

# F-1 / J-1 INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS

## IMMIGRATION DOCUMENTS & TRAVELING ABROAD

F R E Q U E N T L Y   A S K E D   Q U E S T I O N S   ( F A Q )

F-1 visa: Form I-20

J-1 visa: Form DS-2019

### What documents do I need to re-enter the U.S.?

- Valid I-20 or DS-2019 with a recent travel signature
- Valid F-1/J-1 visa
- Passport
- I-94 record: <https://i94.cbp.dhs.gov/home>
- Proof of enrollment (class schedule or enrollment verification)
- Good Standing Letter (optional) → iTorero › F-1/J-1 Student Services

### ✓ What should I check when I re-enter the U.S. after traveling abroad during my program?

- After re-entering the U.S., you must make sure your I-94 record shows that you were admitted in F-1 or J-1 status. If you are admitted under any other visa category, you are not legally permitted to attend classes. Please review your I-94 as soon as you enter and email our office immediately if your class of admission is incorrect.

### How do I check if my travel signature is valid?

- The travel signature on your I-20 is valid for 12 months (6 months for students on OPT). Check the date next to the signature on page 2 of your I-20 to ensure it's still valid.
- The travel signature on your DS-2019 is valid for 12 months or the length of DS-2019, whichever is shorter. Check the date above the signature on your DS-2019 to ensure it's still valid.

### The travel signature on my I-20 or DS-2019 is expired, how do I request a signature?

- F-1: iTorero › F-1 Student Services › I-20 Request
- J-1: iTorero › J-1 Student Services › DS-2019 Request

### What should I do if I lose my I-20 or DS-2019 while traveling?

- Check your USD email first.
- If not found:
  - F-1: iTorero › F-1 Student Services › I-20 Request
  - J-1: iTorero › J-1 Student Services › DS-2019 Request

### Do I need a valid travel signature on my I-20/DS-2019 to depart the U.S.?

- No, you will only need a valid travel signature on your I-20/DS-2019 to re-enter the U.S.

### My travel signature has expired, and I'll be returning to the U.S. before I can receive a new one. Can I still re-enter?

- Re-entering the U.S. with an expired travel signature can be risky. While it is ultimately up to the Customs and Border Protection (CBP) officer, you will most likely receive an I-515A form, which will allow you to enter the U.S. and gives you 30 days to submit the required documents (including an updated I-20/DS-2019) to maintain your status.
- If you receive an I-515 document upon entry, please email OISS as soon as possible so that we can help you resolve your status issues. The form I-515 only grants temporary admission so it is critical that you reach out to OISS right away upon your arrival.

### My program end date has expired on my I-20 or DS-2019, but I didn't pass the required classes for my degree. What should I do?

- If your program end date has expired and you haven't completed your degree, you are no longer maintaining F-1/J-1 status. Contact OISS immediately to discuss your options ([internationaloffice@sandiego.edu](mailto:internationaloffice@sandiego.edu))

### Will I have issues returning if there are changes in U.S. immigration policies?

- While changes are possible, F-1/J-1 students with proper documentation should generally be able to re-enter. Be sure to stay updated with any announcements from our office.
- Review the Important Reminders and Announcements issued by OISS [HERE](#).

### When should I re-enter the U.S. for the spring and fall semester?

- Return before the semester begins
- Recommended: arrive 1 week early
- New students with an initial I-20/DS-2019 may enter 30 days before the start date listed on their I-20/DS-2019

### Could you please provide emergency contact information?

- For emergencies on campus please contact Public Safety at 619-260-7777.
- For after hours emergencies on campus, please call Public Safety at 619-260-2222.
- For non-emergencies concerning travel documents, please email [internationaloffice@sandiego.edu](mailto:internationaloffice@sandiego.edu) right away. We will be responding to emails and inquiries in the order they are received.



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