



# TRAVELING OUTSIDE THE U.S.

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## General Travel Information

- ❑ **Travel Signature on I-20 or DS-2019** – Make sure your I-20 (for F-1 and F-2 status) or DS-2019 (for J-1 and J-2 status) has been signed in the travel authorization section by an OISS adviser **within 12 months** of your expected return to the U.S. (and within 6 months if on OPT).
- ❑ **Valid Passport** – Be sure your **passport has not expired** AND that it will still be **valid at least six months** after the date you plan to re-enter the U.S. (A list of countries whose citizens are exempt from the requirement that their passports be valid at least six months into the future can be found elsewhere in this packet.) If you need to renew your passport, contact the consulate or embassy representing your home country in the U.S. ([www.embassy.org](http://www.embassy.org)) or the appropriate authorities in your home country.
- ❑ **Valid Visa** – Be sure the visa in your passport (1) **will still be valid on the date you plan to re-enter the U.S.**, and (2) **still has entries remaining** (either has an “M” for unlimited multiple entries or at least “1” entry left). If you must renew your visa while out of the U.S., see the section on **Visa Renewal Information**. If you are traveling to Canada, Mexico, or a country in the Caribbean, also see that appropriate section.
- ❑ **Visas for Other Countries** – Be sure you have any visas needed to enter countries other than your own that you plan to visit. Go to [www.embassy.org](http://www.embassy.org) for a listing of foreign consulates in the U.S. to see if you might need a visa for the country to which you are traveling.
- ❑ **Absence from the U.S. More Than 5 Months** – If you believe you may be absent from the U.S. for 5 months or more, please read the appropriate section and consult an OISS adviser. Absences of 5 months or more require special procedures in SEVIS and also creation of a new I-20 before you are able to return to the U.S. It may also affect eligibility for CPT and OPT employment authorizations. You may also have to obtain a new visa.
- ❑ **Returning to the U.S. After Classes Begin** – You could encounter problems at the Port of Entry, and be questioned by the immigration officer about your reason for arriving late. If you believe you must return late after the start of classes, you are advised to get a letter from your department indicating it is acceptable for you to be returning late to your program.

## The \$200/\$180 SEVIS Fee

### What is the SEVIS fee and do I need to pay it?

The SEVIS fee is the charge assessed by the U.S. Department of Homeland Security, whereby all F-1 and M-1 visitors to the U.S. must pay a fee of \$200, and all J-1 visitors to the University of Iowa pay \$180, to supplement federal government expenses involved in the maintenance and administration of the Student and Exchange Visitor Information System (SEVIS).

As a current F-1, M-1, or J-1 student or J-1 scholar at the University of Iowa, there will be certain circumstances where you will be required to pay the SEVIS fee *before* you will be eligible to receive an F-1 or J-1 visa, or before you will be allowed to re-enter the U.S. In order to determine whether or not you must pay the SEVIS fee, please see the attached information sheet at the end of this packet.

## Visa Renewal Information

**What documents do I need to renew my visa?** It depends on your immigration status; see below for what OISS recommends. Check the website (<http://usembassy.state.gov>) of the U.S. consulate you will visit to see exactly what documents, including forms and photos, you will need to present.

You will need to fill out special Department of State application forms, which may be downloaded from the Department of State website at [http://travel.state.gov/visa/visa\\_1750.html](http://travel.state.gov/visa/visa_1750.html). It would be best to fill these out before leaving the U.S. as they request special information such as names and addresses of immediate family and previous employers, and require considerable time to complete. These forms are:

- **DS-156** (*staple or glue your photo in the space provided on this form*)
- **DS-158**
- **DS-157** (*male applicants only unless specifically requested by a consulate*)

### **F-1 students and F-2 dependents should take:**

- SEVIS I-20 from the OISS, with a recent travel signature from an OISS adviser
- Any I-20's previously issued by the UI and any other U.S. school attended before enrolling at the UI
- UI student identification card (dependents should take photocopy of F-1's card)
- Official transcript of F-1's academic record (available from the Registrar's Office in the basement of Calvin Hall)
- Letter certifying F-1's current enrollment (also available from the Registrar's Office in the basement of Calvin Hall)
- Evidence of F-1's financial support shown on the I-20 (bank statement, graduate assistantship offer letter, family bank statement, etc.)
- I-797 Receipt showing payment of \$200 SEVIS fee, if required of F-1 applicant (see section on SEVIS fee)
- If engaged in OPT, also take current EAD (dependents should take photocopy) and a letter from OPT employer stating you are working there under the terms of Optional Practical Training

### **J-1 students and J-2 dependents should take:**

- SEVIS DS-2019 from the OISS, with a recent travel signature from an OISS adviser (if your DS-2019 was made by another institution, you must contact the RO at that institution to get a signature)
- UI student identification card (dependents should take photocopy of J-1's card)
- Financial verification (see above, under F-1 students)
- An official transcript (see above)
- Letter certifying enrollment (see above)
- I-797 Receipt showing payment of \$180 SEVIS fee, if required of J-1 applicant (see section on SEVIS fee)
- If engaged in Academic Training, also take a letter from your employer stating you are working there under the terms of Academic Training

### **J-1 scholars and dependents should take:**

- SEVIS DS-2019 from the OISS, with a recent travel signature from an OISS adviser (if your DS-2019 was made by another institution, you must contact the Responsible Officer at that institution to get a signature)
- Financial verification, usually in the form of a letter from your UI department, confirming that you are still employed by the department. If you are not paid by the UI, get a letter from your home institution or sponsor to show proof of your personal funds, as noted on the DS-2019.
- I-797 Receipt showing payment of \$180 SEVIS fee, if required of J-1 applicant (see section on SEVIS fee)

### **How long will it take to get a new U.S. visa?**

It depends on your situation. But now, more than ever, ALL students and scholars are advised to go to the consulate to renew their visas at the earliest possible opportunity to avoid possible delays. Do not wait until the end of your stay abroad. If you know you will be required to appear in person at the consulate, try to make an appointment with the consulate even before you leave the U.S. Many embassies have web sites with information about their visa application procedures. To view a listing of U.S. embassies and consulates, go to <http://usembassy.state.gov>

### **Security Advisory Options - the "Background Security Clearance"**

Some visa applicants may be subject to additional screening. These security checks are performed by the U.S. Department of State, and can take several weeks or months to complete. There are at least three ways a student or scholar can be subject to a security check: **(1) country of citizenship:** generally for citizens of Middle Eastern or predominantly Islamic countries, although citizens of any country can be subject; or **(2) the area of study/research is highly technical or viewed as "sensitive:"** citizens (both female and male) of any country (particularly those listed above as well as China and India) have been selected for security checks for this reason. The "Sensitive Majors" list includes most engineering disciplines, chemical and biochemical/biomedical sciences, computer science, genetics, certain branches of physics, nuclear and laser technologies, and even urban planning! Complete details are available at <http://foia.state.gov/masterdocs/09fam/0940031X1.pdf>. Finally, people can be subject to a security check if **(3) a preliminary check at the consulate reveals potential criminal history** or other "security concerns."

When a security check occurs, there is **absolutely nothing the OISS, the University of Iowa, or any political liaison can do** to speed up the process. We strongly suggest that you contact the OISS so that we may assess your situation **BEFORE** making travel plans.

Representatives from the U.S. Department of State have suggested that students and scholars who believe they could be subject to a security advisory opinion based on the "sensitive" areas of study/research should take a letter from their academic adviser or employing department that briefly describes – in very elementary language – the type of research you are doing or the focus of your studies. The point is to try to illustrate that your work is not a "threat" to U.S. national security. The letter should then be presented to the consular officer when you apply for your new visa. It is still possible you may be subject to the security clearance, but this letter *could* help speed things up.

### How likely is it that my visa application will be denied?

There are never any guarantees that a visa will be renewed. However, in general it is still very unlikely that a visa will be denied to a student who is in the midst of a course of study. But as noted above, *delays* may be more likely to occur.

### What if my application for a new visa is denied?

Ask the consular officer to *give you a written explanation for the denial*. Contact the OISS immediately and supply details about your visa interview, what you were asked and what you replied. Give us the date and place of the denial and, if possible, the name of the consular officer who issued it. If you have any reason to think your situation might place your visa application in unusual jeopardy, you may want to discuss it with an OISS adviser before traveling (and preferably before purchasing tickets).

### Do I need to do anything upon re-entry to the U.S. on a new visa?

While you are still at the Port of Entry, make sure the information on your I-94 is CORRECT (for example, that it is marked as “D/S” for Duration of Status rather than given a specific end date, and that the appropriate category – F-1, J-1, etc. – is marked on it). If it is not, bring it to the attention of the officer at the Port of Entry. It will be much more difficult and time-consuming to attempt to get it corrected later. You should also certainly *keep a photocopy* of your new visa and I-94 in a safe place.

## Traveling with a Child Who is a U.S. Citizen

If your child was born in the U.S., he or she is considered a U.S. citizen. If you plan to take your child to another country, you need to consider their travel needs as a U.S. citizen (unless you have made arrangements for dual citizenship). Your child may need a visa to enter the country to which you will travel. Your child will also need a U.S. passport (as well as a passport from the second country if a dual citizen).

If your child will be traveling with only one parent, or someone other than both parents, they could encounter problems both departing the U.S. or returning to the U.S. This is because the U.S. and other countries need to ensure a child is not being taken across international borders without parental consent. If one parent will stay behind, that parent should write a letter indicating the name and date of birth of the child or children as well as the name and date of birth of the parent traveling with them, and state that the children are traveling with their knowledge and permission. The parent should then print the letter but NOT sign it, and bring the unsigned letter to the Office of International Students and Scholars. Also bring one form of photo id, such as a passport or driver’s license. The OISS receptionist will then ask the parent to sign the letter in front of her and can then affix a notary seal to verify the letter comes from that person. Then the parent traveling with the U.S. citizen child should carry this letter with the child’s passport when both departing and re-entering the U.S. If neither parent is traveling with the U.S. citizen child, then both parents should write the letter and come to OISS together to have it notarized.

## “Green Travel” - Carbon Offsets Reduce Carbon Emissions Caused by Travel

As you’re making your travel plans, many of you will be choosing to traveling by air. Although air travel has opened the world to us as travelers, there are also serious consequences to the environment every time we fly. Carbon (CO<sub>2</sub>) emissions, created by burning fossil fuels, are causing the greenhouse gasses in the atmosphere which are directly contributing to global warming.

Carbon offsets enable travelers to reduce the CO<sub>2</sub> emissions they are responsible for by offsetting, reducing or displacing the CO<sub>2</sub> in another place, typically where it is more economical to do so. Carbon emission offsets can be used to offset

the inevitable CO2 pollution after you have done your best to try to avoid the pollution in the first place. Carbon offsets typically include renewable energy, energy efficiency and reforestation projects.

OISS encourages you to consider purchasing carbon offsets for your upcoming travel. The following are several websites where you can calculate your carbon impact (footprint) and purchase carbon offsets:

Carbon Fund: <http://www.carbonfund.org/Calculators/>

Native Energy: [http://www.nativeenergy.com/pages/travel\\_calculator/465.php](http://www.nativeenergy.com/pages/travel_calculator/465.php)

Sustainable Travel International: [https://sustainabletravelinternational.org/documents/op\\_carboncalcs.html](https://sustainabletravelinternational.org/documents/op_carboncalcs.html)

If you want to learn more about how you can make your travel abroad as sustainable as possible, please visit <http://www.greenpassport.us> and join the University of Iowa Green Passport group at: <http://greenpassport.ning.com/group/uistudyabroad>.

## Third-Country Nationals and Visa Renewal

“Third-country national” means that you are not a citizen of the country in which the U.S. consulate where you will attempt to renew your visa is located. For example, citizens of China who try to renew their visas in Mexico are “third country nationals.”

In general, it has become riskier to try to renew your visa in a country that is not your own. The United States Department of State says, “Individuals seeking appointments should be aware that applicants may be more likely to encounter difficulties at the time of interview when they apply for a visa outside of their home district. Consular officers...will deny visas whenever they believe there are fraud indicators present, or their lack of knowledge of local conditions and familiarity with documents in the applicant's home country prevents them from properly adjudicating the case.”

This means that you could attempt to renew your visa in a country that is not your own, be denied, and then be unable to re-enter the U.S. until you travel directly to your home country and get a new visa there.

## Travel to Canada, Mexico and the Caribbean (“Adjacent Islands” \*)

*\*The Code of Federal Regulations at 8 CFR 286.1(a) defines “adjacent islands” to include Anguilla, Antigua, Aruba, Bahamas, Barbados, Barbuda, Bermuda, Bonaire, British Virgin Islands, Cayman Islands, Curacao, Dominica, the Dominican Republic, Grenada, Guadeloupe, Haiti, Jamaica, Marie-Galante, Martinique, Miquelon, Montserrat, Saba, Saint Barthelemy, Saint Christopher, Saint Eustatius, Saint Kitts-Nevis, Saint Lucia, Saint Maarten, Saint Martin, Saint Pierre, Saint Vincent and Grenadines, Trinidad and Tobago, Turks and Caicos Islands, and other British, French and Netherlands territory or possessions bordering on the Caribbean Sea. Note that Cuba is NOT considered an adjacent island for the purpose of travel into the United States.*

### “Automatic Revalidation” - Re-Entering the U.S. from Canada, Mexico, or the Caribbean

Some people in F and J status can re-enter the U.S. from Canada, Mexico, or the Caribbean Islands **on an expired visa** if:

- (1) they are returning from a visit of less than 30 days, **and**
- (2) they did not apply for a new visa while outside the U.S., **and**
- (3) they have with them (a) a valid passport, (b) an unexpired I-94 (white card in passport marked as “D/S”) – do NOT give up the I-94 when you exit the U.S. if you are planning to utilize Automatic Revalidation, (c) appropriate financial documentation, and (d) a valid I-20 or DS-2019 signed for re-entry.

**NOTE: The automatic revalidation option is NOT available to:**

- (1) citizens of Cuba, Iran, Iraq, Libya, North Korea, Sudan and Syria.
  - a. You would be required to obtain a new U.S. visa before being allowed to re-enter the U.S., and in all probability could only get a new visa from the U.S. consulate in your home country or the consulate that services your home country
- (2) Canadian “landed immigrants” who have *never* had an F or J visa.
  - a. You would be required to obtain a U.S. visa before being allowed to re-enter the U.S. You *may* be able to obtain the visa from a U.S. consulate in Canada, unless you are a citizen of one of the seven countries listed above or one of the countries likely to be subject to the Security Advisory Opinion.

For more information see: [http://travel.state.gov/visa/laws/telegrams/telegrams\\_1441.html](http://travel.state.gov/visa/laws/telegrams/telegrams_1441.html)

**Getting a U.S. Visa in Canada or Mexico** – If you plan to get a U.S. visa at a consulate in Canada or Mexico, you must make an advance appointment with the U.S. consulate you plan to visit. Please note that only individuals who meet specific requirements will be allowed to do this if Canada or Mexico is not your country of citizenship. To arrange the appointment, please see the website [www.nvars.com](http://www.nvars.com) . Please note appointments may not be available until several weeks in the future.

**If your visa is expired and you apply for and are denied a new visa in Canada or Mexico, you cannot re-enter the U.S. under the terms of automatic revalidation. Instead you will be required to return directly to your home country to apply for a new visa in the U.S. consulate there.** This means, for example, that a person in F-1 or J-1 status who seeks to renew an expired F-1 or J-1 visa in Canada or Mexico will not be able to re-enter the United States *if the application for the new visa is denied.*

## Information for Students and Scholars Subject to Special Registration

This refers to any non-U.S. citizens who have been subject to NSEERS (National Security Entry-Exit Registration System) who were taken into Secondary Inspection at the Port of Entry and a Fingerprint Identification Number (FIN) written on the back of the I-94.

Remember that you must leave the U.S. from only **certain Ports of Departure**. To review the specific list of ports, see the website at:

<http://www.ice.gov/pi/specialregistration/index.htm>

Remember you also **MUST check out with the Department of Homeland Security** at the Port of Departure on the day you leave the U.S. Failure to do so will likely result in you being unable to enter when you attempt to return to the U.S. Instead you would be required to immediately return to your home country. Finally, remember you may face delays or other difficulties if you must obtain a new visa before re-entering the U.S.

## Travel and Optional Practical Training

In order to re-enter the U.S. after you have applied for OPT, you must have your I-20 signed by an OISS advisor within the last six months, a valid F-1 visa, a valid passport and your EAD card. As of January 2005, Immigration and Customs Enforcement has also indicated the following:

- If your OPT is approved and **you are employed or have been offered employment**, you should be able to re-enter the U.S. with the documents mentioned above, PLUS a letter from your employer confirming that you are or will be employed there under Optional Practical Training.
- If your OPT application is still **pending** when you wish to re-enter the U.S., you will be allowed to re-enter to look for employment. In case your OPT is approved while you are outside the U.S., OISS strongly recommends that **ON THE DAY YOU ARE TO LEAVE THE U.S.** you go to the website <https://egov.uscis.gov/cris/jsp/index.jsp> where you can enter the LIN number from your Notice of Action and print a statement showing the OPT application is still pending as of that date, and have this with you when you come through the Port of Entry.
- If your OPT application has been **approved** and you leave the U.S. before finding a job (as evidenced by a job offer letter, which you should be prepared to show the officer at the Port of Entry), your OPT will be considered canceled and you may NOT be allowed to re-enter the U.S.

## List of Passports Considered Valid 6 Months Beyond Expiration Date

The United States requires foreign visitors to maintain passports that are valid for at least six months into the future. This is because the U.S. wants some form of assurance that the visitor will be able to return to his/her own country once the stay in the U.S. ends or is terminated. Some persons with passports that are expired, or that will soon expire, could face difficulty being admitted into the U.S. However, the U.S. has made agreements with several countries whereby the passport is considered to be valid 6 months beyond the expiration date. The link to the list of countries may be found below.

However, OISS has found that immigration officers at Ports of Entry do not always remember that such agreements exist. For this reason, it may be helpful for you to print and take the list of countries in case you encounter a problem at the Port of Entry.

Nevertheless, it is easiest to avoid problems if you plan to renew your passport well before it expires. If you are traveling home, you can make appropriate plans to renew it there. If you will have sufficient time in the U.S. to renew your passport before you travel, you should contact the embassy or consulate of your home country, and they can give you instructions on how to renew your passport while you are inside the U.S.

To check which countries have passports considered valid for 6 months beyond the expiration date, visit <http://www.state.gov/documents/organization/104770.pdf> in the U.S. Department of State Foreign Affairs Manual.

## Absent from U.S. More Than 5 Months

If you know you will be absent from the U.S. for more than 5 months, and will be returning to the University of Iowa to continue working on the same or a new degree program in the near future, there are certain things you need to know.

### **Absent From U.S. More Than 5 Months – Not Registered**

If you will be absent from the U.S. more than 5 months, and you are not maintaining registration to keep working on your degree program (such as through an official study abroad program or registering for PhD Continuous Registration while working on your dissertation):

1. Absent 5-12 Months –
  - a. Immigration regulations require that your current SEVIS record be ended. This carries no negative connotations whatsoever. What it does mean is that, whenever you are ready to return to the U.S., you will need to contact us (preferably at least two months before you plan to return) to obtain a new I-20. Follow the procedures to request the new I-20 at <http://international.uiowa.edu/oiss/documents/Request-I-20-After-Absence.pdf>. The I-20 will have a new SEVIS identification number, and will indicate that you are back in Initial Attendance status. Having an I-20 in Initial Attendance status is a special immigration term that means:
    - i. You can only re-enter the U.S. up to 30 days before the report date on the new I-20.
    - ii. You will be required to pay the SEVIS fee before you will be allowed to re-enter the U.S. For instructions on paying the SEVIS fee, see the next section of this packet.
    - iii. You will be required to obtain a new F-1 or J-1 visa *even if your old visa is still valid*.
    - iv. You will need to contact the OISS as soon as you return to the U.S. A hold will be placed on your registration and you will not be able to register for classes until you have checked in with us. If you do not check in with us, your SEVIS record is automatically terminated by the system after 30 days and you lose your legal ability to be in the U.S.
    - v. Once you have returned to the U.S., you will not be eligible for Curricular Practical Training or Optional Practical Training until you have been registered full-time for one full academic year (fall/spring semesters or spring/fall semesters).
2. Absent Longer Than 12 months –
  - a. You will need to complete a short form to be officially readmitted to the University of Iowa. Contact the Office of Admissions at [www.uiowa.edu/admissions](http://www.uiowa.edu/admissions) and click on the information for “Returning Students” for instructions.

### **Absent From U.S. More Than 5 Months – On Study Abroad or Maintaining Registration**

If you will be absent from the U.S. for more than 5 months, but will be registered in an official study abroad program OR you will be maintaining your registration at the University of Iowa while doing research/working on your dissertation:

1. Your SEVIS record will NOT be terminated, as long as you maintain full-time (or are given permission by OISS to be part-time) registration while you are gone.
  - a. This means that you will use your current I-20 to re-enter the U.S. (make sure you have a travel signature signed within 12 months of when you will re-enter).
2. Make sure you will have a valid F-1 or J-1 visa to re-enter the U.S., or see the section of this packet about renewing your visa.
  - a. You will NOT need to pay the SEVIS fee as long as you are already in F-1 or J-1 student status and will be returning in the same status.
3. If you will be registered less than full-time, you WILL need to submit the Part-Time Enrollment Authorization Form to the OISS each Fall and Spring semester you will register below full-time (12 s.h. for undergraduates and 9 s.h. for graduate students), or for Study Abroad students, a verification form from your Study Abroad adviser.

## The SEVIS Fee

### *Information on the \$200/\$180 SEVIS fee*

#### **What is the SEVIS fee?**

The SEVIS fee is the charge assessed by the U.S. Department of Homeland Security (DHS), whereby F-1 and M-1 visitors to the U.S. must pay a fee of **\$200** and J-1 visitors to the University of Iowa pay **\$180** to supplement federal government expenses involved in the maintenance and administration of the Student and Exchange Visitor Information System (SEVIS).

#### **Who must pay the SEVIS fee?**

- 1. An alien seeking an initial F-1, M-1 or J-1 visa** from an embassy or consulate abroad **for initial attendance** (as noted on the I-20 or DS-2019) at a DHS-approved school **or initial participation** in a Department of State-designated exchange visitor program that **is** subject to the fee. - The fee must be processed at least 3 business days before the consular interview, unless the applicant has a printed receipt from Internet payment. Fees will not be payable at the consulate.
- 2. An alien exempt from the visa requirement** (e.g. **Canadian citizens**), who will be applying for admission at a United States port-of-entry to begin initial attendance in F-1, M-1 or J-1 status at a DHS-approved school or initial participation in J-1 status in a Department of State-designated exchange visitor program that **is** subject to the fee. The fee must be processed at least 3 business days before arriving for admission at a U.S. port of entry, unless the applicant has a printed receipt from Internet payment. Fees will not be payable at the port of entry.
- 3. An alien in the United States seeking a change of status to F-1, M-1 or J-1** must pay the SEVIS fee before mailing in the application to the USCIS to request the change of status. This includes changing from one SEVIS status to another (e.g. from F-1 to J-1, or from J-1 to F-1).
- 4. A nonimmigrant who was initially granted J-1 status** as a participant **in an exchange visitor program sponsored by the Federal government**, (i.e., with a program identifier designation prefix of G-1, G-2, or G-3), and who is now **transferring to another J-1 program in the same category that is not similarly sponsored** (i.e., has a program identifier designation prefix other than G-1, G-2, or G-3) must pay the SEVIS fee.
- 5. A J-1 who is applying for a change of category** (such as from Researcher/Scholar to Student category) within the United States must pay the SEVIS fee, with the exception of a change to a J-1 program whose program identifier designation prefix is G-1, G-2, or G-3.
- 6. A J-1 who is applying for reinstatement** after a substantive violation, or who has been out of program status for longer than 120 days but less than 270 days during the course of his or her program must pay the SEVIS fee. - Note: this applies only to applications for **reinstatement** to J-1 status. **Correct the record** actions do *not* require a SEVIS fee payment.
- 7. An F-1 applying for reinstatement** of student status, **who has been out of student status for more than 5 months** must pay the SEVIS fee before the reinstatement application is sent to the USCIS.

**8.** An F-1 who has been **absent from the United States for 5 months or more**, and who was either **not registered as a student at the University of Iowa and continuing research on a dissertation or thesis**, or **was not registered at the University of Iowa to participate in an approved Study Abroad program**, and now **wishes to re-enter the U.S. to continue their current program of study** must pay the SEVIS fee.

### **Who does NOT have to pay the SEVIS fee?**

**1.** No fee must be paid by a **continuing F-1, M-1 or J-1** who maintains that status, and *whose initial Form I-20 or DS-2019 was issued before September 1, 2004*, as evidenced by their SEVIS record and the issuance date on their initial form.

**2.** No fee must be paid by an **F-2 or J-2 dependent**.

**3.** No fee must be paid by a **J-1 participant** in an exchange visitor program sponsored by the Federal government. A program sponsored by the Federal government is identified by a **program designation prefix of G-1, G-2, or G-3**. Note: If a J-1 participant transfers from a fee-exempt Federal government program to a non-fee-exempt J program, the participant must pay the SEVIS fee prior to completing the transfer.

**4.** No fee must be paid by an **F-1, M-1 or J-1 applying for a visa to return to the United States as a continuing student or a continuing participant of an exchange visitor program**. This provision applies only to nonimmigrants returning to the United States to resume participation in the same program that was previously begun, in which he or she has maintained status, and which has not yet been completed. This includes F-1 students who will return as continuing students after a temporary absence from the United States for a period of less than 5 months in duration. This also includes F-1 students who were absent more than 5 months but who either maintained ongoing registration at the University of Iowa while continuing work on a thesis or dissertation, or who was registered at the University of Iowa as an authorized Study Abroad student.

**5.** No fee must be paid by an **F-1** maintaining continuous status and **changing educational levels**. Examples include F-1 students moving directly from high school to college, and F-1's moving directly from one degree level to another, such as MA to PHD or BA to MA.

**6.** No fee must be paid by an **F-1 transferring between approved schools**.

**7.** No fee must be paid by a **J-1 transferring between programs in the same exchange visitor category where no differential fee exists**. Examples include transfers between two fee-exempt programs (a transfer between G-1, G-2, or G-3 programs), between two non-fee-exempt programs, or from a non-fee-exempt program to a fee-exempt program (G-1, G-2, or G-3 program).

**8.** No fee must be paid by a nonimmigrant applying for a **change of classification from within the United States between an F-1 and F-3**.

**9.** No fee must be paid by an **F-1, M-1 or J-1 nonimmigrant applying for a Program Extension in a single program**. "Extension" for this purpose applies to students or exchange visitors who have maintained participation in a program when additional time is needed for program completion.

**10.** No fee must be paid by an alien who **paid an initial fee when seeking an F-1 visa** from an embassy or consulate abroad, **was denied a visa, and is applying again for a visa for the same type of program within 12 months of the initial denial**.

**11. No fee must be paid by an alien who paid an initial fee when seeking a J-1 visa from an embassy or consulate abroad, was denied a visa, and is applying again for a visa in the same J-1 exchange visitor category within 12 months of the initial visa denial.** This provision does NOT apply to J-1 applicants who initially applied for a fee exempt program (e.g., a program with a program identifier designation prefix of G-1, G-2 or G-3), and who, after visa denial, apply for a program that is not fee exempt.

**12. No fee must be paid by a nonimmigrant who has applied for a change of status in the United States to an F-1 or J-1 classification, had the initial application for the change of status denied for a reason other than failure to pay the SEVIS fee, and is applying for a motion to re-open the case within 12 months of the original denial.**

**13. No fee must be paid by certain nonimmigrants changing between F and M status due solely to a change in school classification during their course of study, pursuant to SEVP discretion.**

**14. No fee must be paid by an F-1 applying for reinstatement of student status, who has not been out of student status for more than 5 months).**

**15. No fee must be paid by a J-1 for correcting the record.**

### **How do I pay the SEVIS fee?**

The SEVIS fee CANNOT be paid to the University of Iowa, to a U.S. embassy or consulate, or at a U.S. Port of Entry. The only means to pay the SEVIS fee are as follows:

#### **To Pay Online** (*highly recommended to pay this way instead of by mail*)

1. Find the Form I-901 at [www.FMJfee.com](http://www.FMJfee.com).
2. Complete the form online and supply the necessary Visa, MasterCard or American Express information. Be sure to write your name exactly as it appears on your I-20 or DS-2019 form.
3. Print a copy of the online receipt.
4. Be sure to make copies of your receipt, and keep it with your other important immigration documents. You will need to submit a copy of this receipt when applying for a visa, entering the U.S., or applying for a change of status or reinstatement.

#### **To Pay By Mail** (*this method is NOT recommended since it could delay your application by weeks*)

1. Obtain a Form I-901 "Fee Remittance for Certain F, J, and M Nonimmigrants" from [www.FMJfee.com](http://www.FMJfee.com) or request the form by phone at 1-800-870-3676 (inside the US)
2. Complete the Form I-901. Be sure to write your name exactly as it appears on your I-20 or DS-2019.
3. Prepare a personal check (drawn on a US bank only) in the amount of \$100 US Dollars, made payable to "The Department of Homeland Security" (OISS strongly suggests you use a personal check, instead of a money order or cashier's check, since it is easy to trace a personal check in the event an application is "lost".)
4. Mail the completed I-901 and payment to the address listed on the Form I-901.
5. A Form I-797 receipt notice should be mailed within 3 days of processing the fee (but it could take weeks or even months before the fee is processed). Be sure to make copies of your receipt, and keep it with your other important immigration documents. You will need to submit a copy of this receipt when applying for a visa, entering the U.S., or applying for a change of status or reinstatement.

**To Pay By Western Union:** check the ICE website at <http://www.ice.gov/sevis/i901/index.htm> for instructions

**If, after reading this, you are still uncertain whether or not you will be required to pay the SEVIS fee, please see an OISS adviser for further clarification.**