Travel Information for J-1 and H-1B Visa Holders

General Overview
J-1 scholars and employees in H-1B status should carry specific documentation when travelling outside the U.S. This handout discusses (1) travel to a country which is not your home country, (2) applying for a new or renewal visa overseas, and (3) what to carry for return to the U.S. In order to re-enter the U.S. using your Carnegie Mellon DS-2019 (for those in J status) or H-1B documents, you must be currently affiliated with the university and be planning to continue your employment or formal affiliation with the university immediately upon your return to the U.S.

Travel to another country, through another country, or to Canada

Travel to any country which is not your home country
Your country of citizenship or legal permanent residence will determine your need for a visa to enter and/or travel through another country. For example, a citizen of the United Kingdom may not need a visa to visit Canada, but a citizen of PR China will need a Canadian visa to visit Canada. Check with the Embassy/Consulate of each country you intend to visit to determine if you need a visa. Links to foreign embassy websites can be found at: www.embassy.org/. Applying for visas can be costly and time consuming, so plan several months in advance. Remember, if your plane is landing in another country – even temporarily – you may need a transit visa even if you will not exit the plane.

Travel to Canada
For information on travel to Canada, visit the Canadian website www.cic.gc.ca. Consult an OIE advisor if you are planning to apply for a U.S. visa while in Canada.

Application for a U.S. visa in a country which is not your own country
You may have reason to apply for a U.S. visa in a country other than your home country. Generally, you should have a good reason for applying for a U.S. visa at a U.S. Consulate which is not located in your home country. A good reason might be participation in a professional conference in the third country. Realize that U.S. State Department preference is for you to handle visa issuance in your home country, so you will not have top priority in another country and if you are subject to a security clearance, you might be stuck in that country for the duration of the clearance process. For a list of U.S. Embassies and Consulates, check the U.S. Department of State website at usembassy.state.gov/.

Automatic Visa Revalidation to Canada, Mexico, and other contiguous territories
If you are traveling to Canada or Mexico, for pleasure or vacation for fewer than 30 days, you can return to the U.S. using an expired U.S. entry visa of any type, as long as you have a valid passport, I-94 printout/card, and signed DS-2019 for persons in J-1 status and copy of the H-1B Approval Notice and other H documents for persons in H status. Automatic visa revalidation, under the conditions listed above, also applies to trips to adjacent/Caribbean island nations (except Cuba) for people in J-1 status.

NOTE: Automatic visa revalidation does not apply if you are visiting one of these countries to apply for a new visa at a U.S. Consulate.
- The U.S. Consulates in Mexico and Canada may not allow 3rd country visa applications from people who are attempting to change their status.
- Citizens of Cuba, Iran, Syria, and Sudan are not eligible for automatic revalidation.
- Residents of Mexico or the Caribbean who are returning to the U.S. from their home countries may not be able to use automatic revalidation and are advised to have a valid visa.

Upon Entry or Re-Entry to the U.S.
After each entry to the U.S., log onto www.cbp.gov/i94 to check and save your new I-94 arrival document. Save an electronic copy and/or print a hard copy and keep with your immigration records. If the I-94 does not indicate D/S (for J status) or match the approval end date (for H status) OR if you cannot find your electronic record, notify OIE immediately.

Details for J-1 Scholars and J-2 Dependents

J-1 visa holders should have these documents for travel outside of the U.S.:
- Current, valid passport.
- Current, valid DS-2019 with OIE travel signature. Signatures are valid for up to 12 months (or end of document if valid less than 12 months). For signature, submit DS-2019 to the OIE front desk and return in 3 days to pick up the signed document. No appointment is necessary.
- Current, valid J-1 visa stamp in passport. NOTE: an expired visa is valid for persons re-entering the U.S. from Canada, Mexico, or the Caribbean island nations after a visit of fewer than 30 days. See conditions above.
- I-94: Either a print out from www.cbp.gov/i94 or a hard copy provided by CBP at a land port or by USCIS after a change of status application.

J-1 scholars who plan to be outside the U.S. more than 30 days must make an appointment with their OIE advisor. Longer absences may result in early termination of the J immigration status and hinder the scholar’s ability to re-enter to the U.S.

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If applying for a new or renewal J-1 visa stamp at a U.S. Consulate, also carry:

- Current, valid DS-2019 with OIE travel signature. Signatures are valid for up to 12 months (or end of document if valid less than 12 months). Carry all DS-2019 forms you have been issued.
- Original evidence of financial support (personal bank statements, Carnegie Mellon department letter of support, support letter from government or home institution, etc.).
- Evidence of your intention to return to home country upon completion of your program in the U.S. - proof of “ties to home country” such as a job offer in home country, family ties, or property in home country.
- Letter from supervisor or advisor addressing sensitive technology issues if you work in a sensitive field with military or possible military application.
- All other documents required at U.S. Consulate overseas. Access specific country and Consulate information at usembassy.state.gov. Check for fees, application procedures, processing times, holiday breaks, etc.

J-2 dependents travelling outside of the U.S. separately from J-1 visa holder should carry:

- Separate DS-2019 issued for dependent(s). To request a DS-2019 for J-2 dependents, contact OIE.
- Current valid passport and J-2 visa stamp.
- Copies of the passport, visa, and current DS-2019 of the primary J-1 holder.
- Copies of marriage certificate in English or with English translation (for visa application).
- Wedding or other photo showing the J-2 dependent(s) with the J-1 scholar (for visa application).

Details for H-1B Workers and H-4 Dependents

H-1B employees travelling outside the U.S. should carry the following documents:

- Current, valid passport.
- Current, valid H-1B visa stamp in passport. NOTE: an expired visa is valid for persons re-entering the U.S. from Canada or Mexico after a visit of fewer than 30 days. See “Automatic Visa Revalidation” on page one.
- Copy of the I-797 H-1B Approval Notice, and original of your portion of the approval notice.
- I-94 – most recent print out from www.cbp.gov/i94 or the most recent hard copy provided by CBP at a land port or by USCIS after a change of status or extension of stay.
- Copy of the approved Labor Condition Application and Form I-129/Application for H-1B status.
- Travel letter from OIE (recommended but not required.) Make request to OIE one week in advance of travel by email or in person submitting your name, place and dates of intended travel, and whether the trip will be for business or personal reasons.

If applying for a new or renewal H-1B visa at a U.S. Consulate, also carry:

- ALL documents recommended above for travel PLUS a letter from department confirming salary/recent pay statement.
- A letter from your supervisor describing the work you are doing in plain, non-technical language if you are engaged in work related to sensitive or technical areas that might have military or security implications or applications.
- Academic documents showing degree(s) obtained.
- Resume or CV, including list of publications (if relevant).
- All other documents required at U.S. Consulate overseas. Access specific country and Consulate information at usembassy.state.gov. Check Embassy website for fees, application procedures, processing times, holiday breaks, etc.

H-4 dependents travelling outside of the U.S. separately from H-1B holder should carry:

- Current valid passport and H-4 visa stamp.
- Copy of the H-1B Approval Notice, visa stamp, and passport of the primary H-1B holder.
- If change of status to H-4 was granted in the U.S., carry the USCIS Approval Notice granting H-4 status
- Copies of marriage certificate in English or with English translation (for visa application).
- Additional proof of the relationship, such as wedding or other photos of the H-4 dependent(s) with the H-1B employee, may be helpful for the visa application—review the Embassy/Consulate website for guidance.

Dual Intent. Workers in H status benefit from dual intent. Dual intent implies that that individual may choose to remain in the U.S. on a more permanent basis (as a permanent resident, also called “green card holder”). Therefore, visa applicants at a U.S. Consulate overseas should not be overly concerned about the need to prove ties to home country.

Department of State PIMS systems. Before a visa can be issued, the Consulate must verify the approval of the H-1B petition in the PIMS (Petition Information Management System) before issuing the H visa stamp. All H-1B approvals - initial, extensions, amendments, and changes of status cases - will be entered into PIMS. If an H-1B visa applicant is not found in PIMS at time of the H visa application, a two working day process has been developed to research and enter the missing information into PIMS so that that visa application can proceed.

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