



The University of Texas
Health Science Center at Houston

General Travel Recommendations for F-1 Students Sponsored by The University of Texas Health Science Center at Houston

F-1 students sponsored by The University of Texas Health Science Center at Houston (UTHealth) who wish to leave the United States temporarily (**absence from U.S. must be less than five months**) and return to continue studies in which they are actively enrolled, must ensure that all required documents for re-entry to the U.S have been prepared prior to travel.

Before Traveling Abroad:

1. Review the U.S. Consulate/Embassy's appointment process and document requirements [\[https://www.usembassy.gov\]](https://www.usembassy.gov)
2. Review the Office of International Affairs' (OIA) [Travel Guidance](#)
3. Complete an OIA [Travel Request Form](#)
4. Schedule an appointment to meet with an OIA Advisor by sending an email to utoiahouston@uth.tmc.edu to discuss travel and secure original travel endorsement(s) on Form I-20
5. **Cruises** – Please note that cruises may disembark in multiple countries each requiring its own visa depending on your country of citizenship. It is imperative that you research visa requirements for each country on the cruise itinerary before booking the cruise.

Required Documents for Re-Entry to the United States:

- A valid Form I-20 with current DSO travel authorization signature (page 2) from the school that sponsors the F-1 visa.
 - OIA Advisor's signature confirms that the F-1 student is maintaining his/her F-1 status and eligible to re-enter the U.S.
 - **OIA Advisor signature is valid for six months (for students on Post-Completion Optional Practical Training [OPT] or STEM OPT)**
- A valid and unexpired F-1 student visa stamp.
 - F-1 students should always be aware of the F-1 visa stamp expiration date and the number of entries allowed on his/her visa. If the visa stamp is expired or if the F-1 student has already used the number of entries allowed, the F-1 student will need to apply for a new F-1 visa stamp at a U.S. Embassy/Consulate abroad in order to re-enter the U.S.
 - Note: Canadian citizens do not require an F1 visa stamp to re-enter the U.S. from Canada.
- If travel abroad will be during a semester and/or more than one-week (excluding holiday/vacation periods) written notification from the Dean or Dean's Designee authorizing the absence must be submitted to OIA with travel request form.

- A valid passport at least six months into the future.
- Confirmation of SEVIS I-901 payment.
- Original Financial Evidence.
- Academic transcript or a Statement that student is in good standing with academic program from Program Director.
- Original Employment Authorization Document (EAD) (for students on OPT or STEM OPT)
 - o *If the EAD has not been approved and received and there is no proof of a job to return to, the OIA strongly recommends that the student **NOT** travel!*
- Letter from the current employer for students on OPT or STEM OPT.

Port of Entry Guidance

At the U.S. port of entry, the U.S. Customs and Border Protection (CBP) Officer will review all of the documents listed above. After the U.S. CBP Officer's review, he/she should issue an admission stamp in the F-1 student's passport and write "**F-1/DS**" and return the documents to the F-1 student.

During entry procedures an F-1 student should answer all questions clearly. Omission or misrepresentation of information can result in denial of entry. If an F-1 student encounters any serious difficulty, please call OIA at 713-500-3176 between 8 a.m. and 5 p.m., Monday - Friday, or at our **emergency after-hours pager, 713-200-1825** and an OIA Advisor will assist you. To contact the pager, you can either text it or dial the pager's number, wait for two beeps, enter the phone number you wished to be contacted at, press pound, wait for three beeps, and then hang up.

Form I-94 Arrival/Departure Record

After an F-1 student is admitted to the U.S., the F-1 student must immediately verify that his/her re-entry to the U.S. is recorded correctly by obtaining the updated Form I-94 Arrival/Departure record at the U.S. Customs & Border Protection's website at www.cbp.gov/i94. A legible copy of the new I-94 record must be submitted to the OIA immediately but no later than 48 hours after his/her admission to the U.S. Failure to check the I-94 immediately after admission to the U.S. and providing the VISA Department with a legible copy of new I-94 could result in loss of immigration status and/or benefits.

Note: The I-94 record end date should say "D/S." If your I-94 record has a date, is blank, or says anything besides "D/S" you should contact OIA **immediately**.

Form I-515A

An F-1/F-2 student who re-enters the U.S. without required documentation **may** be allowed entry by the U.S. Customs and Border Protection Officer using Form I-515A (formerly I-515). If granted this benefit, the F-1/F-2 student is permitted an admission for a limited number of days and is required to comply with the I-515A notice before it expires. The VISA Department must be notified immediately should an I-515A be issued as it may impact your immigration status, studies, and/or employment (if applicable).

***For more information concerning travel abroad, see [U.S. Department of Homeland Security FAQ for Travel](#).**

If there are any questions, please make an appointment with your OIA Advisor by calling 713-500-3176 or by

sending an email to utoiahouston@uth.tmc.edu.