



Guidelines for ABS Approval of Research Fellowships for J-1 Visa Applicants

To obtain ABS support for a J-1 visa applicant who wishes to complete a research fellowship, a formal written request must be made by the program director. The request must be sent by letter, not e-mail, to the ABS executive director and cover the information outlined below. Program directors will be notified of the decision by letter from the ABS executive director.

Normally research fellowships are not covered by J-1 visas, which are intended only to cover clinical experiences. In order to approve such fellowships, they need to be considered integral to the parent residency as part of the overall training being provided to the resident. The following specific guidelines need to be satisfied and submitted to the ABS when requesting a letter of support to be sent to the ECFMG.

1. The research experience should be considered a non-standard pathway and is not part of the five-year accredited surgical residency.
2. The research fellowship should be either one or two years in length, depending on the research plan.
3. The resident involved should have a categorical position guaranteed in the parent residency, and a definite date for return to clinical activities and completion of residency.
4. The resident should have completed at least two clinical years of residency and be in good standing at the time of initiation of the research fellowship.
5. The research fellowship should be a clearly defined experience at an academic institution, with a designated sponsor and research director.
6. A research plan should be submitted which includes a description of the planned activities and the anticipated nature of the investigations and expected results.
7. The track record of the research sponsor and of the laboratory in regard to training of prior fellows, research history, grant funding, and publication record should be evaluated to ensure that the experience provides legitimate research training for the resident, and should be described in the summary provided to the ABS.
8. The resident who is applying for the visa should clearly understand the implications of the one or two years spent in research in regard to the seven year total length of time available in the J-1 visa and the impact this might have on intentions for subsequent clinical fellowship training.