

Checklist for International Travel to Country of Citizenship

UofL Department of Microbiology and Immunology

PhD students in the Department are paid as full time Graduate Research Assistants, typically through IPIBS fellowships, research grants, or other fellowship support. Some funding sponsors require full-time effort by the recipient, which can make extended travel home a violation of terms of the funding agreement. NIH-funded grants, for example, are audited to prevent payment to individuals in excess of the effort they committed to the funded project. Students with absences that exceed the maximum allowed by the Department cannot be considered in good standing; they are at risk of having their stipends suspended or terminated.

Use the following checklist to prevent extended absences that trigger loss of status as a full-time student:

1. **Review your visa.** If your visa is expired you are eligible to remain in the U.S. (provided you have a valid I-20). Thus, travel home to renew a visa is generally not necessary. However, if your visa is expired and you are planning to travel to your country of citizenship, you will need to renew your visa in order to be allowed to return.
2. **Passport.** Make sure that your passport is valid at least six months into the future and your visa stamp is valid with multiple entries.
3. **I-20.** Make sure that you and any dependents are traveling with a valid SEVIS I-20 (signed within the past twelve months).
4. **Mentor's approval.** Obtain written approval from your mentor for the exact dates of your planned absence. In the written request for permission to travel, include a statement about your visa status (valid or expired). Mentor's approval is dependent on item #6 below.
5. **Departmental letter.** Send a copy of the mentor's approval to the graduate program coordinator. The Department will prepare a return letter documenting that you have a graduate assistantship or fellowship at UofL and are registered for the upcoming semester. This letter is dependent on item #6 below.
6. **Make an appointment at the U.S. Embassy in your country before you leave.** If your visa is expired and you are planning a return home for vacation, obtain an appointment with the American Embassy to renew your visa PRIOR to leaving the U.S. Due to the unpredictable nature of visa renewals; your U.S. Embassy appointment should be on the first day of your visit. You may review the US Embassy Consular website in your country at the Department of State website.
7. **Purchase tickets.** DO NOT make reservations for travel or purchase airfare before mentor approval has been given and Departmental letter provided.
8. **Distribute your itinerary.** Once your tickets have been purchased please send your itinerary to your mentor and the graduate program coordinator.
9. **Travel safely and enjoy your time off!**

Note: your planned or actual absence must not exceed the maximum time permitted for vacations by the Department (10 workdays plus an adjacent University holiday). Extended absences that exceed the maximum may cause your graduate stipend to be suspended or terminated.