



Documents to Carry if Resuming Studies Upon Return

- A valid passport
- A valid F-1 visa stamp, unless you are Canadian. If your F-1 visa has expired, you will need to apply for a new visa at a consulate abroad before seeking readmission in F-1 status
- A Form I-20 that has been endorsed for travel by your DSO in the last six months
- If applying to change status to H-1B, a copy of H-1B petition and approval notice

Documents to Carry if Traveling While on OPT

- A valid passport
- A valid F-1 visa stamp. If your F-1 visa has expired, you will need to apply for a new visa at a consulate abroad before seeking readmission in F-1 status
- A Form I-20 that has been endorsed by your DSO in the last six months for travel, OPT (12 month or STEM) and cap-gap (if applicable)
- A valid EAD. If applying for a STEM extension and EAD is still pending, carry 12-month EAD (even if expired) and receipt for extension
- Employment letter verifying that you have a valid job or job offer
- If applying to change status to H-1B, a copy of H-1B petition and approval notice

Applying for an F-1 Visa

If you travel abroad and do not have a valid F-1 visa, you must apply for one at a U.S. consulate before you seek readmission. When applying for a visa, you will need to establish that you have nonimmigrant intent and that are returning to the United States to resume legitimate F-1 student activities (i.e. continued study or OPT employment). You will also have to undergo a security clearance before your visa can be issued. If your name, personal details or travel history match or are similar to information in government security databases or travel watch lists, the State Department will not be able to issue a visa until it completes a security clearance. If this occurs, your reentry to the United States could be delayed, and therefore, you must consider this possibility before deciding to travel abroad.

Visa Exemption: If you are traveling to Canada, Mexico or an island adjacent to the United States (other than Cuba), and staying for less than 30 days, you may be able to reenter the United States with your expired F-1 visa stamp, a valid passport, your EAD card (if in OPT) and an I-20 that has been endorsed for travel and OPT (if applicable) by your DSO. Qualifying adjacent islands include the Bahamas, Barbados, Bermuda, the Dominican Republic, Haiti, Jamaica, Martinique, Trinidad, and certain other islands (https://www.ice.gov/sevis/travel#_ToC81222015).

Notes on Unemployment

The number of days you spend outside of the country may be counted against the regulatory limit on unemployment during the OPT period. Unemployment limits are as follows:

- No more than 90 days of unemployment during an initial grant of OPT
- No more than 30 days during a 17-month OPT extension based on a STEM degree, for a maximum cumulative period of 120 days of unemployment
- No more than 60 days during a 24-month OPT extension based on a STEM degree, for a maximum period of 150 days of unemployment

Unemployment includes time spent in or outside the United States while unemployed, but does not include international travel that is part of your OPT employment or that takes place during leave authorized by your OPT employer.

Impact of March 6, 2017 executive order, “Protecting the Nation from Foreign Terrorist Entry Into the United States”: If you are a national of Iran, Libya, Somalia, Sudan, Syria or Yemen, you may be subject to the travel restrictions outlined in this presidential executive order. Please contact your designated Fragomen professional to discuss any travel needs prior to making any travel plans