

## Leave of Absence for F-1 Students

### **What is a Leave of Absence?**

Students are required to enroll in courses in the Spring and Fall semesters in order to keep their academic record active. When a student wishes to take a Spring or Fall semester off (not enrolled in any courses), they must request a Leave of Absence. The Leave of Absence allows degree-seeking students to keep their academic record active and open while taking a semester off with no enrollment.

The Leave of Absence is a Registrar's permission and applies only to your Academic record, and NOT your *immigration* record. For more information on Leave of Absence, please see the Registrar's website at: <https://registrar.utah.edu/handbook/leave.php>.

In line with the Office of the Registrar regulations, Leave of Absence requests can extend enrollment eligibility for a maximum of **one semester at a time** for undergraduate and graduate students. Leave of Absences can be requested for a maximum of 3 semesters; each semester requires a separate Leave of Absence application.

### **How does a Leave of Absence affect my immigration standing?**

As an F-1 student, you are required to remain enrolled full-time during the Spring and Fall semesters in order to keep your immigration record valid. If you choose to take a Leave of Absence, please remember this is an academic permission, not an immigration one. Therefore, if you are granted an academic leave of absence, you have two choices:

1. Stay in the U.S during your Academic Leave of Absence semester:
  - a. If you choose to stay in the U.S. during your Leave of Absence semester, you **MUST** also apply and be approved for a Medical Reduced Course Load. If you do not have a medical condition that qualifies for a Medical Reduced Course Load, and you still wish to take (0) credit courses during your Leave of Absence, then you must depart the U.S. during this time. Please see the [Medical Reduced Course Load Guide](#) for more info.
2. Depart and remain outside the U.S. during your Academic Leave of Absence semester:

- a. If you choose to depart the U.S. during your Leave of Absence semester(s), you **MUST** submit a Close of SEVIS Record e-form. This form will allow you to close your SEVIS record for Authorized Early Withdrawal. When you are ready to return to the U.S. to resume your studies, if your academic record is still active, you must submit the Continuing Student Initial I-20 to receive your new I-20 to travel back to the U.S. If you have been gone for longer than one semester it is possible you may have to re-apply to the University to re-activate your existing academic record. Please contact ISSS if this is the case.

Requirements for applying for a Leave of Absence:

- F-1 student in good standing
- Have met with your academic advisor (undergraduate students) or committee/ department chair (graduate students)
- Have met with an ISSS advisor

\*Please note that once you are on Leave of Absence, you may not be eligible for other University services (e.g., Student Life Center, Counseling Center). \*

*Additionally, if you are a Utah Global student, you must speak with Utah Global Office before proceeding with a Leave of Absence request.*

### **How to apply**

- If you are an undergraduate student, please download and complete the **International Undergraduate Student Request for Leave of Absence** form ([https://registrar.utah.edu/\\_pdf/intl-ugrad-leave-absence.pdf](https://registrar.utah.edu/_pdf/intl-ugrad-leave-absence.pdf)).  
If you are an undergraduate student, you are encouraged to speak with your academic advisor to discuss your plans and how this will impact your degree progression.
- If you are a graduate student, please download and complete the **Graduate Student Request for Leave of Absence** form ([https://registrar.utah.edu/\\_pdf/graduate-leave-absence.pdf](https://registrar.utah.edu/_pdf/graduate-leave-absence.pdf)).  
If you are a graduate student, you will need signatures from your supervisory committee or from your department chair as well.
- If you are a **Utah Global student**, please contact Utah Global first to determine if you are eligible for a Leave of Absence.

- All students should meet with an ISSS advisor to discuss how your plans will impact your immigration status. Bring your completed form to your appointment so that an ISSS advisor can sign it.
- Send the completed form to the **Office of the Registrar** in the Student Services Building (SSB) or by email at [registrar@utah.edu](mailto:registrar@utah.edu).
- It is your responsibility to drop/ withdraw from classes for the semester you are requesting a leave of absence from. Please speak with your academic department if you have any questions.
- *(If applicable: see above)* Log into UAtlas and complete a **SEVIS Closure (Authorized Early Withdrawal)** e-form. This e-form is a request to close your SEVIS record when you will be outside the U.S. for an extended period of time. You will be asked why you are requesting to close your SEVIS record and your intended departure date from the U.S. For more information on SEVIS closure, please refer to this guide [here](#).

### **Important Reminders Before Applying**

- You are **required** to meet with an ISSS advisor before submitting your LOA form or withdrawing from classes for the semester you are requesting a leave from. Failure to do so may impact your immigration status.
- A student who submits a LOA form is responsible for determining the impact, if any, on their insurance coverage, tuition, financial aid, residential housing or other enrollments.
- It is the student's responsibility to register for the semester following their leave of absence. For example, an undergraduate student who takes a LOA over the Fall semester, must return to resume classes the following Spring semester. Similarly, an undergraduate student who takes a LOA over the Spring semester, must return for the following Fall semester. If a student fails to register for classes for their intended returning semester, the student will be discontinued and will need to re-apply through the Admissions office. If you have any questions about your return semester, please speak with an ISSS advisor. If you need to extend your LOA request, please make sure to contact your department and ISSS for eligibility.

- After your return to the U from your Leave of Absence, you will be eligible for on-campus employment, but you **must maintain full time student status for two semesters before being eligible for CPT or OPT**. Please speak with an ISSS advisor if you have any questions.

### **My LOA is ending and I wish to resume my classes. What should I do?**

If your time of leave is ending and you are preparing to return to the U, it will likewise be a two-part process: reactivating your academic record AND activating your immigration record.

1. Please contact the **Office of the Registrar** or your **academic advisor** (for your classes):
  - Contact the Office of the Registrar or your academic advisor to notify them you are planning to return from your leave of absence.
  - Ensure you are enrolled in classes for the semester following your Leave of Absence as a full-time student. If you do not register for the term following your leave, you will need to be re-admitted through the International Admissions Office.

*\*\*You must be currently active in the University system to go through this process. If you are not currently active in the University system, you will need to re-apply through [International Admissions](#). \*\**

2. Please contact **ISSS** if you have departed the US and have closed your SEVIS record:
  - Visit the ISSS website (<https://iss.utah.edu>) and log into UAtlas.
  - Navigate to **F-1 Student Services Menu** and select **Continuing Student Initial I-20**.
    - *Note: If you did not file for a LOA or it has been more than 1 year since you left the university, you will need to re-apply for admissions to get your new I-20. Please visit the International Admissions website for re-admission requirements <https://admissions.utah.edu/apply/international/>.*
  - This e-form will ask if you have met with an advisor.
    - ◇ It will ask why you are requesting a new I-20. You can select the option that you have **Closed your SEVIS Record**.
    - ◇ The next field will ask about your return to the U.S. Please select **Travel** and indicate your intended return date.
  - Since you will need this new I-20 to enter the U.S., please plan enough time for processing (up to 10 business days) and then time for shipping this new I-20 to you.

- Pay the \$350 SEVIS fee (<https://www.fmjfee.com/i901fee/index.html>) prior to re-entering the U.S. Keep the payment receipt as evidence.
- After returning to the U.S., you **MUST** report to ISSS to have your immigration documents scanned and inform ISSS of your return in order to complete the reinstatement process. **If you do not do this final step within 14 days of your return, you will NOT complete your reinstatement and may have to start the reinstatement process again.**

### Frequently Asked Questions

**Q. I am returning to my home country for extended period of time for family responsibilities or to serve military. Can I submit a LOA?**

A. No, you are not eligible for LOA. In this situation, you will need to close your SEVIS record. You will need to be readmitted to the University. Please visit the International Admissions website for re-admission requirements <https://admissions.utah.edu/apply/international/>.

**Q. Is there a deadline to submit LOA for each semester?**

A. Contact your department advisor and Registrar's Office for further information.

**Q. Can I continue to work while on LOA?**

A. If you have a medical condition and your Medical Reduced Course Load has been approved, it will depend on your physician's recommendation.

### Important Reminders

- You must re-enter the U.S. with your new I-20. However, you may NOT enter the US earlier than 30 days prior to the program start date listed on your new I-20.
- You do not need to renew your visa unless it is expired. Contact ISSS if you have any questions about your visa eligibility.
- Since you will be entering with a new I-20, you are viewed as an initial student. After your re-entry, you will be eligible for on-campus employment, but ***you must maintain***

***full-time student status for two semesters again to be eligible for vacation semester, CPT, or OPT.***

### **Before You Leave**

- Do you need to close your housing contract?
  - If you are currently living on-campus: Have you discussed your situation with Housing, and cancelled your contract with HRE? Have you paid your housing bill, and any other associated fees?
  - If you are currently living off-campus: Have you discussed your departure with your roommates? Does your landlord know that you are moving out, and have you made the steps to remove yourself from the lease? Do you have a plan for collecting your deposit? Are there any utility bills currently in your name that need to be cancelled or transferred to a roommate?
- Have you paid all of your debt with the university (e.g. tuition, parking, student health, etc.)?
- Have you taken care of all of your holds? Holds may prevent you from obtaining your transcript. It is a good idea to take care of them before you leave University of Utah.
- Do you need to cancel your bank account?
- Do you need to forward your mail with USPS to another U.S. address?
- Contact Registrar's Office if you want copies of your transcript for personal record. You can obtain them after you graduate as well.

***Disclaimer:*** International Student & Scholar Services (ISSS) provides support and information related to U.S. immigration laws and regulations related to F and J status at the University of Utah. ISSS staff are not attorneys and any information provided by ISSS should not be construed as legal advice. Individuals are welcome to consult a qualified immigration attorney for specific legal advice, particularly in complicated cases. For a list of local Utah attorneys please visit our website [here](#).