

**Travel FAQ and Advisory**  
**For Continuing F-1 and J-1 Students at University of Hawaii at Manoa**  
**November 2007**

**1. What do I need to carry to go home over the next holidays and to return to Hawaii to study next semester?**

You should carry with you:

- a. Unexpired passport (renew if validity is less than 6 months), and
- b. Unexpired F-1 or J-1 visa (except Canadians, who are exempt), and
- c. F-1 students: unexpired I-20 for continued attendance, *with currently dated travel endorsement*, or
- d. J-1 students: DS 2019 form *with current dated travel endorsement*.
- e. Dependents should also carry a dependent I-20/DS-2019 with currently dated travel endorsement.

*Present these documents to the US Customs & Border Protection Officer at the time of your re-entry to the U.S.*

*Remember, upon your return to the U.S., complete a white I-94 form to present with your documents to the federal officer inspecting your documents.*

**2. How do I get the travel signature (endorsement) at the UHM?**

Request a travel endorsement from the ISS. Bring your I-20 or DS-2019 form to the ISS at least 4 business days before travel and complete the travel request form. We need to have your anticipated travel dates and other information on file. The ISS will verify your eligibility to continue studying and process your travel endorsement (or in some cases a new I-20 form) within 3 days. *Note that F-1 students with "Transfer Pending" or "Initial" I-20 forms will receive a new I-20, page 1 and page 3. Students who already have a continuing student I-20 will receive a signature on page 3.*

**3. My student visa has expired. How can I extend it?**

Students with an expired visa must apply for a new F-1 or J-1 visa abroad in order to return to the U.S.

- a. Check to find out how long the visa processing time is at the US Embassy in your country: [http://travel.state.gov/visa/temp/wait/tempvisitors\\_wait.php](http://travel.state.gov/visa/temp/wait/tempvisitors_wait.php)
- b. Make a visa appointment in advance if possible. This website: <http://usembassy.state.gov/> will allow you to look up visa application procedures and appointment systems in your home country. Times and procedures vary.

- c. All students complete the DS-156 and DS-158 forms. Some student applicants will need to complete DS-157. The major form, DS-156 is on-line at <http://evisaforms.state.gov/>
- d. Bring the following documents to your visa appointment:
- \* Unexpired passport (renew first if validity less than 6 months)
  - \* Valid I-20 or DS 2019 form, signed for travel (see above)
  - \* Transcript (to show full time enrollment and normal progress) (see UHM cashier for transcript request; there is a fee)
  - \* Proof of funding to cover the costs of study listed on I-20 or DS 2019

*If you are planning to apply for a visa in a country that is not your country of citizenship/permanent residency, please make an appointment with an ISS adviser at least 10 days prior to travel to allow for special letter processing, etc. Also allow extra time for visa processing in a “third country”.*

#### **4. How long does it take, on average to renew a student visa?**

Most student visa processing is currently considered on a priority basis and most visas are issued within one to two weeks. However, if you are studying in a field that requires a **SECURITY CLEARANCE** you may be subject to delays in visa processing. Most security clearances are currently completed in less than 30 days, but problem cases have been known to take months. See an ISS adviser for further information.

#### **5. I would like to visit Canada (Mexico) over the next semester break, but since I have an expired visa, can I go there safely?**

“Automatic Revalidation” is a special benefit for students (and some others non-immigrants) who wish to travel to Canada or Mexico for less than 30 days, and who have an expired visa. In most cases, it is possible to make a short trip and return to the US, having your expired F-1 or J-1 status “revalidated” when you return to the U.S. However, there are several requirements and care must be taken when you request this benefit at the border. Also, you may need a visa to ENTER Canada. Please make an appointment with an ISS adviser for details and instructions.

#### **6. I don’t want to go home but my visa has expired. Do I have to go home to renew my visa?**

No. As long as you have an I-20 form and I-94 card that indicate you were admitted to the US for “D/S” (duration of status) then you can stay until you finish studying. The student visa must be valid and unexpired on any day you ENTER the U.S. but it is not “used” after official entry. Thus, it may expire without consequence. *(But when you do leave the U.S. after it expires, you will need to apply for a new visa in order to return.)*

#### **7. I am planning travel to several countries and I may not return to study for several months. What do I need to do to prepare for travel?**

Please make an appointment with an ISS adviser to discuss your travel and study plans. Bring with you a definite plan for your trip. Any complex travel may have implications on your SEVIS record maintenance and your student visa status, especially if you will be away from the U.S. for several months.

**8. I am planning to transfer to another school for my next degree. I will travel abroad in the next vacation. May I have a travel endorsement on my I-20 form?**

If you are eligible to continue in our school, we can sign the I-20 form for re-entry. However, if you have informed us of your intent to transfer, and if we have released your SEVIS record to another school, you should no longer use our I-20 to travel/re-enter. In short, you need to enter the U.S. using the I-20 from the school you plan to attend. However, you should keep all your I-20 forms to be able to document your SEVIS history in the future.

**9. I am graduating and have applied for Optional Practical Training. Can I travel home over the semester break if I don't have a job yet?**

If you have received your Optional Practical Training card (the EAD card) prior to travel you are eligible to travel abroad and, if necessary, apply for a new visa. However, if you have *not* received your EAD card, it is risky to leave the US. Regulations state that the EAD is a required U.S. entry document for a student who has already graduated and is about to begin OPT (or is pursuing OPT), along with the I-20 showing the OPT recommendation, and a travel endorsement on page 3. You may also be asked for proof of employment in the form of a letter from your U.S. employer. *(Note that the US Custom & Border Protection officials at the Honolulu Airport are currently allowing students to re-enter with a receipt showing that OPT is pending. However, this entry benefit is extra-regulatory and cannot be guaranteed. Also, no visa applicant with only a receipt will be able to process a student visa extension.)*

**10. I graduated a few months ago and am currently on OPT. I am working and I want to take a short vacation to my home country. May I travel safely?**

Yes, in general. However, be sure you have a valid visa (or time to apply for a new visa) and have all the supporting documents mentioned above, plus your EAD card and a letter of employment from your U.S. employer. (If you have less than 3 months left on your OPT however, there may be some risk if you will be applying for a new visa.)