



Travel and Re-entry to U.S. for F-1 Student

March 2004

If an F-1 Student is planning to travel outside the U.S. they should refer to the following information to prepare themselves for their return.

1. **Contact the embassy or consulate of the country to which you intend to travel** (if other than your home country) to determine whether a health certificate or entry visa is required. Link to all Embassies in Washington D.C.: <http://www.embassy.org/embassies/index.html>.
2. **Necessary documents to re-enter the U.S. for an absence of less than 5 months:**
 - a. I-20 endorsed for travel by authorized personnel in the Office of International Education and Programs (IEP).
 - b. Copies of all previously issued I-20s or DS-2019s.
 - c. Valid passport good for at least 6 months into the future.
 - d. Valid F-1 visa.
 - If the *F-1 visa will expire* before the planned return date to the U.S. then the F-1 visa must be renewed in the student's home country **before** they will be allowed to return. Refer to "Immigration Resources" for links to U.S. Consulates and Embassies Worldwide for visa renewal procedures *prior to leaving* the U.S. to prepare for the length of time needed for issuance of a new visa as well as to reduce the number of surprises.
 - If the student *changed their status to F-1 while remaining in the U.S.* through application to the U.S.CIS then they need to apply for an F-1 visa to be placed in their passport. This process must be done in the student's home country **before** they will be allowed to return to the U.S.
 - e. An unofficial copy of your most recent transcript.
 - f. Copy of your class schedule for the next academic term.
 - g. Documentation of adequate financial support.
 - h. Any work authorization document you may have been issued.

Please see the authorized personnel from the IEP office if you are planning to be outside the U.S. for longer than 5 months.

3. **Obtaining a signed I-20:**
 - a. Bring the I-20 to the IEP office at least **5** working days before you plan to leave.
 - b. The I-20 should be signed for travel once a semester even though page 3 of your I-20 states that the signature is good for 1 year.

4. **Necessary documents for traveling outside the U.S. while doing Optional Practical Training:**
 - a. Valid F-1 visa (refer to section 1.d. above if the visa will expire prior to returning to the U.S.).
 - b. Valid passport.
 - c. I-20 endorsed for travel within the last 6 months by authorized personnel in the IEP office.
 - d. Valid Employment Authorization Document (EAD) from the U.S.CIS.
 - e. Employer's letter stating end date of your employment and work responsibilities. If you are not yet employed you should carry evidence of job seeking such as invitations for interviews and application letters.

5. **Re-entry to the U.S. after visiting Canada, Mexico or islands adjacent to the U.S.:**
 - a. While in valid F-1 status students may travel to a "contiguous territory" and return to the U.S. even if their *F-1 visa has expired* but the visit must be for *no more than 30 days* and *only as a tourist*. The student will still require an I-20 signed within the last 6 months and a valid passport.
 - b. The visa will be "automatically validated" upon reentry if you:
 - Do not allow the airline official or immigration official to take your I-94 card when you leave the U.S.
 - Present your valid I-94 card to the immigration official upon reentry to the U.S.
 - c. *Exceptions to automatic revalidation* include those who apply for a U.S. visa in Canada, Mexico or adjacent islands. Citizens from Iraq, Iran, Syria, Libya, Sudan, North Korea, and Cuba are also *not eligible* for automatic revalidation.