

The guidance below is designed to support F and J visa holders preparing to travel internationally. Please review the information below for travel recommendations. If you have any questions, you are encouraged to visit with an International Services Advisor during [walk-in hours](#).

What Documentation Do I Need to Re-enter the U.S.?

In order to re-enter the U.S. successfully, you must demonstrate that you have maintained your visa status and are returning for the purposes for which your visa is issued. The documentation you’ll need to have with you in your carry-on luggage when traveling internationally is summarized in the chart below.

| Status | Documents Required |
|--|---|
| <p>Enrolled F-1 Student Visa Holder</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Valid passport (unless you hold citizenship with one of these countries, it is required that the passport have at least 6 months of validity remaining in order to re-enter) • Non-expired F1 visa • Valid I-20 form with a travel signature no older than one year • Copy of your unofficial transcript <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ If between terms, we recommend you obtain proof of enrollment for the upcoming term. You can obtain an enrollment verification letter by submitting a form via Registrar’s Office. |
| <p>F-1 Student Visa Holder on Optional Practical Training (OPT)</p> <p>If you travel internationally without an Employment Authorization Document (EAD) or current OPT employment, your travel is considered high-risk and you may encounter travel disruptions or delays with returning to the U.S. If your OPT application is pending, we recommend you postpone international travel until you are able to present your EAD and job offer letter.</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Valid passport (unless you hold citizenship with one of these countries, it is required that the passport have at least 6 months of validity remaining in order to re-enter) • Valid F-1 student visa • I-20 form with: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ OPT request approved ○ Current employer information listed, and ○ DSO travel authorization no more than 6 months old • Valid Employment Authorization Document (EAD) • Job offer letter to match current employer listed on the I-20 Form |

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| F-2 Dependents | <p>Valid passport (unless you hold citizenship with one of these countries, it is required that the passport have at least 6 months of validity remaining in order to re-enter)</p> <p>Non-expired F2 visa</p> <p>Valid F-2 I-20 form with a travel signature no older than one year</p> |
| F-2 Dependent of student on OPT | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Valid passport (unless you hold citizenship with one of these countries, it is required that the passport have at least 6 months of validity remaining in order to re-enter) • Valid F-2 visa • Valid F-2 I-20 form with a travel signature no older than 6 months • A copy of the F-1 I-20 form with: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ OPT request approved ○ Current employer information listed, and • A copy of the F-1's valid Employment Authorization Document (EAD) |
| J-1 Student Visa Holder | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Valid passport (unless you hold citizenship with one of these countries, it is required that the passport have at least 6 months of validity remaining in order to re-enter) • Non-expired J-1 visa • Valid DS-2019 form with a travel signature no older than one year • Copy of your unofficial transcript • If between terms, we recommend you obtain proof of enrollment for the upcoming term. You can obtain an enrollment verification letter by submitting a form via Registrar's Office. |
| J-1 Student Visa Holders on Academic Training | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Valid passport (unless you hold citizenship with one of these countries, it is required that the passport have at least 6 months of validity remaining in order to re-enter) • Non-expired J-1 visa • Valid DS-2019 form with: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ a travel signature no older than 6 months ○ Academic Training authorization • Job offer letter |

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|--|--|
| <p>J-1 Research Scholar/Professor, Short-Term Scholar, Student Non-Degree, Specialist, and Student Intern Categories</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Valid passport (unless you hold citizenship with one of these countries, it is required that the passport have at least 6 months of validity remaining in order to re-enter) • Non-expired J-1 visa • Valid DS-2019 form with a travel signature no older than one year • Georgia Tech Invitation Letter |
| <p>J-2 Dependents</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Valid passport (unless you hold citizenship with one of these countries, it is required that the passport have at least 6 months of validity remaining in order to re-enter) • Non-expired J-2 visa • Valid DS-2019 form with: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ a travel signature no older than 6 months |
| <p>J-2 Dependents of student participating in Academic Training</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Valid passport (unless you hold citizenship with one of these countries, it is required that the passport have at least 6 months of validity remaining in order to re-enter) • Non-expired J-2 visa • Valid DS-2019 form with: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ a travel signature no older than 6 months • A copy of the J-1's valid DS-2019 form with Academic Training authorization |

What is a Travel Signature?

A travel signature is a signature from International Services on your Certificate of Eligibility I-20 or DS-2019 form certifying you are maintaining your non-immigrant visa status for the purpose of re-entering the U.S.

Who Can Provide a Travel Signature?

An International Services Advisor serving as a Designated School Official (DSO) or Alternate Responsible Officer (ARO) is the appropriate person to sign the Certificate of Eligibility I-20/DS-2019 for F and J visa holders.

How Do I Request a Travel Signature?

1. Complete the Travel Information e-form within your [iStart Student Portal](#)
2. Request a reprint of your I-20 or DS-2019 form for shipping purposes, or visit the office to obtain your travel signature during [walk-in hours](#).

Why is a Travel Signature Required for International Travel?

When you arrive at the U.S. Port of Entry, or apply for a new F or J visa while abroad, U.S. government

officials will review your documents for the DSO or ARO travel signature to verify that a school official has confirmed you are maintaining your non-immigrant status.

For How Long is A Travel Signature Valid?

| Visa Type | Duration of Travel Signature Validity |
|----------------------|--|
| F-1 Enrolled Student | 1 year |
| F-1 Engaged in OPT | 6 months |
| F-2 | 1 year |
| J-1 | 1 year |
| J-2 | 1 year |

I Forgot to Request A Travel Signature Before I Departed the U.S.? Can I Return?

If you do not remember to request an updated travel signature before you leave, you will need to request shipping of an updated I-20 or DS-2019 with a valid travel signature. Please follow the instructions below to request a reprint of the Certificate of Eligibility I-20/DS-2019 Form and a DSO/ARO travel signature. You will then receive international shipping options to request shipping of the reprinted Certificate of Eligibility I-20/DS-2019 Form.

Can I Use A Copy of My Certificate of Eligibility I-20/DS-2019 to Enter the U.S. ?

No, you will need to present a Certificate of Eligibility I-20 or DS-2019 with original signatures, not copied versions when you arrive at the U.S. port of entry.

Can I Attempt to Enter the U.S. Without a Valid Travel Signature?

If you do not present a valid DSO/ARO travel signature at the U.S. port of entry, you'll need to plan for travel delays or disruptions as a result of arriving without this required proof of eligibility to re-enter the U.S.

What Is A Visa?

The visa is an entry document used to establish eligibility to enter the U.S. It works just like a key to get inside a home. Just as you need a key to unlock the door of a home, you need a visa entry document to enter the U.S.

What is an I-94 Arrival/Departure Record?

The electronic I-94 Arrival Departure Record received at the U.S. port of entry grants you the permission to remain in the U.S. for the Duration of Status (D/S).

Do I Need to Renew My Visa?

If your U.S. visa has expired or will expire while you are traveling, you will need to [apply for a new U.S. visa](#) in order to return to the U.S. If you do not plan to travel internationally and your visa expires, you are eligible to remain in the U.S. because the visa is an entry document only.

How Long Will It Take to Renew My Visa?

Processing times for visas can vary, we recommend you visit the [Department of State's website](#) to determine the estimate wait time to apply and receive your visa.

How Do I Renew My Visa?

New visas can't be obtained while inside the United States. In order to receive a new entry visa, you will need to exit the U.S., visit your nearest U.S. consulate, and apply for the new entry visa. For more information about the visa application process, please visit the U.S. Department of State links below:

[F Student Visa Holders Renewals](#)

[J Exchange Visitor Visa Holder Renewals](#)

Do I Have To Return to My Home Country to Renew My Visa?

If you are not returning to your home country to apply for the new visa, it is recommended that you contact the [U.S. Embassy](#) prior to making travel arrangements to ensure they can process visas for third-country citizens from your country of origin.

What Documentation Should I Prepare for Visa Renewal Purposes?

- Update your financial support information on the I-20 or DS-2019
- Print a copy of your academic transcript
- Request an enrollment verification letter from the [Registrar's office](#)

What is Automatic Visa Revalidation (AVR)?

If you are traveling to Canada, Mexico or an [adjacent island](#) for less than 30 days and have an expired U.S. visa, you may be eligible for automatic visa revalidation. Please review [the following guidance from the Department of State](#) and speak with an International Services Advisor if you are considering using this method to re-enter the U.S.

What challenges might occur with re-entering the U.S.?

- [Administrative Processing](#)
- [Changes to Immigration Regulations](#)
- [I-515A](#)

If you have issues with obtaining your new visa and are unable to return to the U.S., please report the issue as soon as possible by completing the Administrative Processing E-Form . This will allow International Student and Scholar Services to work closely with you, your academic department and university officials to determine the appropriate plan of action to support you.

If you have any issues upon re-entering at the U.S. port of entry outside of normal office hours and need immediate assistance, please contact Georgia Tech Campus Police 404-894-2500. An on-call DSO/ARO will be available to speak with Customs and Border Patrol agents.

Domestic Travel: No I-20/DS-2019 signature endorsement is required for domestic travel. However, for domestic travel we always recommend you bring your passport, DS-2019 or I-20 form, and I-94

Departure Record with you to avoid any unnecessary confusion about your identity and/or reason for being in the U.S. (Also, don't forget to keep copies of all of your immigration documents in a safe place in case the originals should ever be lost.)