



OFFICE OF INTERNATIONAL SERVICES

University Center for International Studies
University of Pittsburgh

B-1/B-2 Visitor Visas and the Visa Waiver Program (ESTA)

Under certain circumstances, visitors may come to the University in B-1/B-2 status or under the Visa Waiver Program (VWP). Similar conditions apply to B status and to the Visa Waiver Program.

Prospective visitors should carefully review their eligibility for each category before determining if they should come on a visitor visa or another type of University-sponsored visa (e.g. J-1). The US Department of State may not view B-1/B-2 status or travel on the VWP as appropriate for someone coming to the University to study, conduct research, consult, or lecture. Another immigration category, such as F-1 student or J-1 exchange visitor, is typically more appropriate for such purposes. If the US Customs and Border Control officer believes that a different visa is more appropriate for the person's stated purpose, the B visa could be refused or entry to the US in B status could be denied.

If the foreign national wishes to enter the US as a B-1/B-2 visa holder, or as a visitor on the Visa Waiver Program, **it is their responsibility** to obtain a visa and to gain admission to the US. They also assume any risk associated with the decision to attempt entry to the US in this category.

B-1/B-2 Visas

B-1/B-2 visa holders are eligible to enter the U.S. temporarily for the purpose of business, tourism, pleasure or visiting.

To be eligible for a B-1 Business visa, the purpose of your trip is to:

- Consult with business associates.
- Attend a scientific, educational, professional, or business convention, conference or workshop
- Engage in independent research that will not benefit the University of Pittsburgh. Independent research means the use of University facilities without affiliation or appointment. *Visitors with an appointment or affiliation with Pitt should consider coming on a J-1 visa even if no payment is made to the visitor by the University.*

To be eligible for a B-2 Tourism visa, the purpose of your trip is to:

- Tour the U.S., vacation, or visit with friends/relatives.
- Receive medical treatment.
- Participate in music, sports, or similar events or contests, if not being paid for participating.
- Enroll in a short recreational course of study, not for credit toward a degree and is less than 18 hours per week.

Length of Stay in the U.S.

B-1/B-2 visitors are generally admitted for six months or less, but may not exceed one year. The period of stay is determined by the U.S port of entry official at the airport.

Visa Waiver Program

The Visa Waiver Program (VWP) allows citizens of participating countries to travel to the United States for tourism or business without a visa for stays of 90 days or less. The allowable purposes of the trip for a Visa Waiver visitor are the same as the purposes under a B-1/B-2 visa. If you are eligible to use the VWP, you will apply for approval through the Electronic System for Travel Authorization (ESTA) prior to your trip. Determine your eligibility for the VWP [here](#).

ESTA Authorization Process

In order to travel without a visa on the VWP, you will apply for authorization through the Electronic System for Travel Authorization (ESTA) prior to your trip. ESTA is the Department of Homeland Security, Customs and Border Protection's (CBP) automated web-based system to determine eligibility to travel without a visa to the United States for tourism or business. Information about ESTA can be found [here](#).



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Honoraria/Reimbursement

B-1/B-2 and Visa Waiver Visitors are not permitted to receive a salary.

- Reimbursement for incidental expenses (such as travel, accommodations, and meals) is permitted.
- Honorarium payments are permitted as long as the academic activity at Pitt is no longer than 9 days, and the visitor has not accepted honoraria from more than five institutions or organizations within a 6-month period.

Other resources to consider:

- [University of Pittsburgh Visitor Agreement Procedures](#)
- [University of Pittsburgh Volunteer Guidance](#)