



Office of  
International  
Education

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## Leave of Absence and Immigration Status

**A leave of absence has a direct impact on F-1 student status. It is advisable to schedule an appointment to meet your OIE advisor well before you plan your leave of absence.**

### Leave of Absence and SEVIS

F-1 students must be pursuing a full course of studies each semester to maintain status. Students on leave do not register, and therefore are not pursuing a full course of studies. International students on leave may not remain in the U.S. in F-1 status. We report to immigration via SEVIS that you are taking an authorized leave and the date the leave begins. Your F-1 record and I-20 will be terminated in SEVIS. ***You have a 15-day grace period to depart the U.S.***

**PLEASE NOTE: Your original I-20 will no be longer valid.  
You MUST obtain a new I-20 to return from a leave of absence.**

### Obtaining a new I-20

After you have taken the appropriate steps to return and have sent all required documentation to OIE, we will issue and send you a new I-20 within 2 to 3 weeks; use that new I-20 to reenter the U.S. Your document will be issued for a "new" program, so you will be subject to the \$200 SEVIS I-901 fee prior to returning to the U.S. (<http://www.ice.gov/sevis/i901/index.htm>). Contact OIE in advance so that you have enough time to receive your new document, apply for a new visa if necessary, and reenter the U.S. prior to rejoining your program.

### Mandatory check in with OIE

You will also be required to report to OIE upon your return. Failure to complete the immigration check-in requirement will result in the loss of your legal immigration status.

### Other implications:

- **OPT**

In order to be eligible for Optional Practical Training (OPT) on a new I-20 after returning from a leave of absence, an F-1 student must be in valid status for at least one academic year (2 semesters). If you return from the leave of absence and have only one semester remaining to complete your program, you would not be eligible for OPT. For more, go to: <http://www.studentaffairs.cmu.edu/oie/forstu/pdf/opt.pdf>.

- **Registration upon return**

You must be full-time enrolled for the semester of your return to Carnegie Mellon and you may only enter the US up to 30 days prior to the start of that term. Note: if you plan to return for summer, you MUST be full-time enrolled for the entire summer (36 units) to maintain your status.

- **Andrew email**

Be aware that your andrew email may be discontinued while you are on leave. You should provide OIE with a valid email for the time that you are away on leave.

### Return from Leave

Once you decide to return from the leave of absence, you must do the following:

- Undergraduates should contact Enrollment Services (<http://www.cmu.edu/hub/>). Graduates should contact their home academic department.
- Contact OIE ([oie@andrew.cmu.edu](mailto:oie@andrew.cmu.edu)) to request the International Student Information Form and Affidavit of Financial Support. Return these forms to OIE, with the required financial statements for processing of a new Certificate of Eligibility (I-20).

If you have any questions about the leave or your visa status, please contact OIE. More information about returning from a leave at can be found at: <http://www.studentaffairs.cmu.edu/oie/forstu/coming.html>.