, there are **two main steps** involved in the application process.

1. Apply for the DS-2019 form – Eligibility for Exchange Visitor Status

Before you can apply for a visa, you must be issued with a DS-2019 form, which is a Certificate of Eligibility for Exchange Visitor Status. To **apply for the DS-2019 form**, you must go through an **approved sponsoring organisation**. It is not possible to apply directly to a US Embassy or Consulate.

There are a number of different sponsoring organisations, so you should contact the sponsoring organisations directly for their individual application forms, detailed application guidelines and exact terms and conditions of their schemes before you decide which one to use. All applications will be examined by the sponsoring organisation and you will be required to undergo an interview either by phone or webcam or in person.

2. Apply for a J-1 Exchange Visitor Visa at the US Embassy

If your application is approved by the sponsoring organisation, the DS-2019 form will be issued to you and the next step is to **apply for a J-1 Exchange Visitor visa at the US Embassy**.

The Embassy will examine your application and your documentation, and as part of this process you will be required to attend an interview at the US Embassy or Consulate. The decision to grant or refuse a visa is solely at the discretion of the US Embassy. If you are successful at the interview the Embassy will usually issue your visa within approximately three working days.

How do I find a sponsoring organisation?

There is a full list of approved sponsoring bodies available on the website of the US Department of State at the following link: <http://j1visa.state.gov/sponsors/>.

You can apply directly through a US based sponsoring organisation (for example, the Irish International Immigrant Centre in Boston). The sponsoring organisation does not have to be based in the city or state you intend to travel to. In Ireland, **USIT** and **SAYIT Travel** work directly with approved sponsoring organisations in the USA, so they can also accept your application.

Each sponsoring organisation has slightly different application guidelines and procedures to follow. Some have specific requirements regarding travel arrangements and insurance, and the programme costs and post-departure obligations are also different.

In addition, sponsoring organisations provide different levels of support both during the application process and after you arrive in the US – some organisations will offer flight and insurance options, some will leave this up to you to arrange independently; some will arrange your interview appointment with the US Embassy for you, in other cases you will need to arrange this yourself.

You should **do some research on the various options and shop around to make sure you select the sponsoring organisation that best suits your needs.**

How much does it cost?

Each sponsoring organisation is responsible for setting its own programme application fees. The service offered by each of the organisations is not exactly the same so you should check with each one what is included in their programme application fee.

In addition to the programme application fee, you will also need to pay for the following:

- SEVIS fee (Student and Exchange Visitor Information System) of US \$180
- US Embassy visa application fee of US \$160
- Flight costs
- Health Insurance
- Travel insurance

How much money do I need to bring with me?

You will need to provide a bank statement to the US Embassy and to US Immigration in order to **prove that you can support yourself** and will not pose a burden on the US Government.

Keep in mind that **it may take some time to find a job**, and even when you do find a job, you might not get your first pay cheque for a few weeks. You should **budget for expenses** you may have before you receive your first pay cheque.

The types of expenses you may have include the following:

- **temporary housing** while you are looking for permanent housing
- **housing deposit** (usually equivalent to one month rent)
- **one month rent in advance**
- **transportation costs when looking for work**
- **transportation to and from work**
- **food**
- **clothing**

If possible you should also bring a credit card, as it is accepted in most places in the US and can provide you with emergency funds if anything goes wrong

How long does it take?

It is not possible to say exactly how long the process will take from start to finish as it will depend on a number of factors including which sponsoring organisation you are using, and whether there is any waiting period for the DS-2019 form to be issued or for an interview appointment at the Embassy.

It is estimated that the process will take approximately **six to eight weeks** from the time you submit your application to the sponsoring organisation. Therefore it is recommended that you apply at least eight weeks before your planned departure date.

After your visa has been issued

When you get to the US there are certain obligations that you, your sponsoring organisation and your employer must fulfil.

- You must **notify your sponsoring organisation and/or SEVIS of your residential address** and confirm that you have started to look for work **within 10 days of your arrival** in the US
- **You have 120 days from your visa 'start date' to find a job/internship.** Speak to your sponsoring organisation for more information.
- When you find a placement your employer is required to fill **form DS-7002** (Training/ Internship Placement Plan) before you start work.
- Your **sponsoring organisation must check in with you and your employer every 60 days for the duration of the programme**, and you must inform them of any changes to your circumstances such as change of address or change in the status of your internship.

Can I stay in the US at the end of my internship?

The Intern Work and Travel Programme is a temporary exchange visitor programme only and you will be expected to leave the United States and return to Ireland when your visa expires. Your J-1 Exchange Visitor Visa cannot be renewed or extended even if your employer wants you to stay on.

You may however travel in the US for up to 30 days after the expiry date on your DS-2019 form. During this 30 day 'grace period' you are entitled to travel within the US, but you are no longer eligible to work or intern.

You are strongly advised not to overstay your visa, as this can leave you liable for arrest, detention and deportation, and/or severely affect your chances of entering the US in the future.

Agents/Sponsoring Organisations

Irish International Immigrant Center (IIIC)

100 Franklin Street, Lower Level 1, Boston, MA 02110, USA
Tel: 001 617 5427654 ext.18 (Boston) / 0044 78 7400 3325 (Belfast)
Email: J1IWT@iicenter.org
Web: www.iicenter.org
www.iicenter.org/2013/06/j-1-irish-work-and-travel-program

USIT

19 - 21 Aston Quay, Dublin 2
Tel: 01 602 1600 / 01 602 1747
Email: melanie.young@usit.ie
Web: www.usit.ie
www.usavisa.ie/1-year-graduate-visa

Shandon Travel

76 Grand Parade, Cork
Tel: 021 427 9190
Email: J1visa@sayit.ie
Web: <https://www.shandontravel.ie/>
<https://www.j1.ie/>

US Department of State

Full list of approved sponsoring bodies: <http://j1visa.state.gov/participants/how-to-apply/sponsor-search>

Useful Contact Details

Crosscare Migrant Project

1 Cathedral Street, Dublin 1
Tel: 0 1 873 2844
Email: migrantproject@crosscare.ie
Web: <http://www.migrantproject.ie>

Embassy of the United States

42 Elgin Road, Ballsbridge, Dublin 4
Tel: 01 668 8777
Email: dublincons@state.gov
Web: <https://ie.usembassy.gov/>
<https://j1visa.state.gov/programs/intern/#participants>

Embassy of Ireland, USA

2234 Massachusetts Ave NW, Washington DC 20008, USA

Tel: 001 202 462 3939

Web: www.embassyofireland.org

Consulates General: www.dfa.ie/embassies/irish-embassies-abroad/north-and-central-america/united-states-of-america/

Consular Assistance Unit at the Department of Foreign Affairs

Iveagh House, 80 St. Stephen's Green, Dublin 2

Tel: 01 408 2000

Web: www.dfa.ie/travel/assistance-abroad/

Fáilte 32

A New York based organisation that helps visa holders and new arrivals to find work

Email: failte32@gmail.com

Web: www.failte32.org/

For a list of **Irish Centres based in the USA** see

http://ciic-usa.org/whoweare_findcenter.html

www.mindhowyougo.ie

Before you go take a look at www.mindhowyougo.ie as it contains practical emigration related advice from other Irish emigrants who have recently left Ireland

We would like to acknowledge the support of the
Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade Emigrant Support Programme



Government of Ireland
Emigrant Support Programme



An Roinn Gnóthaí Eachtracha agus Trádála
Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade

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Please contact Crosscare Migrant Project if you have any questions.