

# Visa....Visa....Visa...

Everything you need to know about your F or J visa



University of Texas at Austin - International Student and Scholar Services

## **The visa stamp in my passport is about to expire. Do I need a new one?**

The visa stamp in your passport is for entry purposes only. Once you are in the U.S., your I-20 or DS-2019 and I-94 card become the active documents that permit you to remain in the U.S. You are allowed to stay for D/S which means, "Duration of Status", in other words, the period of time in which you are maintaining your non-immigrant status. The completion date on your I-20 or DS-2019 is the expiration date of your status. Your I-20 or DS-2019 can be extended at the International Student and Scholar Services (ISSS) if necessary - see the "Extension of Stay" handout.

## **Applying for a visa in your home country**

We recommend that you apply for a visa at the US Consulate or Embassy in your home country. Most consulates require a personal interview with a consular officer, as well as collection of biometric identifiers (fingerprints and digital photograph). It is always advisable to check with the consulate or embassy where you will be applying to determine current application and documentation requirements, as well as processing times. To find out about processing times and procedures consult the website of the consulate to which you plan to apply: [http://travel.state.gov/travel/tips/embassies/embassies\\_1214.html](http://travel.state.gov/travel/tips/embassies/embassies_1214.html)

## **Background and security checks**

Consulates and embassies are more frequently conducting background checks on individuals, resulting in possible delays in visa issuance. Background/security checks can be triggered by, but not limited to, arrests in the United States, certain courses that appear on your transcript, or by your field of study. Background/security checks can take up to several months and possibly even longer.

## **Applying for a visa in a third country**

F and J students who apply for a visa stamp in a third country, including Canada and Mexico, will not be allowed to re-enter the U.S. on an expired visa stamp if the new visa is not approved at the U.S. Consulate. If your visa application is denied, you would need to depart directly to your home country to apply for a new visa to re-enter the U.S. Please talk to an Immigration Advisor at ISSS before making the decision to apply for a visa in a third country.

If you are subject to a background or security check upon application for a visa renewal in a third country, you will have to remain in that country until the background or security check is completed and the visa is approved before you are allowed to re-enter the U.S.

### **To enter a third country, you may need an entry visa.**

The following contacts may be helpful to determine if you need a visa to enter another country:

Canada: (213) 346-2711 or <http://www.cic.gc.ca/english/visit/index.html>

Mexico: (512) 478-2866

Foreign consular offices in the United States: <http://www.state.gov/s/cpr/rls/fco>

For information on automatic visa revalidation (re-entry to the U.S. from Mexico, Canada and other contiguous territories), please see the "Travel Advisory" handout.

09/04

## **Visa application process in Mexico or Canada**

The U.S. Consulates in Mexico only process F-1 visa renewals for continuing students in full-time degree programs who can demonstrate that their initial F-1 visa was issued in their home country.

An appointment for a visa renewal in Mexico or Canada is made in advance in one of the following ways:

For consulates in **Mexico**:

- Web Address: <http://www.visa-usa.com.mx/default.aspx>
- Call 1-900-476-1212. You can pay by the minute using a U.S. 900 number. Charges will appear on your telephone bill.
- Call 1-800-919-1754. You can charge a flat transaction fee per call to your Visa or MasterCard using a toll-free U.S. 800 number.

For consulates in **Canada**:

- Web Address: <http://www.nvars.com/use>  
A flat fee will be charged (\$15 Canadian) payable by credit card.
- Call 1-888-840-0032 or 1-900-443-3131. A per-minute fee will be charged on your phone bill for the U.S. 888 number. The U.S. 900 number is not accessible from all phones, and the charge for the connection can be paid only by credit card.

## **What will I need to apply for a new visa?**

- Current SEVIS I-20 or DS-2019**, signed for travel by an Immigration Advisor within the last year.
- Official UT Transcript** in a sealed envelope and **Letter of Good Standing**, also called "letter of enrollment", both available at the Registrar's Office (Main Building 1).
- Proof of financial support**. You should be able to verify the amount shown as the total on your I-20 or DS-2019 with a personal bank statement, Research Assistant/Teaching Assistantship verification letter (should include salary and tuition payment details), or sponsor's letter and sponsor's bank statement.
- Proof of ties to your home country**. From the Department of State web site: "Student visa applicants must establish to the satisfaction of the consular officer that they have binding ties to a residence in a foreign country which they have no intention of abandoning, and that they will depart the United States when they have completed their studies. It is impossible to specify the exact form the evidence should take since applicants' circumstances vary greatly". Examples of such evidence may include: copies of bank statements from a bank in your home country, evidence of ownership of property or residence in your home country, a job offer letter from home, or letters from family.
- Issuance Fee charged for visa**. The visa application fee is \$100. Depending on the country you are from, there may also be an issuance fee (also called a visa reciprocity fee). Check the following website to determine if you will be charged this fee: <http://travel.state.gov/reciprocity/index.htm>
- SEVIS Fee, when required**. If you leave and re-enter the U.S. to regain legal status with an I-20 issued after September 1, 2004, or are readmitted to the University and are returning with an new I-20 issued after September 1, 2004, you are required to pay the SEVIS fee of \$100 at [www.fmjfee.com](http://www.fmjfee.com)
- Application forms**. Form DS-156 (can be completed online at <http://evisaforms.state.gov>); DS-158 and DS-157 (required of some applicants) - both can be downloaded at <http://foia.state.gov/forms/newscripts/formlist.asp?type=V>
- One passport-size photograph**. (Some consulates may require two photographs).

**For more information on applying for a U.S. visa, visit the ISSS website:**

[http://www.utexas.edu/international/cs/student\\_visa](http://www.utexas.edu/international/cs/student_visa)