



Collin College International Students Office

Guidance for Travel Outside the U.S.

This handout has been created by the International Students Office (ISO) to provide guidance for traveling outside the U.S. for F-1 students. For general guidance for traveling outside the U.S., please see the links below.

SEVP Travel: <https://www.ice.gov/sevis/travel>

Renewing F-1 Visa: <https://travel.state.gov/content/travel.html>

Study in the States: <https://studyinthestates.dhs.gov/students/getting-to-the-united-states>

Please note, traveling outside the U.S. may involve policies from multiple entities within different U.S. government agencies including the Student Exchange Visitor Program (SEVP), Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE), U.S. Embassy/Consulate, Customs and Border Protection (CBP), and U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS). These policies may not always provide clear guidance and below is the ISO's general guidance with appropriate links to the relevant government entities.

Additionally, admission into the U.S. is never guaranteed. Admission to the U.S. is determined by CBP at the border.

Travel Documents Required: F-1 visa students are permitted to travel outside the U.S. during the semester breaks and annual vacation (summer for credit students). Below is a list of documents required and recommended when traveling outside the U.S.

- **I-20- the travel signature** for the I-20 is valid for 12 months from the date of the signature. For students on OPT or who have filed for OPT, the travel signature is valid for 6 months from the date of the signature for re-entry. To request a travel signature, please submit the following form at least 1 week before departure. https://www.collin.edu/gettingstarted/advising/international/I-20%20Request_20Form.pdf
- **F-1 Visa-** the visa grants permission for an individual to enter the U.S. under the visa category. The visa can expire while an individual is within the U.S. and it will generally not impact the status. If your F-1 visa is expired and you plan to leave the U.S. and return on F-1 status, you will need to renew your visa at the U.S. Embassy or Consulate. It is advisable to allow plenty of time to schedule your appointment due to delays in getting your visa.
- **Passport-** CBP regulations for re-entry require an individual's passport to be valid for at least 6 months beyond the date of re-entry. ISO strongly advises that you keep your passport valid at all times.
- **Additional Recommended Documents:**
 - Proof of financial resources to cover one year of study at Collin College (\$24,000 and additional for dependents, if applicable)
 - Copies of current/next term enrollment or unofficial transcript
 - SEVIS I-901 fee receipt of payment

General Travel Warnings: The U.S. Department of State has a website for Travel Alerts and Warnings. While these alerts and warnings may be for U.S. citizens we recommend students review this website as well as their country's relevant government website for current travel warnings or alerts.

<https://travel.state.gov/content/travel/en/traveladvisories/traveladvisories.html/>

Travel Outside the U.S. While Classes are in Session: Students are encouraged to only travel outside the U.S. in the fall/spring semesters during college recognized breaks and holidays. Students traveling outside the U.S. when classes are in session for the fall/spring semesters may be detained at the Port of Entry when they re-enter the U.S. and required to provide an explanation/documentation for their travel. It is the student's responsibility to obtain permission and accommodations from professors if traveling during the school semester.

Travel Outside the U.S. and Approved Change of Visa Status from USCIS: Students traveling outside the U.S. who have been approved for a change of visa status within the U.S. from USCIS will need to apply for an F-1 visa (for the visa status they have been approved for) before they may re-enter the U.S.

Travel Outside the U.S. and Terminated SEVIS Record: Students who travel outside the U.S. on a terminated SEVIS record or whose SEVIS record is terminated while they are outside the U.S. will not be allowed to re-enter the U.S. Students will need to request a new I-20 from ISO, if eligible, and also pay the SEVIS I-901 fee for the new SEVIS record. A new visa may be required but you will need to consult with the U.S. Consulate in your home country regarding this requirement.

Travel While on OPT: It is not recommended to travel internationally during OPT. If you do travel, please take note of the following:

- You MUST submit your OPT application to USCIS before any plans to depart the country. If you leave the U.S. and your application is rejected, you will NOT be able to return to the U.S. and apply.
- If you attempt to return to the U.S. WITHOUT your EAD card, you absolutely have to have the following:
 - OPT Receipt from USCIS
 - Latest Form I-20, endorsed by DSO on the page 2 within in the last six months of re-entry.
 - Valid F1 visa & passport
 - Proof that you have job interviews pending or employment pending (for example, job offer letter)
- If you must travel while on OPT after adjudication, you must have the following documents:
 - A valid F-1 visa and passport.
 - Latest Form I-20, signed on the page 2 within in the last six months of re-entry.
 - Valid EAD
 - Proof of employment (or job offer letter)
- If F-1 visa is expired or you do not have one, you will need to renew or get an F-1 visa. F-1 visa renewal is not guaranteed.
- Re-entry into the U.S. without the EAD card and a letter of employment can lead to denial of re-entry into the U.S. and forfeiture of the OPT.
- By itself, the EAD card is not valid for travel purposes.
- DO NOT enter on a tourist visa or any other visa. This will void your F1 visa and OPT.
- Days spent outside of the country will count against the unemployment limit of 90 days. They only exception to this is when students travel in a period authorized by their employer or as part of their employment.

I-94 Arrival/Departure Record- the electronic I-94 record is automatically updated when a student enters or departs the U.S. Students should check their I-94 record each time they re-enter the U.S. To access your electronic I-94 record, please follow the link below. When reviewing your I-94, please check that the visa status states “F-1” and the expiration date says “D/S”. If the I-94 differs, please contact iso@collin.edu. <https://i94.cbp.dhs.gov/I94/#/home>

What a Student Can Expect at the Port of Entry:

Always Hand-Carry Your Documents

Do not check the following documents in your baggage. If your baggage is lost or delayed, you will be unable to present the documents at your Port of Entry. As a result, you may not be able to enter the United States.

1. Your passport (valid for at least six months beyond the date of your expected stay)
2. SEVIS Form I-20 (with travel signature, if you are a current student)
3. F-1 Visa in Passport

In addition, it is strongly recommended that you also hand carry the following documentation:

1. Evidence of financial resources
2. Evidence of student status, such as recent tuition receipts and transcripts
3. Paper receipt for the SEVIS fee
4. Any other document related to your immigration status

For a comprehensive information on procedures for traveling and arriving in the United States, visit:

1. U.S. Department of State - <https://travel.state.gov/content/studentsabroad/en.html>
2. Study in the USA - <https://www.studyusa.com/en>
3. I-901 Fee Payment - <https://www.fmjfee.com/>

Complete your Entry Paperwork

If Arriving By Air: Flight attendants will distribute Customs Declaration Forms (CF-6059) and Arrival Departure Record Forms (I-94). These must be completed prior to landing.

If Arriving By Land or Sea: The CBP Officer at the Port of Entry will provide the necessary Customs Declaration Forms (CF-6059) and Arrival-Departure Record Forms (I-94) to be filled out upon your arrival.

As You Arrive at the Port of Entry

Proceed to the terminal area for arriving passengers. Have the following documents available for presentation:

1. Passport
2. SEVIS Form (I-20)

All foreign nationals entering the United States must state their reason for wishing to enter the country. You will also be asked to prove information about your final destination. **It is important that you tell the CBP Officer that you will be an F-1 student.** Be prepared to include the name and address of the school program where you will enroll. (*Collin College, 2800 E. Spring Creek Pkwy, Plano, TX 75074*)

Once your inspection is successfully completed, the inspecting office will:

- Stamp your passport with your entry date and duration of status (“D/S”) for the F visa holders.

Additional Information

SECONDARY INSPECTION REQUIREMENTS

If the CBP Officer at the port of entry needs or wants to check for further information, you may be directed to an interview area known as “secondary inspection.” Secondary inspection allows officers to conduct additional research in order to verify information without causing delays for other arriving passengers.

The officer will first attempt to verify your status by using the Student and Exchange and Visitor Information System (SEVIS) database. In the event that the CBP Office needs to verify information with your school or program, we strongly recommend that you have the name and telephone number of the designated school official (DSO) at your school.

The CBP Officer may issue a “Notice to Student or Exchange Visitor” Form I-515A, which authorizes temporary admission into the United States, for students attempting to enter without an I-20 or current students traveling without an endorsement. Contact the International Student Office to submit the proper documentation requested without delay. You must follow the instructions on the Form I-515A and provide the documents to the CBP office within 30 days.

Office of Biometric Identity Management Identification Services OFBIM (Formerly US Visit)

All nonimmigrant visitors holding visas—regardless of race, national origin, or religion—participate in the program, a comprehensive registration system tracking entries to and exits from the United States. For more information: <https://www.dhs.gov/obim-biometric-identification-services>

DHS Travel Redress Inquiry Program (DHS TRIP): <https://www.dhs.gov/dhs-trip>

The Department of Homeland Security Traveler Redress Inquiry Program (DHS TRIP) is a single point of contact for individuals who have inquiries or seek resolution regarding difficulties they experienced during their travel screening at transportation hubs—like airports—or crossing U.S. borders. This includes:

- watch list issues
- screening problems at ports of entry
- situations where travelers believe they have been unfairly or incorrectly delayed, denied boarding or identified for additional screening at our nation’s transportation hubs

F-1 Visa Denials:

The approval for an F-1 visa from the U.S. Embassy or Consulate of the Department of State is not guaranteed. For more information on visa denials, please see the link below.

<https://travel.state.gov/content/travel/en/us-visas/visa-information-resources/visa-denials.html>