Travel Outside the U.S.: Frequently Asked Questions for Students in J-1 Status

Required Travel Documents
What travel documents do I need to bring when I leave the U.S.?
Students must have a valid passport, valid visa, and DS-2019 with a valid travel endorsement.

What documents do I need when I am on Academic Training?
Students on Academic Training (AT) must have a valid passport, valid visa, and DS-2019 with a valid travel endorsement. It is also highly recommended that students travel with an offer letter or employment letter.

Travel Endorsements (Travel Signatures)
What is a travel endorsement or travel signature?
A travel endorsement, otherwise known as a travel signature, is issued by ISSO. This signature verifies that you are currently enrolled and maintaining status, and therefore eligible for reentry into the U.S.

Do I need a travel signature if I am traveling inside the U.S.?
No, travel signatures are only needed for reentry into the U.S.

How long is a travel signature valid?
Travel signatures are valid for one year. For students on AT, travel signatures are only valid for 6 months.

I forgot to get a travel signature before I left the U.S. What should I do?
Contact ISSO at 515-294-1120 or isso@iastate.edu. ISSO will provide more instructions at that time.

Visa Renewal
Do I need to get a new visa?
A student does not need a new visa if it has not expired. However, students in the following circumstances may need to get a new visa and should contact the U.S. Consulate or Embassy in their home country to confirm:

- Students who have reported their passport (and visa) lost
- Students who have updated their name on their passport
- Students who have taken an absence from the U.S. for 5 months or longer
- Students who have been dismissed and are reentering the U.S. with a new SEVIS record
- Students who have violated their J-1 status and have NOT been reinstated to valid F-J-1 status
- Students whose visas have been revoked by the Department of State

Do students on AT need to get a new visa?
Students on AT do not need to get a new visa if the visa has not expired.

What documents do I need for the visa renewal process?
ISSO recommends students check the U.S. Consulate or Embassy policies in the country where they will renew their visa.
Can I get my visa renewed in a country other than my home country?
It may be possible for students to renew their visa in a country other than their home country, but there is a higher risk of facing complications, and ISSO therefore recommends that students renew their visas in their home countries to reduce those risks. Some countries have policies that do not permit third-country nationals from renewing their visas in that country. It is always recommended that students check the U.S. Consulate or Embassy website before applying.

Automatic Revalidation
What is automatic revalidation?
Automatic revalidation allows a J-1 student to reenter the U.S. without a valid passport if they visited Mexico, Canada, or adjacent islands. The visit can be for no longer than 30 days for automatic revalidation to apply. Students must have a valid passport, DS-2019, and travel endorsement to reenter the U.S. using automatic revalidation. ISSO also recommends students take a copy of their I-94 record. There are some exceptions to automatic revalidation, and students are encouraged to read more about Automatic Revalidation on the Department of State’s website here.

Does automatic revalidation apply to students on AT?
Yes, automatic revalidation applies to students on AT. Students on AT must have a valid passport, and DS-2019 with travel endorsement. ISSO also recommends students take a copy of their I-94 record.

Disclaimer: This Frequently Asked Questions document is intended for general information and guidance. Please consult with an International Student and Scholar Advisor in the International Students and Scholars Office regarding your individual request.