

## Travel and Re-entry in F-1 Status

While you are in F-1 status, you are permitted to leave the U.S. and re-enter in F-1 status provided you present the required documentation. If you intend to re-enter the U.S. and continue your full-time course of study, you must always be admitted to the U.S. in F-1 status. This section provides detailed information on the requirements for traveling outside the United States and re-entering in F-1 status. The following topics are addressed:

- Documents Required for Re-entry in F-1 Status
- Obtaining a New F-1 Visa
- Travel to Canada, Mexico, and the Caribbean
- Travel for Canadian Students
- Travel while on Post-Completion OPT
- Extended Stays Outside the U.S.
- Travel within the United States
- Travel to a Third Country
- Travel for Dependents
- US-VISIT
- NSEERS

Please note that if you are sponsored by a program other than Bard College, i.e. IIE or LASPAU, you should discuss your status and any travel requirements with your program sponsor.

### Documents Required for Re-entry in F-1 Status

You are required to carry the following documents with you to re-enter the U.S. as a F-1 student. We encourage you to use this section as a checklist to ensure that you have everything you need to successfully re-enter the U.S. in F-1 status.

\_\_\_ Passport valid for at least 6 months into the future: Some countries have the expiration dates of the passports automatically extended for 6 months based on an agreement with the U.S. If your country of citizenship is on this list, you may enter the U.S. using your passport until its actual expiration date. A list of the countries that participate is available at <http://inside.bard.edu/payroll/foreign/> in the section labeled Documentation. If your passport will expire, contact your consulate. Consular locations can be found at <http://www.citidex.com/252.htm>.

Canadian citizens do not require an entry visa to enter the U.S. from Canada, but DO require an I-20. Effective December 31, 2007, a passport will be required for ALL entries to the U.S. Your passport may also be required for other purposes in the U.S., such as completing a form for employment on campus, or applying for a Social Security number.

\_\_\_ Unexpired F-1 visa valid for further entries: You should always be aware of the expiration date and the number of entries allowed on your visa. Most visas have "M" written under entries. This means that there is no limit on the number of

entries for which you can use your visa. If your visa is expired or you have already used the number of entries you are allowed, you will need to apply for a new F-1 visa in order to re-enter the U.S. See the section Obtaining a New F-1 Visa for more details. An exception to this requirement exists for travel to certain countries.

\_\_\_ Valid I-20 recertified within 12 months of the date of on which you will return to the U.S. Recertification (travel signature) is on page 3 of the I-20. It indicates that you are maintaining valid F-1 status. Only the responsible officer listed on your I-20 is authorized by the Department of Homeland Security to sign your I-20. Each signature is valid for 12 months, although you may have the I-20 signed more frequently if you wish.

The responsible officer can only sign your I-20 for travel if you are maintaining valid F-1 status and can show that you have the financial resources to cover all expenses for one year. Continuing students may be required to show updated funding documentation to have their I-20 recertified. You must plan ahead to get your I-20 signed before you leave the country. Request the recertification of your I-20 at least ten business days prior to your departure.

If you will be outside the U.S. for more than 5 months, please see Extended Stays Outside the U.S.

We also recommend that you carry the following documents with you. It is possible that an immigration officer could ask you for these documents.

\_\_\_ Receipt of SEVIS I-901 Fee (if applicable). For information on who is required to pay this fee, go to [www.fmjfee.com](http://www.fmjfee.com)

\_\_\_ Current financial documentation issued within the last 3 months.

\_\_\_ Proof of full-time enrollment. You can obtain a copy of your enrollment history from the registrar's office.

## Obtaining a New F-1 Visa

If your entry visa has expired and your travel does not qualify for visa revalidation, you must apply for a new visa at an American consulate before re-entering the U.S. Entry visas can only be issued outside the United States. We recommend that you apply for the new visa in your home country; however, if you are unable to return to your home country and need to travel to a third country, it may be possible to apply for a visa there. We recommend in this case that you first contact the U.S. consulate in the country where you will be traveling to confirm that they will review your application. It is possible they would refuse to do so and ask you to travel to your home country. You should also be prepared for potential delays in visa issuance. A list of visa wait times is available on the Department of State website, and a document discussing types of delays is available at: <http://inside.bard.edu/payroll/foreign/> When you go to the consulate, you will need to bring your passport, I-20, financial documentation, and proof of full-time enrollment, as well as any other documents requested by the consulate. If you have ever overstayed your authorized stay (as noted on your I-94 card) in the United States, you will be required to return to your home country to apply for a new entry visa.

## Travel to Canada, Mexico, and the Caribbean

If you are traveling only to Canada, Mexico or the Caribbean (except Cuba and Bermuda) for fewer than thirty days, you may return to the U.S. with an expired F-1 entry visa in your passport. To qualify for this privilege, you must:

1. Be in lawful F-1 status.
2. Have an unexpired I-94 card indicating your F-1 status in your passport when you enter the U.S. Do not surrender the I-94 card when you leave the U.S. If you do, you will not be eligible for visa revalidation.
3. Have a current, recertified I-20 in your possession.
4. Have a passport valid at least six months into the future on the day you return to the U.S.
5. Travel only to one of the destinations named above and for fewer than thirty days. For example, you cannot use automatic revalidation to enter Canada, depart to another country, return to Canada, and then return to the U.S. within 30 days.
6. Not apply for a U.S. visa while in Canada, Mexico, or the Caribbean. If you apply for a U.S. entry visa during your visit to one of these destinations, you must wait for it to be issued before you return. If your visa application is denied by the American consulate, you are not allowed to use automatic revalidation to return to the U.S. You will be required to travel to your country of citizenship to apply for a new visa.
7. Have a F-1 visa (expired or valid) in your passport or an approval notice for change of status to F-1 and the invalid visa of your previous non-immigrant status in your passport.
8. Be a citizen of a country other than Syria, Iran, Iraq, Sudan, North Korea, Cuba, or Libya. Nationals of these countries are not eligible for visa revalidation. If you are a national of one of the above countries, you must always have a valid visa in your passport to enter the United States.

## Travel for Canadian Students

Canadian citizens do not require an entry visa to enter the U.S. from Canada, but DO require an I-20. Effective December 31, 2007, a passport will be required for ALL entries to the U.S. Your passport may also be required for other purposes in the U.S., such as completing a form for employment on campus, or applying for a Social Security number. If you enter the U.S. from a country other than Canada, you are required to present a passport at the port of entry.

Those entering the U.S. to study should request F-1 status at the border and must always show the Form I-20 and supporting financial documentation to the immigration inspector at the port of entry. Be sure to check your I-94 card before you leave the inspection area to ensure that the I-94 card was properly notated with F-1, D/S. Often, your I-94 card will not be removed from your passport when

you leave the U.S., and you will not receive a new one when you re-enter. This is not a problem. Just be aware that if the I-94 card is removed, you must get a new one with the F-1 notation when you re-enter.

## Travel while on Post-completion Optional Practical Training

The entry requirements while you are on OPT are similar to the requirements while you are a student; however, you will need to show some additional documentation. The Department of Homeland Security allows for re-entry while on OPT "to resume employment after a temporary absence".

All individuals who have applied for post-completion OPT must carry the following documents:

- Passport valid for 6 months into the future
- Valid F-1 entry visa, unless using visa revalidation
- I-20 recertified within the past 6 months. Please note that this is a change in the length of validity of recertifications. Recertifications are generally valid for one year, but once you are on OPT, they are valid for only 6 months.

\*\* See Documents Required for Re-entry in F-1 Status above for document descriptions.

If you have applied for OPT, but not yet received the EAD, you must also carry the following:

- Original receipt notice issued by the Vermont Service Center confirming your request for OPT.

If your OPT has been approved, you must also carry the following:

- EAD card
- Letter from employer confirming that you are employed or have been offered employment. Please note: this letter must be for the duration of your OPT and not for a permanent position.

The guidance from DHS states that if an individual has been approved for OPT and leaves the U.S. prior to receiving a job offer, the OPT authorization ends. If you are planning to leave the U.S. and do not have all of the required documentation, please speak with the responsible officer listed on your I-20.

If you require a new entry visa while on OPT, be aware that there is no guarantee that you are eligible for one. You are required to establish non-immigrant intent every time you apply for a non-immigrant visa. This may be harder to establish when you are working rather than studying. If you have an expired F-1 entry visa, speak with your responsible officer before planning a trip abroad.

## Extended Stays Outside the U.S.

If you will be outside of the U.S. for more than 5 months, you may be required to get a new I-20 from the responsible officer prior to returning to the U.S. DHS regulations state that a stay outside of the U.S. for 5 months is considered a break in F-1 status. After an absence of more than five months an F-1 student is no longer admissible to the U.S. as a "continuing student" unless the student was 1) registered at Bard or 2) enrolled in a study abroad program that gives credit

towards the Bard degree and is sanctioned by the student's academic advisor during this period.

The State Department has decreed that with a five month absence, the F-1 visa that the student holds is considered invalid and the student must apply for a new visa. A new visa application must be accompanied by a new "initial" I-20 and a newly paid SEVIS fee with receipt.

If you are leaving the U.S. and will be outside of the country for more than 5 months, please speak with the responsible officer who appears on your I-20.

**Travel within the United States** - In general, special permission is not required to travel within the U.S. We recommend that you carry your passport, I-94 card, and I-20 with you whenever you travel outside the New York metropolitan area.

**Travel to a Third Country** - When traveling to a third country (a country other than the U.S. or your home country), you are responsible for knowing whether you need an entry visa for that country. Travel to Canada and Mexico is common from the U.S.

**Canadian visas** - Persons from many countries are required to obtain a Canadian entry visa when entering Canada from the U.S. Visas may be obtained from the Canadian Consulate General at 1251 Avenue of the Americas (at 50th Street, tel. 596-1600) between 8:00 and 10:00 am. Consult the Canadian Consulate General for visa regulations concerning your country before making travel arrangements.

**Mexican visas** - Tourist cards or visas may be required for travel to Mexico. Information is available from the New York Consulate General of Mexico, 27 East 39 Street, telephone (212) 821-0313 or 821-0378.

## Travel for Dependents

Entry requirements for dependents are essentially the same as those for holders of F-1 visas. Each dependent must carry his/her original I-20. If traveling separately from the principal visa holder, dependents should also carry a photocopy of the F-1's visa, I-94 card, and I-20. Note that if F-2 status was obtained through a change of status application, the F-2 will not be issued an F-2 entry visa unless the student has already obtained an F-1 entry visa.

Entry document checklist for dependents:

- Passport valid for at least 6 months into the future
- Valid F-2 entry visa
- I-20 signed on page 3 within the last 12 months

Photocopies of the principal visa holder's passport, I-94 card, and I-20

\*\* See Documents Required for Re-entry in F-1 Status above for document descriptions.

## US-VISIT

US-VISIT is a program recently implemented by DHS to track individuals entering and leaving the U.S. As part of the process, you will have your photograph and fingerprint taken when you enter the U.S. See more information on US-VISIT entry procedures.

Exit procedures for US-VISIT are still being developed and implemented at airports throughout the U.S. If you see a US-VISIT kiosk in the airport terminal where you are departing, you must complete the exit procedure.

## NSEERS

Some students are selected at the ports of entry to be registered in NSEERS (National Security Entry-Exit Registration System). These individuals will be issued a FINS number that is written in your passport and on your I-94 card. If you are registered in NSEERS, you are required to follow exit procedures and to depart from designated ports of departure. You should have received this list and other information on the program when you were registered. If you do not have these documents, the “Official Travel information regarding certain individual international scholars, students, and other visitors ....”, which is the “Walkaway” documentation provided by the Department of Homeland Security is available at <http://inside.bard.edu/payroll/foreign/>