F-1 Students – Reentering the U.S.

You must obtain prior approval from ISSO if one of the following applies:

- If you are planning to be away for a period longer than one week at any time during the official semester start and end date (i.e., any absence taking longer than a one-week period during the semester dates, must have our permission)
- If you are planning on returning to school after the semester start date

Students are not permitted to be on a leave of absence from UMass Lowell (without prior approval from the ISSO). This pertains to any type of leave, whether academic leave, personal, medical leave, military leave, etc.

- All must have a valid passport upon re-entry to the U.S.
- Your passport must be valid at least six months beyond your approved stay as per your visa document
- Valid visa stamp for the status that you are returning to (F-1, J-1, H-1B, TN, O-1, etc.)
- Do not re-enter in tourist status, as it will cancel any other status. Upon arriving in the U.S., always check your I-94 record to ensure you entered with appropriate status.
- Do not travel with a pending petition at United States Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS)
- Some will also need an employment verification letter as detailed within above sections pertaining to your category

TRAVELING TO CANADA & RE-ENTERING THE U.S. FROM CANADA

If you are interested in visiting Canada, be sure to check the Canadian Consulate General’s official website in New York for the most current information. You are no longer permitted to apply for a Canadian visa in person, but you can drop off your paperwork in person. Please visit the Canadian Government’s Visas and Immigration website.

You will need to complete the necessary visa application process, and submit the paperwork as per their instructions. (Be sure to follow their instructions carefully.) Typically, you will be required to mail in your documentation. If approved, your Canadian entry visa and documentation will be returned to you. In certain cases, you may receive a notice requesting an in-person interview to pick up your documentation.

Depending on your country of citizenship, you may need a Canadian visa to enter Canada. Also, depending on your country of citizenship, it could be a lengthy visa application process, as they may
need to process a security check (i.e., Administrative Processing). Their address is: Canadian Consulate General; Immigration Section; 1251 Avenue of the Americas; New York, NY 10020-1175)

F-1 & J-1 visa holders are allowed to re-enter the U.S. from Canada with expired F-1 or J-1 visa stamps provided they are re-entering within a 30-day period and have a valid passport (valid at least five years beyond the expiration date of their Form I-20 or Form DS-2019). This is called “automatic revalidation”.

H-1B Visa Holders re-entering the U.S. from either Canada or Mexico are allowed to enter the U.S. with an expired H-1B visa stamp provided that they are re-entering within a 30-day period and have a valid passport (valid at least five years beyond the expiration date on their Form I-797/H-1B Approval Notice). Canada and Mexico, however, are the ONLY two contiguous territories that allow H-1B visa holders to re-enter with expired H-1B visa stamps.

NOTE: If you are traveling to Canada for the sole purpose of applying for a U.S. visa at a U.S.
Consulate, you are not guaranteed approval. You may be subjected to a long security check. Be sure to first discuss your travel plans with the ISSO. Third Country Nationals visiting Canada for the purpose of applying for a U.S. visa may be denied. It is always risky to enter Canada for this purpose.

TRAVELLING TO CONTIGUOUS TERRITORIES OR ADJACENT ISLANDS:

CFR 286.1 (a) defines Contiguous Territories and Adjacent islands as:

Canada, Mexico and Adjacent Islands. Adjacent Islands are: Bahamas, Barbados, Bermuda, Dominican Republic, Haiti, Jamaica, Leeward Islands (Anguilla, Antigua, Guadeloupe, Montserrat, Nevis, St. Kitts and The British Virgin Islands), Martinique, St. Pierre & Miquelon, Trinidad & Tobago, Windward Islands (Dominica, Grenada, St. Lucia, St. Vincent), as well as other British, French or Dutch Territories or Possessions in or bordering on the Caribbean Sea.