

Date: December 17, 2014

To: Research Group Leaders and Staff Administrators

From: Elsy Luc 

Subject: Department of State (DOS) J-1 Updated Regulations

We have been informed by MIT's International Scholars Office (ISchO) of the release updates to the J-1 regulations. Of particular impact on LNS and international scholars are the requirements for English language proficiency verification and health insurance coverage.

Verification of English Language Proficiency:

Under the Final Rule, program sponsors must determine, in advance and by an objective method, that a potential exchange visitor possesses "sufficient proficiency in the English language to participate in his or her program and to function on a day-to-day basis." This may be done in one of several ways acceptable to the DOS:

- A recognized English language test
- A signed document from an academic institution or English language school
- A documented interview conducted by the sponsor either in person or by videoconferencing, or by telephone if videoconference is not a viable option

English language proficiency portion of the regulation takes effect **January 5, 2015**, MIT must retain records of how English language proficiency was verified. Until the regulations are clarified, ISchO will collect this information on new, incoming scholars only.

From this point forward, all requests for incoming J-1 exchange visitors must be accompanied by an English Language Proficiency Verification Form. This includes any scholars transferring in from another institution. I have attached the form for your reference.

Health Insurance:

The new regulations raise the minimum amount of medical benefits coverage required to \$100,000 per accident or illness and limit the allowable deductible to no more than \$500 per accident or illness. The rule continues to require exchange visitors to have coverage for medical evacuation and repatriation of remains; however, the amount of coverage required has been increased (\$50,000 for medical evacuation and \$25,000 for repatriation). The health insurance provisions of the regulations take effect *as of May 15, 2015*.

In addition to providing detailed comments to DOS about these insurance requirements and requesting that the effective date of the health insurance related provisions be moved further into the future, ISchO will confer with the administrators of MIT's health plans to discuss compliance.

- All J-1 exchange visitors, even those with insurance from outside MIT, are required to carry coverage that meets J-1 regulatory guidelines. Failure to maintain such coverage is considered a failure to maintain J-1 status.

ISchO will be in contact with LNS and J-1 exchange visitors as more information and clarification becomes available from the Department of State.

