OVIS Winter Break Travel Checklist

International students, scholars, faculty and staff who will be traveling internationally during the holiday break should be sure to have your immigration documents in order prior to departing the U.S. For those making visa applications at U.S. consulates, be prepared for possible delays in visa issuance. This checklist can help you to prepare for your trip:

- **Valid passport** – Make sure your passport is valid for at least six months beyond the expiration of your period of admission to the U.S.

- **Valid visa stamp** – Unless you are Canadian and visa exempt, your visa stamp in your passport must be valid at the time of your planned reentry to the U.S., and must reflect your correct nonimmigrant visa status. If you have changed your immigration status since your last admission to the U.S., you will need to apply for a new visa stamp in order to reenter the country.

- **Valid Form I-20 (F-1 Students) or Form DS-2019 (J-1 Exchange Visitors)** – Check your form to make sure you will reenter before the program end date, and that you have a valid travel signature from OVIS. The travel signature for F-1 and J-1 visa holders is valid for 12 months, unless you are a graduated F-1 student on OPT, in which case your I-20 travel signature is valid for 6 months. If you need a new travel signature, be sure to bring your form, along with your passport and most recent I-94 record of arrival to OVIS for signature at least 2 business days before planned travel. You can complete a request form, and expect your signed form back in 1-2 business days. Or submit the E-form, “Request Travel Signature” in the “General Requests” category via iDartmouth: [https://ovis.dartmouth.edu](https://ovis.dartmouth.edu) – log in with your NetID and password.

- **Plan for possible visa issuance delays** – The holiday season is a busy travel time. The combination of higher volumes of applications, reduced hours around the holidays and increased security of applications at consular posts can lead to delays in visa issuance. Be sure to check the website of the U.S. consulate or embassy for hours of operation, specific application procedures including required documentation, and processing times. For students, bring a copy of your transcript as proof of enrollment. For scholars, faculty and staff, bring an updated employment verification letter and if you are paid by Dartmouth, copies of your two most recent pay statements. Visit the Department of State website at [https://travel.state.gov/content/visas/en/general/wait-times.html](https://travel.state.gov/content/visas/en/general/wait-times.html)

- **Security clearances** – U.S. Consular Officers can require visa applications to undergo additional security clearances based on country of nationality, a name that is similar to a name on a government watch list, study or work in a field involving sensitive technologies, or other reasons. If an application requires an additional clearance, it will be placed in "administrative processing" and the visa will not be issued until the process is complete, which can take several days to several weeks. Security clearances cannot be expedited. Contact OVIS if your application is undergoing administrative processing. For more information on administrative processing, visit [https://travel.state.gov/content/visas/en/general/administrative-processing-information.html](https://travel.state.gov/content/visas/en/general/administrative-processing-information.html)

- **Admission at U.S. port-of-entry and automated Form I-94 record** – For F-1 students with a previously terminated SEVIS record, expect to undergo additional screening at the Customs & Border Protection Agency's (CBP) secondary inspection so that your valid F-1 status can be verified in the SEVIS system.

- **If traveling by air**, paper I-94s will no longer be issued. CBP will issue an admission stamp in the passport, and once in the U.S. with access to the Internet and a printer, a copy of the I-94 record of arrival can be accessed on [CBP's website](https://www.cbp.gov/). **If traveling by land** crossing from Canada or Mexico, you must request a “new admission” if you want your entry recorded in the electronic system. OVIS recommends the I-94 record be accessed and printed for every new arrival to the U.S. to ensure accuracy. If there is an error in your I-94 record, contact OVIS for assistance in having it corrected. Visit the I-94 website at [https://i94.cbp.dhs.gov/I94/#/recent-search](https://i94.cbp.dhs.gov/I94/#/recent-search).