



NORTHWESTERN STATE UNIVERSITY OF LOUISIANA
INTERNATIONAL STUDENT RESOURCE CENTER
Russell Hall, Room 227
125 Central Avenue
Natchitoches, LA 71497

F-1 / J-1 TRAVEL INFORMATION

It is strongly recommended that you always carry your original documents when traveling internationally and within the US.

To reenter the U.S. from abroad, you will need the following documents based on your status:

Student Type Required Documents

- F-1: Current Student**
- Most recent valid I-20 form with a travel signature on page 2 that is less than **1 year** old.
 - Valid passport (that won't expire for at least 6 months).
 - Valid F-1 visa (except Canadian citizens).
 - Optional documents: evidence of financial resources, printed class schedule, name and contact information of the ISRC office.

Note: Always use your most recently issued I-20 form. Students who were issued a transfer I-20 must obtain a new I-20 issued for "continued attendance" in order to re-enter the U.S. to resume their program.

- F-1: Student on OPT**
- Most recent valid I-20 form (showing OPT recommendation on p. 2) with a travel signature that is less than **6 months** old.
 - Valid passport (that won't expire for at least 6 months).
 - Valid F-1 visa (except Canadian citizens).
 - Valid Employment Authorization Document (EAD), which is the card authorizing your OPT.
 - Letter from employer verifying employment start date or resumption date.

- Optional documents: evidence of financial resources, official NSU transcript, name and contact information of the ISRC office.

Note: Students re-entering the U.S. after program end date but before OPT start date must have their EAD with them.

F-1: Student on STEM OPT Extension or pending STEM OPT Extension

- Most recent valid I-20 form (showing STEM OPT recommendation on p. 3) with a travel signature that is less than **6 months** old.
- Valid passport (that won't expire for at least 6 months).
- Valid F-1 visa (except Canadian citizens).
- Valid Employment Authorization Document (EAD). Note: If you have a pending STEM OPT application, you should carry your expired post-completion OPT EAD card with you, for reference, along with the receipt notice from your pending application.
- Letter from employer verifying employment start date or resumption date.
- Optional documents: evidence of financial resources, official NSU transcript, name and contact information of the ISRC office.

J-1: Current Student & Their Dependent

- Most recent valid DS-2019 form with travel signature that is less than one year old.
- Valid passport (that won't expire for at least 6 months).
- Valid J-1 or J-2 visa (except Canadian citizens).
- Optional documents: evidence of financial resources, official NSU transcript, name and contact information of the ISRC office.

J-1: Student on Post-Completion Academic Training (AT)

- Most recent valid DS-2019 form with travel signature that is less than one year old.
- Valid passport (that won't expire for at least 6 months).

- Valid J-1 visa (except Canadian citizens).
- Job offer letter.

Travel Signatures

Travel signatures, also called 'travel endorsements', are ISRC/Admissions designated officer's signatures that can be found on your I-20 (page 2) or DS-2019. When the ISRC provides a travel endorsement on your document, it is confirming to the U.S. government that you are eligible to return to the University. Anytime you travel internationally in F or J (including F-2/J-2 dependents), you must have a valid travel signature on your I-20 or DS-2019 at the time of re-entry to the U.S.

Travel Signature on I-20 (F-1 Student): Page 2

Department of Homeland Security
U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement

I-20, Certificate of Eligibility for Nonimmigrant Student Status
OMB NO. 1653-0038

SEVIS ID: (F-1) NAME: John Smith

EMPLOYMENT AUTHORIZATIONS

CHANGE OF STATUS/CAP-GAP EXTENSION

AUTHORIZED DROP BELOW FULL COURSE OF STUDY

TRAVEL ENDORSEMENT

This page when properly endorsed, may be used for reentry of the student to attend the same school after a temporary absence from the United States. Each certification signature is valid for one year.

Designated School Official	TITLE	SIGNATURE	DATE	PLACE ISSUED
Maggie Girland	Int'l Student Advisor	X John Smith	12/15/2015	Boston, MA
		X		
		X		
		X		

Date Format:
Month/Day/Year

Travel Signature on DS-2019 (J-1): Page 1

Date (mm-dd-yyyy) of Signature

TRAVEL VALIDATION BY RESPONSIBLE OFFICER
(Maximum validation period is one year*)

*EXCEPT: Maximum validation period is up to six months for Short-term Scholars and four months for Camp Counselors and Summer Travel/Work.

(1) Exchange Visitor is in good standing at the present time

7/26/2007
Date (mm-dd-yyyy)

Signature of Responsible Officer or Alternate Responsible Officer

(2) Exchange Visitor is in good standing at the present time

Date (mm-dd-yyyy)

Signature of Responsible Officer or Alternate Responsible Officer

KOREA 04-17-2007

Travel Signature Validity

Travel signatures are valid for **12 months** from the signature date listed on the I-20/DS-2019 (shown above). If you are an **F-1 student on post-completion OPT**, then your travel signature will be valid for 6 months only. Travel signatures are located on page 2 of I-20s or in the lower right hand corner on page 1 of DS-2019s.

For the I-20 example listed above:

- Travel Signature Issued: **12/15/2015**
- Travel Signature expired: **12/15/2016** (one year validity)
- Expiration for student on OPT: **06/15/2016** (6 months validity)

Getting a New Travel Signature

Travel signatures are provided as a walk-in service at the ISRC/Admissions offices anytime during regular business hours; no appointment is needed. Make sure to bring your I-20/DS-2019.

Visa Renewal

Visa stamps are available outside the U.S. only. Their sole purpose is for *entry* into the country; once you are in the U.S., you only need to renew an expired visa if you leave the U.S. and want to return in the same status.

Visa Eligibility

You continue to be eligible to apply for an F-1 or J-1 visa for the duration of your F-1 or J-1 status, including any periods of post-completion Optional Practical Training (OPT) or Academic Training (AT) that follow your program. OPT and AT are continuations of your F-1/J-1 status, respectively, and you remain eligible to apply for a visa anytime your SEVIS record is still active (e.g. until your OPT/AT end date). However, visa approval and issuance is always up to the individual consular officer reviewing your case.

Grace Period

'Grace Period' refers to the cushion of time before and after your F-1/J-1 program that allows you to be in the U.S. to prepare for your program or prepare for departure. The length of the Grace Period varies for F-1 and J-1 students. Only certain activities are allowed during your grace period. The grace period is **not** shown on your I-20/DS-2019 or any other document.

F-1 Student Grace Period Length

- **Pre-program:** Enter U.S. up **30 days** before your I-20 start date.
 - This grace period at the beginning of your program allows you time to settle in and begin looking for an on-campus job, register in your classes, get to know the campus, etc.
- **Post-program:** Following completion of I-20 end date or Optional Practical Training EAD end date, you have a **60 day** grace period.
 - During the grace period following your end date you may **NOT** attend classes or work.

J-1 Student Grace Period Length:

- **Pre-program:** Enter U.S. up **30 days** before your DS-2019 start date.
 - This grace period at the beginning of your program allows you time to settle in and begin looking for an on-campus job, register in your classes, get to know the campus, etc.
- **Post-program:** Following completion of DS-2019 end date, you have a **30 day** grace period.
 - During the grace period following your end date you may **NOT** attend classes or work.

Activities Allowed in Grace Period

During the grace period following your end date you may **NOT** attend classes or work (unless you've been approved for post-completion OPT). However, you can finish incomplete work, including working on your thesis, or other required academic completion tasks, such as taking the Bar Exam if you are a Law graduate.

This grace period is just an opportunity to prepare for departure. You can travel within the U.S. or apply for a different immigration status during this time. Once you exit the U.S. you will not be permitted to re-enter in F or J status if your program of study has finished or you have not been approved for post-completion OPT. You can re-enter the U.S. in another status, such as tourist, if you choose.

Complying with the Grace Period

Once your I-20/DS-2019 end date passes, you must do one of the following by the end of the grace period:

- Leave the U.S., thus ending your F-1/J-1 status.
- F-1: Have an application for OPT pending (if eligible).
- J-1: Have approved Academic Training (if eligible).
- Transfer your SEVIS record to another school (if eligible).
- Have a Change of Status application pending.

If you have any other questions, please contact us at contrerast@nsula.edu, or (318) 357-5939.