Automatic Revalidation of Visa for Re-entry to the United States

The “Automatic Revalidation of Visa” means that for F and J visa holders a valid U.S. entry visa is not required to travel to a contiguous territory (Canada, Mexico or the Caribbean Islands excluding Cuba) for less than 30 days. Under the Automatic Visa Revalidation rule, if a student in F or J status enters the United States from the contiguous territories after an absence from the United States not exceeding 30 days, the entry visa is considered to be automatically extended to the date of re-entry.

Automatic Revalidation does not apply to:

- Students whose visa has been cancelled by the consulate office.
- Students who have applied for a new visa while in Canada, Mexico or the Caribbean Islands excluding Cuba. Applicants for a new U.S. visa while in one of these countries must wait for a decision before being eligible to re-enter the United States. Certain individuals will be subject to a security check and delays of 20 business days or longer may occur. Students will not be allowed to re-enter the United States until their visa is renewed/approved. If the visa application is denied, the student cannot re-enter the United States until they obtain a new entry visa from the U.S. consulate or embassy in their home country.
- Students traveling from a contiguous territory (for example, Canada or Mexico) to a noncontiguous country (for example, India or China) with the intention of returning to the United States via a contiguous territory (Canada or Mexico).
- This rule does not apply to F and J visa holders who are citizens of Cuba, Iran, Iraq, Libya, North Korea, Sudan and Syria.

Documents Needed to Enter Under Automatic Revalidation

When re-entering the United States from Canada, Mexico or the Caribbean Islands excluding Cuba using automatic visa revalidation, students must have in their possession:

1) A valid and unexpired I-20 or DS-209 with a travel authorization signature by an adviser at the International Services Center.
2) A valid I-94. STUDENTS SHOULD NOT SURRENDER THEIR VALID FORM I-94 TO IMMIGRATION OFFICIALS UPON DEPARTURE FROM THE UNITED STATES. When re-entering the United States from any of these territories, the student must present their form I-94.
3) An original unexpired passport.
4) A UCF ID card.

Certain individuals need an entry/tourist visa for a visit to Canada, Mexico or the Caribbean Islands. Further information about the tourist visa requirements for these countries can be found by visiting the “Useful Links” section of the ISC website at www.intl.ucf.edu/links/.

Students who need a tourist visa to visit Canada or Mexico must apply for the visa stamp by contacting the consulate office of that country in the United States.

Obtaining or Renewing F-1 or J-1 Visa in Canada and Mexico

Any F- or J- visa holder intending to visit Canada or Mexico and who wishes to apply for a nonimmigrant visa at any U.S. border posts in Canada or Mexico must make an appointment for an interview. U.S. consulate offices in Canada are located in Calgary, Halifax, Montreal, Ottawa, Quebec City, Toronto, and Vancouver. In Mexico they are located in Ciudad Juarez, Matamoros, Nogales, Nuevo, Laredo and Tijuana.

Appointments by Telephone (Canada): From the United States appointments can be scheduled by calling 1-900-443-3131; in Canada the number is 1-900-451-2778. Callers from the United States or Canada wishing to charge the cost of the call to a credit card may schedule an appointment by calling 1-888-840-0032. Unlike the 1-900 numbers, which are blocked from most hotels, offices or pay telephones, the credit card line can be accessed from almost any telephone. The appointment system requires a touch-tone phone; a push-button rotary phone will not work.

Appointments by Internet (Canada): Applicants may also book appointments via the Internet at www.nvars.com. Each appointment costs $10.00 Canadian, which will be charged to a major credit card. Applicants are advised to have their credit card information handy. After the appointment is scheduled, an application form (DS-156) and an information sheet will be mailed for the post where the applicant will be applying. Individual posts cannot be contacted directly to request an appointment. They can only be scheduled by calling the
appropriate 1-900 or 1-888 telephone numbers or by using the Internet.

More information on application process in Mexico and other related matters can be found on the U.S. Department of State website at www.state.gov/travel/.

Students should be aware that there are no guarantees that they will get a new or renewed visa through the appointment process. A decision will be made at the time of the interview. Applicants for a new U.S. visa cannot re-enter the United States using automatic visa revalidation. They must wait for a decision on the visa application (which could take 20 additional days if security checks are needed) before re-entering the United States.

Students must notify ISC if they will be applying for a new entry visa while abroad. Those who have previously violated their immigration status may not be eligible for the visa renewal from Canada. Any questions regarding this issue should be directed to an adviser at the International Services Center.

**Documents Needed to Apply for the Renewal of an F-1 or J-1 Visa**

Students will need the following documents to apply for the renewal of their F-1 or J-1 visa. It is the F-1 or J-1 visa holders responsibility to collect and take all these documents with them while traveling abroad with the intention of applying for the renewal visa:

1. An unexpired and valid I-20 or DS-2019 with a travel authorization signature from an adviser at the International Services Center.
2. A travel letter issued by an adviser at the ISC stating that they will be applying for the renewal visa and have maintained their F-1 or J-1 status.
3. A valid and unexpired passport.
4. Financial documents (assistantship/fellowship letters/ bank statement/ or affidavit of support, whichever is applicable).
5. A copy of their current transcripts.
6. A copy of their registration receipt (if enrolled for the upcoming semester).
7. A UCF ID card.
8. A copy of their I-94 card.
9. Immigration documents for their F-2 or J-2 dependents (if applicable). Additional funds are needed for each F-2 or J-2 dependent so an additional bank statement or financial document may be necessary.

**Special Name Checks by the U.S. Department of State for Some Visa Holders**

Effective November 13, 2001, certain nonimmigrant visa applicants will be subject to an additional name check clearance procedure before being issued a nonimmigrant visa. The name check clearance involves the Department of State (DOS) sending the visa applicant’s name to be checked against information in various databases. The DOS expects the extra screening to take up to 20 additional business days.

According to the DOS the following individuals may be subject to this additional name check:

- Male (some women have been subject)
- Between the ages of 16 and 45
- From one of the following countries: Afghanistan, Algeria, Bahrain, Djibouti, Egypt, Eritrea, Indonesia, Iran, Iraq, Jordan, Kuwait, Lebanon, Libya, Malaysia, Morocco, Oman, Pakistan, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Somalia, Sudan, Syria, Tunisia, United Arab Emirates, Yemen. Some reports suggest that citizens of Bangladesh, Turkey and other countries appear to have been subjected to the name check as well.

This security check process is time consuming. It’s recommended that F and J visa holders from the above countries do not travel abroad unless they have enough time for the application and approval of the visa.