Travel Signatures

Traveling Outside the United States
When leaving the U.S., always check to make sure that your important documents will be valid (not expired) on the date you plan to return to the U.S. If you need a new passport, apply immediately at your country’s consulate here in New York City. You will need a new visa if your visa has expired or will expire before you return to the U.S., or if you changed your status within the U.S. Please see The U.S. State Department Student Visa page, and also visit ISS for help with required documentation.

Travel Signatures
All F-1 and J-1 students and all J-1 professors and scholars must have a valid travel signature to re-enter the U.S. from abroad (bottom of page 3 for the I-20; lower front right for the DS-2019).

*F-1 and J-1 students who are current students should get a valid travel signature every 9 months.

*F-1 students on OPT must have a valid signature every 6 months.

*J-1 professors and scholars must have a valid signature every 6 months.

Renew your travel signature early in the semester. September/October and February/March are great times to get a new signature since a September/October signature will be valid for travel through the end of the next spring semester, and a February/March signature will be valid through the end of the next fall semester.

Drop off your I-20 or DS-2019 at ISS today, and it will be waiting for you at ISS within 5 business days after 3:00 p.m.

Expedited Processing and Mailing Fees: Aside from the set of times listed above, students who submit documents later or who request expedited processing will be charged mailing fees for their documents to be mailed to them abroad.

Requesting a travel signature:
- Submit an online ISS Service Request Form and check “Travel Signature” request on the form.
- Submit your current original I-20 or DS-2019 to ISS for a travel signature.
Travel to Canada, Mexico, and the Adjacent Islands

When traveling to Canada, Mexico, the Caribbean, or other adjacent islands for fewer than 30 days, be certain to ask the Department of Homeland Security Officer NOT to remove the I–94 card from your passport when you are leaving the U.S. Explain that you plan to return in fewer than 30 days.

Remember that, depending on your nationality, you may need a tourist visa to enter Canada, Mexico, the Caribbean islands, or any of the adjacent islands. For a definition of “adjacent islands” please see the following Immigration and Customs Enforcement page. Information concerning tourist visas to these countries and which nationalities are required to have visas to enter these countries can be obtained by calling the consulate general of the country you wish to visit or by consulting their website. If a tourist visa is required, you must go in person to the consulate to apply. If this applies to you, please allow adequate time before your travel date to obtain a visa to the country you wish to visit.