

Subject:[Whoi-announcements] Attention Foreign Nationals and Supervisors of Foreign Nationals – MA Driver’s License Important Notice

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From:Announcements <announcements-editor@whoi.edu>

To:whoi-announcements@whoi.edu

Our Foreign National Advising team recently learned that the Registry of Motor Vehicles (RMV) has implemented changes to the issuance of Massachusetts’s Driver Licenses for Foreign Nationals. This has already impacted our FN’s and could potential impact other individuals who are attempting to apply for a new driver’s license for the duration of their stay in the United States.

Background on the related regulations

Last year, the Massachusetts state legislature passed a law relating to REAL ID compliance that included language that requires that applicants for a MA Driver’s License be lawfully present and have 12 months remaining in their status from the date of application (per MA code of laws, Chapter 90, section 8 – CLICK HERE). Foreign Nationals who are applying for a new driver’s license are now required to show that their authorized stay is at least 12 months from the date of application utilizing visa documents, such as a DS-2019 form, I-20 form, etc. Any student or scholar who has less than 12 months remaining in their current status in the United States will have their application denied when they go to the RMV.

To our knowledge, the RMV is not making exceptions to this new rule. If you are a student or scholar who is denied and you believe should qualify (have 12 months remaining in the US, including grace periods included in regulation), the RMV licensing division is working on these on a case-by-case basis at this point. Please contact a member of the WHOI Foreign National team at fna@whoi.edu for further assistance.

If your appointment length and visa documents are for a period of less than 12 months, you may utilize your driver license from your home country. Car insurance companies and law enforcement typically consider another Country’s driver license as valid for one year upon entry or re-entry date into the U.S. (based on your I-94 record). If you have been in the U.S. for more than 12 months, but you have less than 12 months left remaining on your existing WHOI appointment/visa documents, you may need to leave the U.S. and re-enter to restart your validity period. Please note that if you exit and re-enter at a land port-of-entry, you will need to double check with the Border Patrol Agents before you leave the area to ensure that they have updated your I-94 record.

Below are a few links to better help you understand these driver license requirements:

- <https://www.mass.gov/service-details/international-driver-permits>
- <https://www.massrmv.com/rmv/forms/21317.pdf>

Please feel free to contact the Foreign National team if you have any questions or concerns. We can be reached at FN@Whoi.edu