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

Overview
What is a Program Extension?
A Program Extension is the term used to apply and receive an extension of an I-20. Students must apply for a program extension when their degree program cannot be completed by the program end date on page 1 of their I-20 and need additional time.

Reasons
What are acceptable reasons for a 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
- Retaking courses after completing all degree requirements
- Delay in completing degree requirements caused after being placed on academic probation or having been suspended from Iowa State University

Application
When do I submit the Program Extension request?
A student may apply as early as four months prior to the end date on the current I-20 and no later than ten working days prior to the end date on the current I-20.

How do I submit a program extension request?
Program Extension requests can be submitted through an electronic process in Cystart. Students can log in to Cystart using their ISU NetID and password. Complete and submit the Program Extension e-form under the F-1 Student Services tab.

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).
  - Please refer to the Estimated Expenses information found on the ISSO website
  - 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.
If requesting extension due to medical reasons, a letter from a licensed medical doctor or licensed clinical psychologist which documents illness or condition

What is the timeline for processing this request?
It will take 10 working days after there is a check mark in all boxes on the CyStart Program Extension Request page. ISSO will not start processing the request until we have received the program extension e-form, approval/verification from the academic or faculty adviser, financial support document, or the doctor's letter (if applicable). When the request is approved, ISSO will prepare a new I-20 form with an updated program end date. ISSO will send an e-mail to the ISU email address on file notifying the student to pick up their new I-20. ISSO recommends sending an email to isso@iastate.edu if an email has not been received within 10 working days.

Duration
How long will my I-20 be extended?
ISSO will extend the I-20 based on the information provided by the academic/faculty adviser. A Program Extension can be for any length of time that would allow a student to reasonably complete degree requirements, not to exceed one year.

Can I request additional extensions?
Yes, students can request multiple Program Extensions during their academic program as long as there continues to be a compelling academic or medical reason for the extension.

Immigration Consequences
What will happen if I do not complete a Program Extension and my I-20 expires?
- Violation of F-1 nonimmigrant status
- Must apply for reinstatement or leave and reenter the U.S. in new status
- Must immediately stop working on campus
- Any authorized off-campus work will be terminated automatically
- Lose eligibility for all other benefits of F-1 nonimmigrant status
- Lose eligibility to change status, for example from F-1 to F-2, F-1 to H-1B, etc.
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.