

Frequently Asked Questions by International Students

Can a J-1 and J-2 work in the U.S.?

J-1 Students may engage in employment as described below. J-2 dependents are eligible to apply to USCIS for employment authorization so long as the employment is NOT FOR THE PURPOSE OF SUPPORTING THE J-1. Types of employment are explained under the employment section.

Can a F-1 and F-2 work in the U.S.?

F-1 students in good status can be employed in the U.S. during and after completion of studies with authorization only. F-2 dependents may NOT accept employment or engage in business under any circumstances. Please check the Employment section for types available for F-1 status.

What if I have an expired passport or one that will expire in less than six months?

You must renew your passport before reentering the United States. In most cases, to enter the United States, you must have a passport that is valid for at least six months after the date you enter or reenter. Try to keep your passport current at all times. You need to determine your country's requirements for renewing passports as well as the time it will take. Many countries will allow you to renew your passport while in the United States. The other alternative is to renew your passport when you return home for a visit. You may want to delay leaving the United States until you have renewed your passport. You will not be able to reenter the United States without a valid passport. If your expired passport has a valid visa, you can still use it if you kept the old passport. Present the old passport, along with the new passport when you reenter the country.

What if my F-1 student visa has expired?

You can stay in the United States on an expired F-1 visa as long as you maintain your student status. However, if you are returning home or traveling to a third country, you must have a valid visa to return to the United States. Ensure that you have all the documentation you need for your visa application and allow sufficient time for processing a new visa. The documentation you may need for a new visa includes, but is not limited to the following:

- A SEVIS Form I-20, endorsed for travel and signed by your ISA and your original Form I-20 (see your ISA before you travel)
- Original evidence showing proof of necessary funds to cover tuition and living expenses

- Evidence showing your intention to return to your home country upon program completion, including evidence of compelling social and economic ties to your home country

If you have applied for or had optional practical training (OPT) approved, bring a copy of your Form I-20 endorsed for OPT and your Employment Authorization Document (EAD), if one has been issued. The Department of State recommends that you apply for a visa in your home country. For more information about visa applications visit the Department of State website (<https://travel.state.gov/content/visas/en.html>).

You can apply in a third country for a visa, but you will not be able to return to the United States until your visa has been issued. In some cases, this could take several weeks if a background check is required. If your visa is denied, you will not be able to return to the United States. Be sure to check the Department of State website for specific information pertaining to each consulate.

If you have an expired visa **and** a terminated record, we strongly advise that you do not travel outside the United States until your SEVIS record shows that you are in active status. If you do travel, you may not be able to renew your visa or return to the United States.

I wish to travel to Canada, Mexico, or one of other the islands adjacent to the United States except Cuba, can I return if my visa is expired?

Yes, in most cases. You can usually revalidate an expired visa automatically when returning from a visit of less than thirty days to Canada, Mexico, or one of the adjacent islands listed below (other than Cuba) provided that you have a valid SEVIS Form I-20 and a valid unexpired Form I-94. This process is known as **automatic visa revalidation**.

Adjacent Islands are: Miquelon, Saint Pierre, The Dominican Republic, Haiti, Bermuda, The Bahamas, Barbados, Jamaica, Windward and Leeward Islands, Trinidad, Martinique, Other British, French, and Netherlands territory or possessions in or bordering on the Caribbean Sea

However, if you meet any **one** of following criteria, **you will not be able to automatically revalidate your visa**:

- You applied for a new visa and it has not yet been issued
- You applied for a new visa and were denied
- You have a terminated SEVIS record indicating that you are out of status
- You have been out the United States for more than thirty days

Do I need a valid visa to visit Puerto Rico or the U.S. Virgin Islands?

No. You will need a valid SEVIS Form I-20 and a valid unexpired Form I-94. Be sure that you do not have a terminated SEVIS record indicating that you are out of status.

How do I know if I have a terminated record in SEVIS?

Your ISA will be able to inform you of your SEVIS record status and give you appropriate travel related advice.

I want to travel outside the United States, but my SEVIS record has been terminated. Can I return if I travel?

If you need to travel on a terminated record, you must visit your ISA. If your school has requested a data fix, the ISA will put your help desk ticket number on your Form I-20 and report your pending travel to SEVP. There is no guarantee you will be readmitted to the United States if you travel on a terminated record. In most cases, inspectors will allow you to reenter the United States if you are otherwise admissible and your ISA has properly annotated your Form I-20. It is likely, however, you will be sent to secondary inspection while CBP determines whether you are eligible to return to the United States.

Can I reenter during the 60-day grace period after finishing my program or after finishing OPT?

No.

Can I re-enter on my F-1 visa if my request for OPT is pending?

Yes, you may re-enter to search for employment.

Can I re-enter on F-1 visa if I left while on OPT?

If your OPT has been approved and you depart before you get a job, your OPT ends and you cannot reenter unless you have a written job offer. If you have a job, you may travel and reenter to resume work at the same job or you have a written offer for another job.

Are there any other requirements for travel outside the United States?

The questions above outline the general requirements for reentry for F-1 students. **However, because individual circumstances vary, consult your ISA, embassy, or legal advisor before traveling.** If you discuss your travel plans as soon as possible, this will allow time to ensure you have proper documentation for travel. If you are not returning to your home country, you should check the requirements of the country you are visiting. Some countries will require a visa. You may also need an in-transit visa for countries where you are making a connecting flight. Be sure to check before you travel. Most countries have immigration websites that provide visa information.

How can I get my California driver license?

If you are a visitor in California over 18 and have a valid driver license from your home state or country, you may drive in this state without getting a California driver license as long as your home state license remains valid. However, it is strongly recommended that you obtain a California Driver License if you expect to purchase a car or stay within the U.S. longer than one year. Also be prepared to obtain the required automobile insurance if you buy a car. A California driver license and a California identification card are available at the California Department of Motor Vehicles (DMV). They are useful to have as a source of identification for writing checks and for other instances in which you require a "government-issued ID". A California Driver's License is valid throughout the United States. If you have a license from another country, you will be required to take both the behind-the wheel driving test and written test.

Information on how to obtain a license is provided at the DMT website (www.dmv.ca.gov).

Local Department of Motor Vehicles Office:
1659 W Lugonia Ave., Redlands, 92374

Telephone: 1-800-777-0133

Hearing Impaired: TTY 1-800-368-4327

What is a Social Security Number?

A Social Security Number (SSN) is required to earn wages, file taxes, and receive some types of government services in the U.S. A Social Security Number is a nine-digit number issued to US citizens, permanent residents, and temporary workers by the Social Security Administration. Like your passport this document should be stored in a safe location and not carried on you.

You will need to obtain a Social Security card if you have an internship or employment in the U.S. The application is available at the local Social Security Administration Office or its website (www.ssa.gov). Before you visit the Social Security Office, pick up a letter of endorsement from the International Student and Scholar Advisor.

Telephone: 1-800-772-1213

Open Monday through Friday 9 a.m. to 4 p.m.

How to obtain a Social Security Number?

F-1 Students: F-1 students are only eligible for a SSN if they have a job offer through on-campus employment or authorized off-campus employment and will be receiving wages.

J-1 Students: J-1 students are eligible to apply for a SSN after they have completed visa check-in requirements and receive approval from the International Student Advisor. Please visit our office for more information.

General steps for getting a Social Security Number

1. Find a Job
2. Schedule an Appointment with the International Student and Scholar Advisor. She will then write you a Support Letter that you must take with you to the Social Security Administration (SSA). Please allow AT LEAST three business days to process this Support Letter request.
3. Complete an Application for a Social Security Card (Form SS-5). Download from the Social Security Administration website at: www.ssa.gov. (Click on "Get or Replace a Social Security Card" and then "International Students").
4. Go to Social Security Administration

Take all necessary original paperwork (application, passport, and visa documents) with you to the Social Security Administration. You must wait at least 10 days from your arrival before going to the SSA office.