Renewing Your Student Visa: A Step by Step Guide

If you are planning to travel out of the United States and your visa is expired or about to expire, you will need to renew your F-1 or J-1 visa outside of the U.S. to be able to re-enter and resume your studies. It is not possible to renew your visa from within the U.S.

STEP ONE: Make visa appointment early
Follow the U.S. Embassy/Consulate instructions to schedule your visa interview appointment. Apply as far in advance as possible.

STEP TWO: Pay visa application fee
Follow the instructions found on the U.S. Embassy/Consulate website.

STEP THREE: Complete Visa form
Form DS-160: Online Nonimmigrant Visa Application
- Make sure the U.S. Embassy/Consulate you will attend has transitioned to this online form.
- If not, follow the instructions on the U.S. Embassy/Consulate’s website.

STEP FOUR: Gather documents for visa interview
- I-20 or DS-2019 with travel signature from ISS along with all previously issued I-20 or DS-2019 forms
- Valid passport
- Visa application fee receipt
- Confirmation page from your DS-160 visa application
- Certificate of Enrollment (order online from your myPurdue account)
- Original bank statements or Purdue funding letter showing sufficient funds to cover your expenses as listed on I-20 or DS-2019
- Demonstration of residence abroad to which you plan to return after finishing your studies
- Official university transcripts (order online from your MyPurdue account)
- Some consulates/embassies may require passport size photographs
- If dependents are accompanying you, make sure you have a certified copy of your marriage certificate as well as birth certificates for your children
- If on OPT, make sure you have your employer’s letter and EAD card
- If on AT, make sure you have your employer’s letter and the ISS letter authorizing employment

STEP FIVE: Prepare for visa interview
- Interview generally lasts only 2-3 minutes.
- Under U.S. law, all nonimmigrant visa applicants are viewed as intending immigrants unless they convince the Consular Officer otherwise. You must show your reasons for returning to your home country following your studies.
- Be prepared to use English and speak for yourself.
- Answer all of the Officer’s questions concisely and honestly.
- Be able to explain how studying in the U.S. relates to your future career plans.
- Know that lengthy supplemental documents cannot be quickly read or evaluated.
- People from certain countries and those studying certain technology majors may experience processing delays due to security background checks.
- Remember that the purpose of a student visa is to study and return home, not to work in the U.S.
- Be prepared to address how your dependents, if any, will support themselves in your absence.
- Keep a positive attitude. If denied, understand the reason why and what to do the next time.

STEP SIX: Attend visa interview
Arrive early; remain calm!

Helpful Tips
- Students are able to check on the visa wait times for a specific U.S. Embassy or Consulate through the U.S. Department of State website.
- The Department of State recommends that students apply for a visa in their home country.
- For additional information, refer to the U.S. Department of State website.

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