

Travel Information for F-1 Students and F-2 dependents

Required documents for re-entering the United States in F status

Both F-1 students and their F-2 dependents must have the following documents to reenter the United States:

1. Passport
2. Valid F-1 or F-2 entry visa
3. Properly endorsed and valid SEVIS I-20
4. Documents proving your funds as listed on the SEVIS I-20
5. Employment Authorization Document and proof of employment if you are in engaged in optional practical training after completion of studies.

Take the above-mentioned documents to the Office of International Students and Scholars (OISS) at least one full week before you depart. In some cases, a designated school official will need to endorse your I-20 to travel; in others it may be necessary to prepare a new I-20 for you.

Citizens of Canada do not need a passport to enter the U.S. from countries in the Western Hemisphere, and do not need an U.S. entry visa in any case.

Travel with an expired U.S. entry visa

In some cases, a new entry visa is required to reenter the U.S.; in other cases it is not.

Travel of less than 30 days to Canada, Mexico, or a Caribbean Island (other than Cuba): You do not need to apply for a new U.S. entry visa if you plan to travel to a contiguous territory for less than 30 days, provided that you have the required documents for re-entry to the United States. This is known as "automatic revalidation". Do not surrender your I-94 when you leave the U.S.; if you do so, you must obtain a new visa to return. Citizens of Iran, Iraq, North Korea, Libya, Sudan, Syria, and Cuba are not eligible for automatic revalidation. People with single entry visas may not be eligible for automatic revalidation, as a single entry visa may be presumed cancelled. Finally, if you apply for a new U.S. entry visa in a contiguous territory, you may not reenter the U.S. using automatic revalidation.

Travel to any other country: You must apply for a new entry visa in an U.S. Embassy or Consulate General. Students must present the following documents to the visa officer:

1. Valid passport
2. Properly endorsed valid SEVIS I-20
3. Any previously issued I-797 approval notices for change of status
4. Documents verifying the financial resources that appear on your I-20 (for example, a letter of financial aid, bank statement, letter verifying employment).

F-2 dependents must also show proof of relationship to the F-1 principal (birth or marriage certificate). The documents, procedures, and processing time required to obtain a visa can vary from post to post.

Special cautions for U.S. entry visa renewal

If you need a new entry visa to return to the U.S., you should be aware that there is never a guarantee that one will be issued. Certain factors may complicate your visa application. Following is a list of some of the more common potential pitfalls:

- You must have the proper documents with you when you apply for a new visa. It is critical that you stop by the Office of International Students and Scholars at least one full week prior to your departure from Charleston. Bring your passport and I-20(s) with you. You should also check specific requirements for visa issuance in the particular U.S. Embassy or Consulate General where you will apply.
- Students whose field of study or research appears on the Department of State Critical Fields List may experience visa issuing delays of at least 30 additional days while a Security Advisory Opinion is sought. There is no way to expedite this process. Make your travel plans accordingly. For more information, see the Department of State [Critical Field List](#) site.
- It may be more difficult to obtain a renewal of your entry visa if you are engaged in practical training after completion of studies. You should be prepared to document strong ties to your home country.
- It can be more challenging to obtain a new U.S. entry visa outside of your country of citizenship or permanent residence. You may be asked to apply for the visa in your home country. If you decide to apply for a U.S. entry visa outside of your home country, you should consider carrying proof of your valid F-1 status with you. Examples of such proof include an official copy of your transcript, all previously issued I-20s, and any practical training documents.
- You must have an appointment to make a visa application in an U.S. Consulate in Canada or Mexico. Call 1-900-443-3131 or visit www.nvars.com to make your appointment. It may take several weeks to

get an appointment. Be sure to check with the Canadian or Mexican Consulate to see if you need a visa to enter either country. Keep in mind that it may be difficult to get a U.S. entry visa in either country. If you apply for a U.S. entry visa in Canada, Mexico, or one of the adjacent Caribbean islands, you may not re-enter the United States using the "automatic revalidation" benefit.