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TRAVELING TO CANADA

If you are in F-1 or J-1 status and planning a trip to Canada there are several things you should do before you leave the United States. For example:

- have the back of your Form I-20, for F-1 visa holders, or DS-2019 (previously IAP-66), for J-1 visa holders signed for re-entry to the U.S. by an ISSO advisor
- determine whether your U.S. entry visa is still valid or if it has expired
- determine whether you need a Canadian entry visa

This handout will help you get ready for your trip to Canada and your return to the United States. Please read it carefully. If you have any questions, please ask an ISSO advisor.

How can I obtain a signature on my I-20 or DS-2019 for travel and re-entry?

All F-1 and J-1 visa holders must have their I-20s or DS-2019s signed by an ISSO advisor in order to re-enter the U.S. We generally recommend that you have your I-20 or DS-2019 signed the semester you are traveling; however, if you are from a country that requires you to have a Canadian entry visa, the Canadian government requires that your signature for travel must be less than three months old and the signature must be obtained prior to your Canadian visa application.

Please bring your I-20 to the ISSO **at least two working days before your departure date**. This is necessary because the process requires a considerable amount of staff time, especially during busy periods when many TU international students are traveling at the same time (such as at the end of each semester and prior to vacation periods). In order to endorse your I-20 or DS-2019, we must certify the following information:

- ◆ that your academic progress (G.P.A.) is satisfactory;
- ◆ that you have been a full-time student;
- ◆ that you are in legal F-1 or J-1 status; and
- ◆ that you have met your financial obligations to Towson University.

Your request for endorsement may be delayed or denied in any of the following cases:

- ◆ if you have a hold flag on your University account because of a financial or other obligation to the university;
- ◆ if you are registered as a part-time student without ISSO approval;
- ◆ if you are on academic warning or suspension; or
- ◆ if the completion date in item 5 of your I-20 has expired.

If any of the above situations applies to you, see an ISSO advisor. You may need to submit additional financial documentation from your sponsor and obtain a new I-20 for re-entry.

Is my visa still valid?

Most students/scholars may travel as a tourist to Canada (and Mexico and the islands near the U.S. except for Cuba) and return to the U.S. with an expired U.S. entry visa, as long as the time abroad is less than 30 days. This is a convenient benefit, called "automatic visa revalidation." However, please be aware that the U.S. Department of State has eliminated this benefit for some foreigners, effective April 1, 2002. Any student/scholar who applies for a U.S. visa in Canada, Mexico, or adjacent islands is no longer eligible for the "automatic revalidation" benefit. Also, citizens of Iraq, Iran, Syria, Libya, Sudan, North Korea, and Cuba are no longer eligible for this benefit. See the ISSO handout entitled "Visas and Travel" for more information.

Do I need a Canadian entry visa?

Canada requires citizens of specific countries to have a Canadian entry visa. Please log onto www.cic.gc.ca/english/visit/visas.asp regarding countries and territories whose citizens require visas in order to enter Canada as visitors.

How can I obtain a Canadian entry visa?

If you need a Canadian visa, you can apply for it in person or by mail. You will need to show the Embassy the following documents:

- a valid passport;
- a valid U.S. arrival/departure I-94 card;
- your I-20 signed by an advisor within the past three months for F-1 students;
- two identical recent passport size photos for you and each family member (the name and date of birth should be written on the back of each photo);
- evidence of temporary visit (e.g. return airline tickets or detailed itinerary of visit);
- proof of funds for your visit
- documentation must be in English or French only;
- personal interviews may be required.
- application form
- application fee (cash[in person only], certified check, or money order)
 - \$75 Canadian dollars (approximately \$50 U.S. dollars) per person for a single entry visa
 - \$150 Canadian dollars (approximately \$100 U.S. dollars) for multiple entry visa per person
 - \$400 Canadian dollars (approximately \$260 U.S. dollars) for the family rate

To apply in person, go to the Visa Office of the Canadian Embassy. The address is: 501 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW, Washington, DC. They are open for tourist visa services Monday through Friday from 9:00 a.m. until 12:00 noon. You will be helped on a first-come-first-serve basis. Your Canadian visa may be processed the same day for in-person applications, providing all documentation is correct. A delay of two weeks or more can be expected for applicants from certain countries.

To apply by mail, you must first obtain a visa application. You can either call the embassy at 202-682-1740 to request an application, fax your request to 202-682-7701, or download the application from the web site at <http://www.cic.gc.ca/english/visit/apply-how.asp>. Once you have completed the application, you can send your application materials and a self addressed stamped envelope to: Visa Office, Canadian Embassy, 501 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW, Washington, DC 20001. Applications by mail generally will be processed within two business days (Monday–Friday) of receipt in the Immigration office, if all documentation is in order. A delay of three weeks or more can be expected for applicants from certain countries. Please keep in mind that an interview may be required before you will be granted a visa.

How can I contact the Canadian Embassy in Washington, D.C.?

You can call the Canadian Embassy by dialing 202-682-1740 from 8 a.m. to 6 p.m. To learn more about visiting Canada, you will be forwarded to a recorded message based on your country of citizenship.