Hi everyone. Welcome to our Requesting a Leave of Absence video.

After watching this video, you will be able to do the following three things: understand what happens to your immigration record when your Leave of Absence, or LOA, request is processed; determine what actions to take before time off from study; and identify the steps to prepare an F-1 Leave of Absence request.

Those of you watching this video have likely already determined that a Leave of Absence might be the best option for your time off. So, let’s start by talking about what happens to your F-1 record when you are authorized for a Leave of Absence.

When ISS processes your LOA request, your F-1 record will be terminated for “Authorized Early Withdrawal.” I know this sounds a little intimidating, but this actually means that you’ve communicated your plans to ISS and have completed the appropriate process to take time off. “Authorized Early Withdrawal” is, as it says in the name, an authorized termination of status. This should not have an impact on future immigration requests.

However, if you fail to notify ISS of your absence - even after approval from your academic department - your immigration record will be terminated for “Failure to Enroll.”  This could have serious consequences on future study, work, or travel in the United States.

A Leave of Absence request also impacts F-1 employment.

Since you are not in active F-1 status during your LOA, you must end all F-1 work programs once your LOA is processed. This includes on-campus work, CPT, or OPT.

Depending on the length of your absence and how many quarters you spend outside the U.S., an LOA can impact future work authorization eligibility as well.

For example, if you take more than one quarter off and return with an initial I-20, you will need to enroll full-time for three academic quarters before being eligible for CPT or OPT again.

We will talk about this in more detail in our Returning Student videos.

A student who is authorized for a Leave of Absence must depart the United States.

If you are physically present in the U.S. when your LOA is processed, you must depart by one of the following dates:

If you are NOT ENROLLED for your LOA quarter, you should depart within 15 days of the last day of enrollment. For example, if you don’t enroll for winter quarter because you are taking a leave of absence during winter, and autumn quarter ended on December 16th, you should leave within 15 days of December 16th.

If you ARE ENROLLED for your LOA quarter and haven’t dropped your courses yet, you should depart within 15 days of either your withdrawal date or your termination date, whichever comes first. ISS will notify you when we terminate your record. This will be the day we process your LOA request.

If you have any questions about dropping your courses or when you should leave the U.S., please talk to an ISS Advisor.

Keep in mind that an approval for an immigration Leave of Absence does not automatically drop you from your courses.

If you are enrolled when your LOA is approved, you must take action to drop your own classes. If you are past the add/drop period, you will need to submit an Advisor Assisted Drop request, which can be found on the Registrar’s website under “Current Quarter Drop.”

There are other actions you may need to take to tie up any loose ends before you leave the country that are unrelated to your immigration status.

Undergraduate students can refer to the Registrar Checklist for institutional policies and reminders.

Graduate students should review information for Grad On-Leave status and discuss any academic requirements with your department.

Now let’s talk about how to request a Leave of Absence.

The Leave of Absence request form can be found under Requests & Documents in MyISSS.

When you apply for your LOA, we will request the following information.

The quarter you are requesting to start your Leave of Absence. Please be sure to include the term and year. For example, “Spring, 2023.” We will also ask for the last date you were enrolled in classes, as well as the date you plan to leave the United States. If you have already left the U.S. when applying, you can enter the date you left the country.

In terms of *when* to submit your request, ISS recommends that you submit the request form before your planned LOA quarter begins. The earliest you can submit your request is once the quarter before your LOA ends. As an example, if you are planning on taking an LOA for winter quarter and autumn quarter ends on December 16th, the earliest you can submit your request is December 17th. If you submit your request too early, ISS will dismiss your request.

As a reminder, please read the attestations carefully to make sure you fully understand the requirements of the F-1 Leave of Absence.

When you are ready to return to the U.S. after a Leave of Absence, you must request a new I-20.

There are two different ways for students to receive a new I-20 after an LOA. We can either request a reactivation of your terminated SEVIS record or you can reenter on a brand-new SEVIS record.

You can learn more about these two options in our Returning Student video series.

Thank you for watching our video on Leave of Absence. The next video in the series will be about returning to the U.S. after a Leave of Absence.