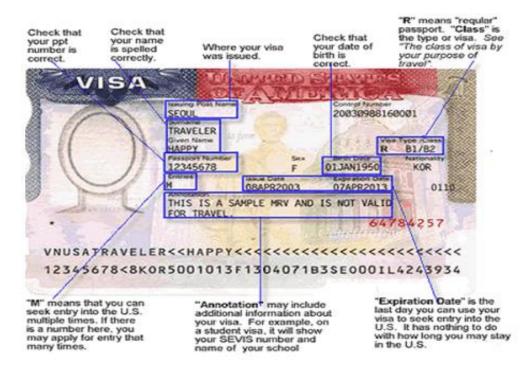


Understanding the F-1 Visa

What is a visa?

A visa is a document that gives the traveler permission to go to the US border to enter for a specific purpose. While having the visa does not guarantee entry; it does show the inspector at the port-of-entry that a consular officer at a U.S. Embassy or Consulate abroad has determined eligibility to seek entry for that specific purpose. The visa must be obtained outside of the US and is a sticker placed in the traveler's passport. The sticker will indicate identifying information, the purpose of the visit, the length of time it can be used to enter the US with supporting documents and the number of entries allowed. Students apply for an F-1 visa in order to enter as a full-time student.



What if my visa expires while I am in the US?

The F-1 does not determine how long you can stay in the U.S. Once you are here, the designation of D/S on the I-94 card and I-20 is what governs your ability to remain in the U.S. as a student. (Please see the handout on Maintaining F-1 Status for further information.) Therefore, you do not need to be concerned with the expiration of your visa, unless you travel abroad for a short visit prior to completing your degree.

What if my visa is expired and I am traveling home and intend to return for the next semester?

You must have an unexpired visa in order to travel to the US and re-enter. Therefore, you must go through the same procedures as completed initially in order to obtain a new visa in your passport. Each country has different requirements; however, in general, you should be prepared with the following:



- Valid passport
- Nonimmigrant visa application, Form DS-160
- Application fee payment receipt
- Photo
- Form I-20
- Financial support documents
- Proof of attendance at the school (transcripts, registration for the following semester, admission letter, etc.)
- Receipt for SEVIS I-901
- Proof of your intention to depart the US upon completion of your studies and any applicable optional practical training.

Please visit http://travel.state.gov/visa/ for more information on visa application procedures, interview appointment policies, visa wait times and additional visa issues.

What my visa is not expired, but my previous school is indicated on my visa?

If you have transferred schools since your visa was initially issued and you having been maintaining F-1 status, you do not need to renew your visa if it has not expired. You should, however, bring copies of all previously issued I-20's to show your complete history.

I am from a visa waiver country; do I need to apply for an F-1 student visa?

Yes, the visa waiver applies to visits as tourists only. If your purpose for entry to the US is to be a student, then you must apply for an F-1 visa.

What is automatic visa revalidation and can I take advantage?

Automatic visa revalidation may apply for students holding expired nonimmigrant visas who seek to return to the US after brief travel to Canada, Mexico, or an adjacent island for thirty days or less. (Please see the International Student Advisor for a complete list of adjacent islands.)

Caution: Students may not use automatic visa revalidation if they have applied for a new visa which has not yet been issued or if the application for a new visa was denied.

What if my passport is expired, but I have a valid F-1 visa in it?

If you have a valid visa in your expired passport, do not remove it from your expired passport. You may use your valid visa in your expired passport along with a new valid passport for travel and admission to the United States.