

Travel Outside of the United States as an F-1 Student

When holiday seasons or semester breaks are upon us, which means end of term exams, assignments that are winding down and perhaps plans to travel outside of the United States back to your home country. It is important that you to know what to expect and what is required of you upon your return to the states.

Here are **three tips to ensure smooth travel**:

Tip 1: Prepare for the U.S. Port of Entry

Every time you enter the United States, you will arrive at a port of entry and meet with [U.S. Customs and Border Protection \(CBP\)](#) officers for primary and sometimes a secondary inspection. The CBP officer may ask questions about your reason for travel. They will inspect important documents. These documents could include:

- Your valid passport
- Your signed [Form I-20, "Certificate of Eligibility for Nonimmigrant Status"](#)
- Proof of financial support, which can be the same documents you provided at your original visa interview with the Department of State
- Evidence of acceptance or continued attendance at your school, like an acceptance letter or a recent tuition payment receipt or transcript or registration or current schedule.
- Name and contact information (including a 24-hour emergency contact phone number) for your [designated school official \(DSO\)](#)

[Hand-carry](#) these items and do not put them in your checked luggage.

Tip 2: Understand Secondary Inspection

If the CBP officer cannot verify your information or you do not have all of the required documentation, you may be directed to an interview area known as [secondary inspection](#). This allows CBP officers to do additional research to verify your information without causing delays for other passengers. In case a CBP officer needs to verify your information with the school, you should have your [designated school official's \(DSO\)](#) contact information on hand, including a 24-hour emergency phone number.

Secondary Inspection

If the [U.S. Customs and Border Protection](#) (CBP) officer at the port of entry cannot verify your information, or if you do not have all of the required documentation, a CBP officer may direct you to an interview area known as "secondary inspection." Secondary inspection allows inspectors to conduct additional research in order to verify information without causing delays for other arriving passengers.

The inspector will first attempt to verify your status by using [SEVIS](#). In the event that the CBP officer needs to verify information with your school or program, **we strongly recommend** that you have the **name and telephone number of the designated school official (DSO)** at your school. If you will arrive during non-business hours (evening, weekends, holidays), you should also have an emergency or non-business hour phone number available for this official.

Under certain circumstances, the CBP officer may issue a [Form I-515A "Notice to Student or Exchange Visitor,"](#) which authorizes temporary admission into the United States for 30 days while you obtain and submit the necessary documentation to SEVP. Work with your school without delay to submit the proper documentation required by the [Form I-515A](#).

Tip 3: Know About the Form I-515A

Under certain circumstances, the CBP officer may issue you a [Form I-515A, "Notice to Student or Exchange Visitor."](#) This form authorizes temporary admission to the United States for 30 days while you obtain and submit the proper documentation to [SEVP](#). Notify your DSO right away if you receive a Form I-515A. They will work with you to make sure you have everything in order and submitted on time.

What is a Form I-515A?

This page provides F and M students with information and answers to frequently asked questions about the Form I-515A, "Notice to Student or Exchange Visitor." As an F or M student, if you arrive at a U.S. port of entry and do not have all your signed required documents, have not paid the I-901 SEVIS Fee on your current Form I-20, "Certificate of Eligibility for Nonimmigrant Student Status," or have a Student and Exchange Visitor Information System (SEVIS) status issue, the U.S. Customs and Border Protection (CBP) officer may deny your entry into the United States. As an alternative, the officer has discretion to issue you a Form I-515A. This document allows you to have temporary admission into the United States for 30 days. To maintain your nonimmigrant [student status](#), you must address your Form I-515A within the time provided to you.

Beginning on April 1, 2016, the Student and Exchange Visitor Program (SEVP) will send "Intent to Terminate" notices to students and exchange visitors and their dependents who have failed to comply with the Form I-515A directive by the specified deadline. Recipients of the "Intent to Terminate" notices will have 14 days, as of the date the letter is sent, to respond to the Form I-515A. Failure to comply will result in the termination of their SEVIS record. For more information, please download the [Form I-515A Termination Procedure](#) on [ICE.gov](#).