



Dartmouth College • Office of Visa and Immigration Services

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F-1 Student Travel and Re-Entry to the U.S

The U.S. government uses the Student and Exchange Visitor Information System (SEVIS) to manage information relating to international students in the U.S. All international students must have a SEVIS-generated, valid I-20 form in order to apply for an F-1 visa, and/or to enter the U.S. to attend school, or to remain in the U.S. as an F-1 student.

If you travel out of the U.S. while you are in F-1 status, your I-20 form must have a travel validation signature by one of the designated school officials at the Office of Visa & Immigration Services (OVIS), and you must have a valid F-1 visa, as appropriate, in order for you to be permitted to re-enter the U.S (see “**Contiguous Territory & Adjacent Islands**” below for a discussion of re-entry from Canada or Mexico without a valid visa). If you are in F-1 status and applying for a visa, we recommend a travel signature on page 3 of your I-20 dated within the last 9 months (one academic year). To request this signature, drop your I-20 form off at the OVIS offices along with your Dartmouth ID card. Please allow at least three days for processing. A valid visa stamp in your passport is also required for re-entry to the U.S., unless you are a Canadian citizen. If your visa stamp has expired and you leave the U.S. you will need to go to the U.S. consulate (outside of the U.S.) to apply for the new visa stamp before re-entering the U.S.

Non-immigrant Intent:

In all cases, F and J visa applicants must be able to prove non-immigrant intent to the U.S. consular officer. This means that you need to be able to prove to the consular officer that you will be returning to your home country at the end of your academic program if the officer asks about your future plans. You can do this by showing evidence of strong family and economic ties to your home country. This is even more important if you are applying for a visa after you have graduated, and are working in the U.S. on post-graduation optional practical training (OPT).

Required Documents in the U.S.:

U.S. law requires you to carry your photo ID (passport) and your alien registration information (I-94 card and I-20 form) on your person at all times.

Student travel; post-graduation:

If you have graduated and are on post-completion practical training, you are also required to show your EAD work card when re-entering the U.S., and proof that you have a temporary job in the U.S. related to your field of study. Please note that it can be difficult to re-enter the U.S. even if you have the EAD and a job offer. See our F-1 OPT FAQ sheet (available online, here: <http://www.dartmouth.edu/~ovis/updates/f1/optfaqs.html>) for more information on this.

Visa Applications:

Whenever you apply to a U.S. Consulate for a new nonimmigrant entry visa stamp, you always run the risk that your application may be denied, or delayed due to security checks or other administrative processing. While it is allowed, the U.S. Department of State does not recommend that you apply for a visa stamp at a U.S. Consulate in a country of which you are not a citizen. If you are denied in a “third country”, you will be required to travel home from that country to apply for the visa. You will not be allowed to come back to the U.S. first, even if you have applied for the visa in Canada.

Documents for Visa Application

(Note: Canadian citizens are exempt from the requirement to have a U.S. “visa”, but must still present all the other required documentation at the U.S. Port of Entry, in order to enter the U.S. in legal F-1 status.)

You should check with the U.S. Consulate where you will apply for the visa, but non-immigrant visa applicants are normally required to submit the following documentation to the U.S. consulate abroad:

- Valid passport
- Current passport-size photographs
- Valid SEVIS Form I-20
- Proof of Payment of SEVIS fee, if appropriate (see International Office visa application info sheet for more information on the SEVIS fee)
- Proof of financial support
- Proof of admission to program of study
- Proof of non-immigrant intent (evidenced by strong ties to home country)
- Non-immigrant visa application form(s), available from the U.S. consulate abroad, or online at: http://travel.state.gov/visa/frvi/forms/forms_1342.html

It is often advisable for continuing students to submit copies of transcripts or an academic advisor's letter stating that the student is making good progress toward degree completion.

You may find information on wait times for visa appointments at various consulates by clicking here: http://travel.state.gov/visa/temp/wait/tempvisitors_wait.php

Please double check with the Consulate where you will be applying to verify the required application documents and procedures. You may find a list of all U.S. embassies and Consulates here: <http://usembassy.state.gov/>

For visa appointments at the U.S. Consulate in Canada:

- See the website for the U.S. embassy in Montreal for more information:
<http://montreal.usconsulate.gov/content/content.asp?section=visas&document=index>
- For information on visa applications at any border post or consulate:
http://travel.state.gov/visa/temp/without/without_1260.html#TCN
- For the online reservation system (you *must* have an appointment to apply for a visa at a U.S. Consulate in Canada): <http://www.nvars.com>

Visa delays:

- **Change to interview requirement:**
There have been recent changes to the interview requirement for certain U.S. visa applicants. Many more people will now be required to have a personal interview before a visa can be issued. Please allow at least one to two months for the visa application and for scheduling the interview at the appropriate consulate, if required.
- **Security clearance delays:**
Current security clearance checks by the U.S. State Department can delay the visa application process for one to three weeks, or longer. You are less likely to be subject to a visa security check delay if you have received a U.S. visa in the last 12 months, and were previously subject to a security check. Most checks clear in two to four weeks, but this is highly variable.
- Unfortunately, Dartmouth College can do very little to assist with visa application delays. Please do let us know if your application is delayed, and we will inquire at the State Department on your case after it has been pending for 30 days. This inquiry will not expedite your visa application; it can only serve to find out if it is still pending.

Documents to re-enter the U.S.:

All travelers who plan to re-enter the U.S. require

- A valid passport with an expiration date at least 6 months in the future
- A valid SEVIS I-20 form with a valid travel signature less than 9 months old on page 3. (Please allow three business days for processing if you need a new signature from your international advisor prior to traveling.)
- A valid F-1 visa stamp (unless re-entering from Canada or Mexico or the adjacent islands after a trip of less than 30 days – see below under “automatic revalidation”)
 - (Note: Canadian citizens do not need a visa stamp)
- A valid Form I-94 (white card usually stapled to the passport, known as the "arrival/departure record". You will complete this form on the airplane coming into the country, or at the land border post when you apply for entry to the country)
- Proof of financial support

We recommend, in addition:

- Copies of academic transcripts to verify enrollment and academic progress for students
- For students on F-1 OPT: a letter from your employer verifying temporary employment.

Automatic Revalidation: Travel to Contiguous Territory & Adjacent Islands

After initial entry to the U.S., persons in F-1 status who have an expired non-immigrant visa in their passport may re-enter the U.S. without obtaining a new U.S. visa if their travel was solely to a contiguous territory (Canada or Mexico) or adjacent islands (excluding Cuba) and their travel is for a period not exceeding 30 days. This procedure is known as “automatic revalidation”, and if you are planning to take advantage of it we will give you a citation of the regulation that allows this. To take advantage of automatic re-validation of an expired visa after travel to a contiguous territory or islands adjacent to the U.S., travelers must have, in addition to their passport and properly endorsed I-20 form, a valid passport, a valid Form I-94, and, if on post-completion OPT, a valid EAD work card and evidence of temporary employment in their field of study.

U.S. VISIT system:

Upon entry to the U.S., most non-U.S. citizens traveling on non-immigrant visas or under the visa waiver program will be photographed and fingerprinted for security purposes.

Exiting the U.S.:

You must surrender your I-94 card to the airlines, or to the border officer, if departing the U.S. by a land Port of Exit. This is how you document your departure to the U.S. Government. If you are traveling to Canada or Mexico for less than 30 days, you do not need to give up your I-94 card. If you fail to surrender your I-94 card, please see this website for information on how to correct your departure status with the U.S. Government.

http://help.cbp.gov/cgi-bin/customs.cfg/php/enduser/std_adp.php?p_faqid=752&p_created=1077641280&p_sid=9VyH5fGh&p_lva=&p_sp=cF9zcmNoPTEmcF9zb3J0X2J5PSZwX2dyaWRzb3J0PSZwX3Jvd19jbnQ9NDcmcf9wcm9kcz0yMywzMiZwX2NhdHM9MCZwX3B2PTIuMzImcf9jdj0mcF9zZWFyY2hfdHlwZT1hbN3ZXJzLnNlYXJjaF9ubCZwX3BhZ2U9MQ**&p_li=&p_to_pview=1

IMPORTANT NOTES:

- If you are a citizen of Iraq, Iran, North Korea, Sudan, Somalia, Syria or Libya you **are not** eligible for automatic revalidation of your expired non-immigrant visa.
- If you have applied for a new visa while out of the country, you **may not** re-enter the U.S. until the new visa is issued even if your old visa is still valid.
- You may be required to have a visa from either Canada or Mexico to enter those countries. The visa you have for the United States does not automatically grant entry into these countries. If you are in doubt, go to the Canadian and Mexican consulate web sites listed below

Canadian Consulate in New York: <http://www.cic.gc.ca/english/index.asp>

Mexican Consulate in New York:

<http://portal.sre.gob.mx/usa/index.php?option=displaypage&Itemid=111&op=page&SubMenu=>