

Visiting Scholars: Guidelines and Procedures*

The Department of English and Comparative Literature periodically welcomes scholars for a term of between six months to one year who wish to engage in independent, non-collaborative research.

The Visiting Scholar designation is designed to link the visiting scholar with the Columbia community to further their research, provide connections to faculty members, and encourage participation in the department and university's intellectual community. Visiting scholars have a strong intellectual link to the work of the department and are engaged in a clearly defined program of research while in residence.

Most people who obtain the visiting scholar designation are international scholars, though requests from domestic scholars are also accepted. Potential scholars must meet one of the criteria for [Visiting Scholars/Scientists in the Columbia University Faculty Handbook](#) to have an application considered.

For those interested in accessing collections at Columbia and in the New York City area, please note that a visiting scholar designation is not required to access these materials. Please use the links below to register and/or make appointments to access collections at the following locations:

- [Overview of Columbia collections](#)
- [Rare Books and Manuscript Library](#)
- [Burke Library](#) at Union Theological Seminary
- [New York Public Library collections](#)
- [NYPL library card registration](#) (for those who do not live in the NYC area)

Deadlines and Timing:

Applications are considered three times during the academic year:

- September (for an appointment beginning in mid-January or later that Spring),
- January 31 (for an appointment beginning in the Summer),
- May 1 (for an appointment beginning in September).

Please note that these timelines are subject to change. **Unfortunately, the department is not able to guarantee specific dates for the processing of visa applications.**

General Policies

The Visiting Scholar designation is a **courtesy designation that does not signify a formal association with the University**. As such, individuals given these titles:

- may not claim a Columbia University affiliation for the purpose of applying for grants or contracts
- May not be paid for providing services to the university
- May not engage in work that would normally be provided by faculty and staff (for example, teaching a class)
- May not register or enroll for courses (auditing of lecture courses is permitted with permission of an instructor)
- may indicate their designation, including the dates they held this designation and the names of the faculty/officers of research who served as their sponsors during this period, in the section of their curriculum vitae where they list the “fellowships, grants, and honors” they have received (not in the “Appointments” section)

Since Visiting Scholars do not hold appointments, they receive a special Columbia University identification card which allows them limited library borrowing privileges. They are not given office space and are not entitled to administrative assistance.

Visiting scholars are responsible for arranging for their own financial support and benefits. They may not be paid compensation from a University account, given a fellowship, or reimbursed for expenses without the prior approval of the Office of the Provost. They may, however, receive an honorarium for participating in a conference or giving an occasional lecture if they are United States citizens or permanent residents or, in the case of nonresident noncitizens, if they have an appropriate visa and the prior authorization of the Office of the Provost.

Applicants are responsible for arranging and demonstrating their own financial support and benefits (including health care coverage) while in residence, including travel to and from New York, living expenses, suitable housing, and other expenses that may arise.

Visiting scholars may audit lecture courses with the permission of the instructors. Auditing of summer courses also requires the permission of the Dean of the Summer Session. Visiting scholars/scientists may also use the Dodge Fitness Center and the University’s other recreational facilities on payment of a fee.

To Apply:

Prior to receiving an invitation letter, the University requires that all potential visiting scholars/scientists and their home institutions undergo “restricted party” screening before the

request for the visiting designation is submitted to Columbia's Office of the Vice Provost for Faculty Affairs.

Step 1: Identify and confirm a faculty sponsor. The sponsor should agree to assist with reading and evaluating the proposal and confirm their availability for collegial support during the term of the visit. Ideally, the faculty member will not be on research or other leave during the period of the visit.

Step 2: Application submission

For the applicant: The following information **must be first submitted to your faculty sponsor** (Subject Line: “Visiting Scholar Application, [Name], [Desired Term]”) to be included with the initial screening request:

- the proposal outlining the specific research the visitor plans to do within the context of their overall research project while using the University’s libraries or other research facilities and its relevance to the department’s larger mission;
- the proposed visitor’s *curriculum vitae*;
- the name of the faculty member who will serve as the visitor’s sponsor.
- The dates of the proposed visit
- Indication of whether a visa will be necessary

For the faculty sponsor: please review the proposal and make suggestions if appropriate and then forward the application to the Chair and the DAAF. In your email, please confirm your support and your availability to the visiting scholar for collegial (rather than collaborative) support during the term of the visit and include a brief discussion of the benefits of the VS designation for the scholar.

Step 3: Department Review

This information will be submitted by the department to a committee for review. If approved, applications will then move on to the Vice Provost's Office for review.

Step 4: Review

Foreign nationals and their home institutions will need to undergo “restricted party” screening using Visual Compliance before any commitment is made to the individual and before the request for the designation is submitted to the Office of the Vice Provost for Faculty Affairs. Once an application is approved, Visiting Scholar status is dependent on the ability of the scholar to meet the requirements set out by the International Students and Scholars Office (ISSO) for

either **J-1 sponsorship** (the only visa type accepted for the visiting scholar designation) or **non-J-1 sponsorship** (for domestic scholars who are US citizens or Permanent Residents).

Foreign nationals cannot hold the designation of visiting scholar/scientist if they have a visitor visa status (B-1 or B-2 visa or are traveling under the ESTA Visa Waiver Program). Upon submission of all the documentation required by the US government, the International Students and Scholars Office will issue the DS-2019 form needed to support the J-1 application. Federal regulations require that the applicant for J-1 status have sufficient funds for the period of stay at Columbia and that the applicant meet the health insurance requirements of the Exchange Visitor Program while in the US.

After Visual Compliance screening, applications are sent to the Office of the Provost for approval. **Please note: this process can take several months.**

Upon approval from the Office of the Provost, formal notification will be issued by the Department, along with next steps.

Please note: all Visiting Scholars are processed via the International Students and Scholars office, regardless of whether visa sponsorship is or is not requested.

Supporting documents required by ISSO for Visiting Scholars **without** visa sponsorship are listed [here](#).

Supporting documents required by ISSO for Visiting Scholars **with** visa sponsorship are listed [here](#).

*Information drawn from guidelines in the Faculty Handbook and the Institute for the Study of Gender and Sexuality