



## Travel Handout

### Travel Documents

Students seeking to enter the U.S. in F-1 or J-1 status should be prepared to present the following documents to Customs and Border Protection (CBP) officials when seeking to re-enter the U.S. after a temporary absence:

☐ **I-20 or DS-2019 with Valid Travel Signature**

A travel signature is generally valid for re-entry to the U.S. within 1 year of the signature date or until the end date on the I-20 or DS-2019, *whichever occurs first*. When traveling during OPT, the travel signature is only valid for re-entry to the U.S. within 6 months of the signature date.

To request a travel signature:

- Students in F-1 status, complete the *I-20 Reprint Request* e-form (available in the [MyISSS portal](#)).
- Students in J-1 status, complete the *DS-2019 Reprint Request* e-form (available in the [MyISSS portal](#)).

Typical processing time is 2-5 business days. ISSS will reprint and email you a new I-20/DS-2019 with a new travel signature.\* Print the document, sign it on the bottom of p.1 (Student Attestation or Exchange Visitor Certification section), and carry it with you when you travel to the United States.

☐ **Valid Passport:** Must be valid 6 months beyond your date of re-entry to the U.S. ([exceptions](#))

Passports may be renewed at your country's embassy or consulate within the U.S.

☐ **Valid U.S. Visa:** Student visa must be valid at time of re-entry (Citizens of Canada do not require a visa.)

*Exception:* [Automatic Visa Revalidation](#) [8 CFR 214.1(b)(3)]: F and J non-immigrants can usually revalidate an expired visa automatically when returning to the U.S. **after a visit of less than 30 days to Canada, Mexico, or adjacent islands** except Cuba. If you intend to use automatic visa revalidation, travel with your [printed I-94](#).

☐ **Current Financial Support Documents**

Funding documentation for one year of expenses as noted on your I-20 OR the duration of your J program as noted on your DS-2019 (e.g., bank statement, financial guarantee letter, scholarship/offer letter, affidavit of support).

☐ **I-901 SEVIS Fee Receipt:** To [print a payment confirmation](#), click on "Check Status" on the [I-901 Fee webpage](#).

☐ **Unofficial Transcript and/or Verification of Enrollment Showing Full-Time Status**

Print a free unofficial transcript and [Enrollment Verification](#) through [Buff Portal](#).

☐ **PhD students, a signed letter from your PhD advisor:** Written on official letterhead, that briefly describes your PhD research in terms understandable to a general audience (i.e., layperson's terms).

Travel During OPT Authorization: ☐ **Valid Employment Authorization Document (EAD/OPT Card) AND**

☐ **Job Offer Letter for Employment in Major Field of Study**

### Travel to Third Country Destinations

Depending on the country you are traveling to and/or through, you may require a transit visa (to travel through an intermediary country on your way to your final destination) or a tourist visa to enter your final destination. Consult the appropriate embassy or foreign consular office to determine if an additional visa is necessary.



## Renewing Your Student Visa

Review the ISSS [Visa Renewal Information for Students and Scholars](#) handout.

## Transfer Of SEVIS Record/ Attending A New School After Travel

To initiate the transfer of your SEVIS record to another school, complete the *SEVIS Transfer Out Request* (in the [MyISSS portal](#)). Once the SEVIS record transfer has occurred, contact your new school and request the I-20 or DS-2019 for your new degree program.

You must re-enter the U.S. with the immigration document from the new school you will attend.

- [Additional information regarding SEVIS Transfers](#)

## F-2 / J-2 Dependent Travel

Dependents who are maintaining valid status may travel with or without the F-1 /J-1 primary and may remain in the U.S. without the F-1/ J-1 primary if the primary maintains status and will return after a temporary absence of less than five months using the same SEVIS ID number. When seeking re-entry to the U.S., dependents must present: their I-20/DS-2019 with a valid travel signature, valid passport, \*valid visa, and may be asked to provide proof of F-1/J-1's status (e.g., copies of primary's documents as noted above)

\* Exceptions: Canadians; individuals who qualify for automatic visa revalidation

## Secondary Inspection

If the Customs and Border Protection (CBP) officer at the Port of Entry (POE) is unable to quickly verify a person's eligibility for admission to the United States, they may refer the traveler to [secondary inspection](#). This is a routine process and not necessarily a cause for concern.

Common reasons for secondary inspection:

- Missing or incomplete travel documents
- Possible grounds for inadmissibility, such as:
  - Previous violations of U.S. immigration status
  - Concern that your intended activities in the U.S. do not align with the intent of your immigration status
  - Suspected fraud or misrepresentation
  - Evidence of previous or ongoing unauthorized employment in the U.S.

Secondary inspection may indicate that the CBP officer may need more time to conduct a detailed review or interview to determine your eligibility for entry. Secondary Inspection can take a few minutes to an hour or more.

## Tips to Avoid Issues When Entering the United States

- Ensure that you have all required travel documents and that they are valid at the time of entry.
- Review the [ISSS Immigration Documents website](#) to understand the required documents and their validity requirements.
- Answer all questions from the CBP officer truthfully. Refusing to answer or providing false information can delay your entry or result in denial of admission to the U.S.
- Try to arrive at the US POE during business hours
- Be mindful of time between connecting flights



## Reviewing and Printing Your I-94 Arrival Record

Review your [I-94 arrival record](#) every time you re-enter the U.S. to confirm that your entry was recorded properly as Customs and Border Protection sometimes makes mistakes that require correction.

Access the [Customs and Border Protection \(CBP\) I-94 website](#).

- Enter information as it appears on the visa you utilized to enter the U.S. or passport (Canadian citizens)
  - When entering your first (given) name, do not include middle names, nicknames, or titles.
- If you are unable to access your I-94 using your visa information:
  - Try entering your name as it appears on your passport biographic page
  - Try entering your name as it appears in the passport Machine Readable Zone
  - Try entering your name as it appears on your airline ticket/ itinerary
  - Try entering your date of birth a day before and after your actual birth date
  - Try entering your date of birth a year before and after your actual birth date

**Review your I-94 and make sure your arrival was recorded properly.**

The screenshot shows the U.S. Customs and Border Protection website header. Below it, the 'Most Recent I-94' record is displayed. On the left, a vertical box labeled 'Electronic I-94 Printout' contains the following information: Admission (I-94) Record Number : 86753099999, Most Recent Date of Entry: 2014 December 10, Class of Admission : F1, Admit Until Date : D/S, and Details provided on the I-94 Information form: Last/Surname : SIMPSON, First (Given) Name : LISA, Birth Date : 1979 AUG 11, Passport Number : J9876543, Country of Issuance : Australia. To the right, there are two boxes. The top box, 'Class of Admission', lists I-20: F-1 (Dependents: F-2), DS-2019: J-1 (Dependents: J-2), and H-1B (Dependents: H-4). The bottom box, 'Admit Until Date for F & J Status', lists D/S (Duration of Status). Blue arrows point from the 'Class of Admission' and 'Admit Until Date' boxes to the corresponding fields in the 'Electronic I-94 Printout' box.

If you are unable to retrieve your I-94 or the information on your I-94 is incorrect or incomplete: Obtain an [I-94 correction](#) with Customs and Border Protection.

**Keep your I-94 printouts to document your maintenance of status.** You do not have to turn I-94s in when exiting the U.S. *Exception:* To prove eligibility for automatic visa revalidation, travel with your I-94.

## Additional Travel Resources

- [ICE Travel FAQ](#); [Visa Renewal](#)
- [Printing a Copy of Your I-94](#)

## Frequently Asked Travel Questions

**Q: Do I need my original I-20 or DS-2019 or can I use a copy?**

- You must present your most recent, original I-20/DS-2019 or print a copy of the most recent I-20/DS-2019 emailed to you by the ISSS office at the U.S. port of entry. You must sign the I-20/DS-2019 in the Student Attestation/Exchange Visitor Certification section at the bottom of p.1.



*Q: I am outside the U.S. and I forgot my I-20/DS-2019 or the signature is more than a year old! What do I do?*

- Students in F-1 status, complete the *I-20 Reprint Request* e-form (available in the [MyISSS portal](#)).
- Students in J-1 status, complete the *DS-2019 Reprint Request* e-form (available in the [MyISSS portal](#)).

Typical processing time is 2-5 business days. ISSS will reprint and email you a new I-20/DS-2019 with a new travel signature.

- \* Print the document, sign it on the bottom of p.1 (Student Attestation or Exchange Visitor Certification section), and carry it with you when you travel to the United States.

If you do not obtain the document, you may be provisionally admitted to the U.S. for 30 days with a Form I-515A. You will have 30 days to mail in the I-515A with the requested documents. If you receive an I-515A, please consult ISSS immediately.

*Q: Can I re-enter the U.S. after I have completed my F-1 or J-1 program using my F-1 or J-1 visa?*

- F-1 and J-1 students cannot re-enter the U.S. during their grace period using their F-1 or J-1 visa.