Program Extension: Frequently Asked Questions
Students in F-1 Status

When do I need to submit program extension request?

- When your current degree program cannot be completed by the program end date on your I-20 and you need additional time
  - Your program end date is provided on page 1 of your I-20 form

What are acceptable reasons for program extension?

- Compelling, valid academic reasons (see examples below)
  - Change of major
  - Change of research topic
  - Unexpected research problem(s)
  - Completing a master’s degree with a creative component or thesis and only given two years to complete the program on the original I-20
  - Addition of a second major at the same degree level
  - Addition of a minor
  - Compelling medical reason (student’s illness or medical condition)

What reasons are not acceptable for this request?

- Allow additional time for Curricular Practical Training
- Poor job market/failure to find employment
- Delay in completing degree requirements caused after being placed on academic probation or having been suspended from Iowa State University

How long an extension can I request?

- Any length of time it would reasonably take to complete degree requirements

Can I request additional extensions, if needed?

- Yes, as long as there continues to be a compelling academic or medical reason

When do I submit the program extension request?

- As early as four months prior to the end date on current I-20
- At least ten working days prior to the end date on your current I-20

How do I submit program extension request?

- This is an electronic process completed through Cystart. The link for Cystart can be found on the ISSO website. Log in to Cystart using your ISU NetID and password
- Cystart ➔ F-1 Student Services ➔ Program Extension
What documents do I need to include with my request?
- **Proof of financial support** for the period of extension you are requesting (one semester, academic year, calendar year). Refer to the Expense Worksheets for the amount of financial support you need to show
  - Financial documents more than 3 months old will not be accepted
  - Examples of financial documentations include: U.S. or foreign bank statements, Letter of Intent for graduate assistants, etc. Consult with an ISSO advisor on other types of acceptable financial support documentation
- If requesting extension due to medical reasons, a letter from a licensed medical doctor or licensed clinical psychologist which documents your illness or condition

What is the timeline for processing this request?
- 10 working days after there is a check mark in all boxes on the CyStart Program Extension Request page
- ISSO will not start processing your request until we have received the following:
  - Your program extension request e-form
  - The approval/verification from your academic or faculty advisor
  - Financial support documentation
  - Doctor’s letter, if applicable

How will I know if my program extension request has been approved?
- When your request is approved, ISSO will prepare a new I-20 form for you with an updated program end date
- ISSO will send an e-mail to your ISU e-mail address notifying you to pick up your new I-20
- If you do not receive this e-mail within 10 working days as noted above, please send an e-mail to isso@iastate.edu to check on your request.

What are the immediate consequences if I fail to request program extension before my current I-20 expires?
- You will be considered in violation of your F-1 nonimmigrant status
- You will not be allowed to continue working on campus
- If you have authorization to work off campus, it will be automatically terminated
- You lose your eligibility for all other benefits of your F-1 nonimmigrant status
- You lose your eligibility to change your status, for example from F-1 to H-1B