



Office of
International
Education

Carnegie Mellon University
Warner Hall, Third Floor
Pittsburgh, PA 15213
Tel: 412.268.5231
Fax: 412.268.7832

www.cmu.edu/oie
Students & Scholars: oie@andrew.cmu.edu
Study Abroad: goabroad@andrew.cmu.edu

Termination from Ph.D., Leave of Absence, Suspension or Dismissal for all International Students

I. EXPLANATION

There are immigration implications for international students who leave Carnegie Mellon without completing their degree. This handout provides information for several different situations in which students leave Carnegie Mellon prior to completing their program or experience a delay in anticipated completion dates.

II. LEAVE OF ABSENCE/WITHDRAWAL

Students who choose to take time off from their academic programs must submit a Leave of Absence form to the HUB. Nonimmigrant students in F1 or J1 status are required to be enrolled as full-time students therefore they cannot remain in the US while on a leave of absence. Students in F1 or J1 immigration status must make their plans carefully and consult with an OIE advisor before withdrawing or taking a leave of absence.

F1 students. Current immigration regulations provide a 15 day grace period for F1 students who discuss their intention to withdraw or take a leave of absence with an OIE advisor prior to withdrawing. Students who do not notify the OIE advisors in advance have no grace days. The grace days are the time that students are legally allowed to remain in the US to prepare to depart the US, to request a transfer to another school's immigration documents or to request a change to another immigration status. Early communication with an OIE advisor is crucial in order for the student to gain a benefit from the 15 day grace period. Without that grace period, a student cannot legally transfer to another school or change to another immigration status but must immediately depart the United States.

J1 students. Students in J1 status have a 30 day grace period and are also strongly encouraged to consult with an OIE advisor regarding their options. Students in J1 status cannot transfer to another J program beyond the expiration date of their DS-2019 so early communication with OIE is important.

Students who take a leave of absence may elect to return to Carnegie Mellon in the future. At the time the student is contacting his/her academic department and completing the Return from Leave of Absence form, he/she must also contact OIE. International students will need to obtain a new I-20 or DS-2019 from OIE in order to legally re-enter the US after a leave of absence.

Guidance for students returning from a leave of absence is on the OIE website at:
<http://www.studentaffairs.cmu.edu/oie/forstu/coming.cfm#return>

In the best interest of the student, (1) departments should direct the international student to contact OIE and (2) the student should contact OIE regarding the plan to withdraw and/or take a leave of absence before withdrawing or leaving.

III. SUSPENSION OR DISMISSAL

When a student is suspended or is dismissed, the student who is in F1 or J1 status cannot legally remain in the US. In cases where OIE is notified prior to the students' registration being cancelled or dropped, the student would have a 15 day grace period. During the grace period, the student may prepare to depart the US, to request a transfer to another school's immigration documents or to request a change to another

immigration status. If OIE is notified after the fact, the student would not have any grace days but must legally immediately depart the U.S. It is to the student's advantage that OIE be provided notification that a student will be placed on suspension or will be dismissed as early as possible. Students and/or department contacts or advocates are should contact OIE directly with this information.

Colleges and universities are required to report to the Department of Homeland Security, through the SEVIS system, when a student has been suspended or dismissed within 30 days of the event. Therefore, even if OIE cannot be notified in advance of a student's dismissal or suspension, OIE must be notified as promptly as possible in order for Carnegie Mellon to meet its legal obligations.

For the student's behalf, desirable actions include (1) early and clear notification of the student by faculty regarding sub-standard or unacceptable work or serious charges of misconduct (2) directing student to contact OIE before canceling or dropping registration, (3) notification to OIE of an international students' suspension or dismissal as promptly as possible but no later than final written communication to the student.

IV. TERMINATION OF PH.D. PROGRAM

At times a Ph.D. student will choose or be requested to leave a Ph.D program. As in the cases mentioned above, notification to OIE in advance of the student's departure from the program preserves options for the student. In particular, in some departments, Ph.D. students may have the option of being awarded a Master's degree even though they will not successfully complete the PhD program. In this case, if the appropriate changes are made by the department in SIS, OIE can issue an I-20 for the Master's program and can recommend Optional Practical Training (OPT) based on the Master's degree, provided that the OPT request is made by the student *prior* to masters-level completion.

The student is not eligible for OPT if the recommendation for OPT is made *after* the masters-level coursework has been completed and the degree certified.

For the student's behalf, desirable actions include (1) early and clear notification of the student by faculty regarding sub-standard or unacceptable PhD-level work, (2) recoding in SIS to masters-level at the earliest possible time, and (3) application for OPT (if desired) prior to coursework completion and masters degree certification.

V. PROGRAM COMPLETION DELAYED

Students who successfully complete their academic program are entitled to a full grace period (60 days for F1 students; 30 days for J1 students). As indicated previously, the grace period provides time for students to prepare to depart the US, transfer to another school/academic program (which for J1 students must occur prior to the expiration of the DS-2019) or request a change to another nonimmigrant status. Additionally, students who complete their programs are eligible to extend their stay in the US in order to work in a job related to their field of study (OPT for F1 students; Academic Training for J1 students). However students must apply for this work permission before they complete the requirements for their degree.

Occasionally, a student applies for OPT anticipating they will complete their program but does not finish as anticipated. Students in that situation must consult with an OIE advisor as soon as possible. The student must extend his/her I-20, prior to its expiration, to maintain status while completing the program requirements. Depending upon what requirements remain, students in this situation may need to cancel their work permission. This particular situation is extremely problematic for students who have applied for OPT and subsequently fail a class or have additional course requirements to complete. Students in that situation may have to obtain a reinstatement to legal status from US Citizenship and Immigration Services.

For the student's behalf, desirable actions include (1) early notification of the student by faculty regarding sub-standard or unacceptable work or failure to meet all program requirements so the student can consult with OIE advisors about OPT application timing and (2) notification to OIE when a graduating international student does not complete the program as anticipated.