Absence from Iowa State University: Frequently Asked Questions
Students in F-1 Status

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) or depart ISU permanently.
  - Some common reasons include medical leave, family emergency, military duty, etc.
- There is no time limit associated with your leave of absence
  - Undergraduate students who have not been enrolled for over 5 months will need to apply for Reentry to ISU through the Office of the Registrar.

What happens to my immigration status when I take a leave of absence?
- Your SEVIS record (and any dependents) will be terminated for an “Authorized Early Withdrawal”, which a positive termination that should have no negative impact on future entries into the United States.
- Your F-1 visa and I-20 are no longer valid after your SEVIS record is terminated. You cannot reenter the United States with these immigration documents during your leave of absence.
- You may lose your eligibility to apply for OPT. In order to qualify for off-campus work authorization, students must be in valid F-1 status for one academic year. If you plan to apply for OPT after your leave of absence, please make arrangements with your Academic Adviser so that you have enough credits to complete one academic year.

When should I notify ISSO that I will be leaving ISU?
- It is recommended that you notify ISSO before you plan to depart the United States. If you do not notify ISSO before you leave, you will still need to complete the required e-form on Cystart as soon as possible.

How do I notify ISSO that I will be leaving ISU temporarily or permanently?
- Log into Cystart with your Net ID and password
  - Select Student Services
    - Complete the “Absence from ISU” e-form

Do I need to complete a withdrawal form?
- If you are enrolled in classes and will not be attending due to a leave of absence, you will need to complete the withdrawal form.
- Please consult with your Academic Adviser regarding the withdrawal form and process

When do I need to leave the U.S. after requesting a leave of absence?
- You are required to depart the United States within 15 days of submitting the required e-form or withdrawing from ISU.

Do I need a new I-20 when I am ready to return to ISU?
- Yes, you will need a new I-20 to reenter the United States. Please review the Reentry FAQs on the ISSO website and contact an International Student Adviser if you have further questions.