

## Out of Status: Re-Entry Alternative to Reinstatement

**Disclaimer:** GCC ISO provides this guide for general information only. Information in this document does not constitute legal advice. Because immigration rules and interpretations can change, U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) and the Department of State (DOS) may modify eligibility requirements or interpretations at any time. It is recommended that individuals who are out of status obtain information from GCC's ISO *and* consult a qualified immigration attorney.

### What is re-entry?

Re-entry is used by students who have lost their status as an alternative to reinstatement. This is a viable option only if you have been out of status for less than 180 days (see below); students with multiple terminations should also seek counsel prior to pursuing this option (see page 2). You will be issued a new initial entry I-20 and will leave the US and re-enter at one of the borders (for example, Canada or Mexico). When you re-enter, you will be considered a new F-1 student. You will have to be in status for at least 9 months (one academic year) before being eligible for any period of optional Curricular Practical Training (CPT) or Optional Practical Training (OPT).

### What should I expect?

Because you previously lost your status, your immigration record will show a former termination. Be prepared to be asked to go to secondary inspection when crossing the border. You may have to wait several hours to speak to someone. Be prepared to truthfully explain how you lost your status at your former school. It is also ok to tell the officer that your new school's immigration advisor suggested that you attempt re-entry as you have been out of status for a short period of time. **However, do not rehearse a script.** Speak respectfully, naturally, and calmly with the immigration officer. **Be honest and smile** – a positive attitude is very helpful in these situations. After you speak with the officer, the officer will decide if you will be allowed back into the US.

### What should I take with me?

Take the following items with you:

- New I-20
- Valid passport
- Valid visa
- Admission letter
- I-901 Receipt (Proof of SEVIS Fee payment; you may pay your fee at [www.fmjfee.com](http://www.fmjfee.com))
- Proof of having paid tuition for your new program, if possible

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### **How early can I enter the US?**

You may enter the US up to 30 days before the start of your program (start date listed on I-20). Keep this date in mind. **Do not attempt re-entry too early.**

### **Can I be refused entry?**

Yes. It is important to understand that every time you present yourself for admission, a Customs and Border Protection officer must make the determination that you are eligible for entry. Having said that, the chances of being refused entry are less if you have not been out of status long and if this is your first offense. We see much success with this option – especially when students have not been terminated long and are honest, calm, and respectful when explaining what happened. If, however, you are not allowed back into the US, you will need to be prepared to return to your home country immediately and attempt to re-enter the US from there.

### **I have been out of status for more than 180 days. Should I travel and re-enter or file for reinstatement?**

You should contact a qualified immigration attorney to discuss your options. GCC ISO will assist you by providing an I-20 for whichever path you choose.

### **I have previous terminations on my immigration record. Should I travel and re-enter or file for reinstatement?**

You should contact a qualified immigration attorney to discuss your options. GCC ISO will assist you by providing an I-20 for whichever path you choose.