



## Student Eligibility Guidance for High School Principals and Athletic Administrators

### International & Exchange Student Bylaw Guidance Bylaw 4-8-1, Exception 1 – J-1 Visa Students

This document will focus on Bylaw 4-8-1, Exception 1. The exception reads as follows:

**EXCEPTION 1:** *The international student who is a participant in a recognized visitor exchange program may be eligible for interscholastic athletics subject to the restrictions and conditions set forth below:*

- a. The international student may be eligible for a maximum of one school year which is the first year of enrollment at the Ohio member school.*
- b. The international student has not previously participated in any other visitor exchange program in the United States. If the international student has participated in another visitor exchange program in Ohio or any other state, the period of participation in that other program shall count against the one year maximum eligibility set forth in (a) above.*
- c. The international student is in this country pursuant to a J-1 Visa. No other visa type, passport or other documentation shall qualify the student for eligibility under this exception.*
- d. There shall be no evidence of a direct placement for athletic purposes into a specific member school in Ohio.*
- e. No more than five (5) international students from the same visitor exchange program, in one member school, shall be permitted to be eligible during any school year.*
- f. The member school at which the international student wishes to be declared eligible for interscholastic athletic participation must submit the appropriate forms to the Executive Director's office, and the student and school must cooperate with the Executive Director's office in determining that all other requirements for eligibility have been satisfied.*

*The international student described in this Exception 1 shall be ineligible until declared eligible by the Executive Director's office upon submission of the appropriate form.*

This exception is only to be used for students in the United States on a J-1 Visa. It is not to be used for students with dual citizenship, students who are American citizens and their parents are non-citizens living outside of the country, or students on an F-1 Visa. The OHSAA does not require international exchange students to be a part of programs approved by the Council on Standards for International Education and Travel (CSIET) but only possess a J-1 Visa, as this Visa type evidences them being involved with an approved short-term visitor exchange program.

A reminder that OHSAA Bylaw 4-8-1, exception 1, states that an international exchange student is eligible to participate in interscholastic athletics for a maximum of one school year (two semesters) provided the student complies with all provisions of Bylaw 4, (e.g. age, graduation, semester, etc.). No more than five students who possess a J-1 Visa and who are from the **same** Visitor Exchange Program will be approved for interscholastic eligibility at any one school during a school year. Once the OHSAA has approved five J-1 Visa students from the same exchange program for the school year, no more requests will be approved for students from that program.

Here is a link to the J-1 Visa student form: <https://ohsaaweb.blob.core.windows.net/files/Eligibility/forms/FEelig.pdf>  
This form needs to be completed and returned to the OHSAA, attention **Molly Downard** ([mdownard@ohsaa.org](mailto:mdownard@ohsaa.org)), for approval **prior** to an international exchange student becoming eligible under exception 1. After receipt of an eligibility request, a review is completed, and forms are returned to Athletic Directors. **Please submit the request electronically as an attachment to an email.**

**Please feel free to contact Kristin Ronai** ([kronai@ohsaa.org](mailto:kronai@ohsaa.org)) or **Ronald Sayers** ([rsayers@ohsaa.org](mailto:rsayers@ohsaa.org)) if you have any questions!