Overview
What is a leave of absence?
A leave of absence is when a student wants to take a break from their studies (summer semester excluded - unless summer is the first or last semester of the degree program) or depart ISU permanently. Some common reasons for a leave of absence include medical leave, family emergency, military duty, etc. There is no time limit associated with a leave of absence, however students who wish to return to ISU will need to go through the reentry process.

“Absence from ISU” Application
When should I notify ISSO that I will be leaving ISU temporarily or permanently?
It is recommended that students notify ISSO before they plan to depart the United States. If a student leaves the U.S. without notifying the ISSO, they will still need to complete the required Cystart e-form.

How do I notify ISSO that I will be leaving ISU temporarily or permanently?
This is an electronic process completed through Cystart. The link for Cystart can be found on the ISSO homepage. Log in to Cystart using ISU NetID and password. Once in Cystart, select F-1 Student Services and complete the Absence from ISU e-form.

Do I need to complete a withdrawal form?
Students who are currently enrolled in classes and will not complete the semester due to a leave of absence need to complete a withdrawal form. Students should consult with their academic/faculty adviser regarding the withdrawal form and process.

Immigration Consequences
What happens to my immigration status when I take a leave of absence?
- ISSO will terminate F-1 SEVIS record (and any F-2 dependents) for an “Authorized Early Withdrawal,” which is a positive termination that should have no negative impact on future entries into the United States.
- Following termination of the SEVIS record, the associated F-1 visa and I-20 are no longer valid. Students cannot reenter the United States with these immigration documents during a leave of absence.
- Students may lose eligibility to apply for CPT or OPT. When a student returns after a leave of absence, they will receive a new F-1 record. In order to qualify for off-campus work authorization, a student’s new F-1 record must be valid for one academic year prior to the start of CPT or OPT. Students who plan to apply for CPT or OPT after their leave of absence must complete at least two semesters of required courses before they are eligible for CPT or OPT.

Leaving the United States
When do I need to leave the U.S. after requesting a leave of absence?
Students are required to depart the United States within 15 days of the termination of the F-1 record.

What should I do if my departure date has changed after submitting the Absence from ISU e-form?
Students whose departure date or plans to depart the U.S. have changed should contact ISSO immediately, or their immigration record will be terminated as initially requested in the Absence from ISU e-form.
What else must I do before leaving the U.S.?
There are many tasks students must complete prior to departing the U.S. These tasks include:
- Inform academic/faculty adviser of upcoming departure
- If renting from private company, notify landlord
- If living on campus, complete the "check out" procedures with Department of Residence
- Cancel and pay final bills, such as university bill

Returning to ISU and the United States
Do I need a new I-20 when I am ready to return to ISU?
Yes, a student will need a new I-20 to reenter the United States. Review the "Returning to ISU" page on the ISSO website and contact an International Student Adviser with further questions.

Disclaimer: This Frequently Asked Questions is intended for general information and guidance. Please consult with an International Student and Scholar Advisor in the International Students and Scholars Office regarding your individual request.