Hi everyone. Welcome to the ISS video about taking time off from study.

After watching this video you will be able to do the following: understand the options for taking time off from study as an F-1 student, identify circumstances when an F-1 Leave of Absence is needed, and recognize the effects a Leave of Absence has on F-1 status.

Let’s begin by reviewing enrollment requirements for F-1 students. Students on an F-1 visa must enroll full-time in order to maintain their immigration status.

For Undergraduate students, full-time enrollment is a minimum of 12 credits. For Graduate Students, the minimum enrollment is 10 credits.

Not enrolling full-time is a violation of F-1 status with serious effects on your ability to continue study in the United States. For this reason, it is important to request an exception or a Leave of Absence when you need to take a break from study.

In order to take a break from study, there are two options for your visa status.

The first option is to keep active F-1 status through a full-time exception. These exceptions are limited but can allow you to take the quarter off and remain in the U.S. The two exceptions we’ll cover in this video include the Annual Vacation Quarter and the Medical Reduced Course Load. These both require approval from ISS.

The second option is to temporarily end your F-1 status by taking a Leave of Absence. Taking a Leave of Absence means that you end your status for a period of time. Taking a Leave of Absence requires you to depart the U.S. You can only have F-1 status again after you return to the U.S. to resume your study.

One full-time exception is the Annual Vacation Quarter. F-1 students can use this exception when you plan to take one quarter off. You are eligible if you have enrolled full-time for the last three quarters in a row, including Summer. You must also be planning to enroll the following quarter after your vacation.

During a vacation quarter, it is OK to take the quarter off completely, or to enroll part-time. You may also choose to remain in the U.S. or to travel internationally.

ISS approval is required for Annual Vacation Quarters taken during the Autumn, Winter, or Spring. You can submit the request through MyISSS with the Alternative Vacation Quarter request form.

Another full-time exception is the Medical Reduced Course Load. This exception can be used if you need a break from study due to concerns of your physical or mental health. To qualify, you must submit a letter from a Medical Doctor, Doctor of Osteopathy, or a Licensed Clinical Psychologist. Medical Reduced Course Loads are approved one quarter at a time, and up to four quarters are allowed at each degree level. ISS must review and approve your request before you can take the quarter off. A new I-20 is issued after approval.

If you are considering applying for a Medical Reduced Course Load, you can find a template for your healthcare provider’s letter and more information on our website.

If you plan to take time off from study, the alternative option is to request a Leave of Absence. You’ll need to request a Leave of Absence if you do not qualify for one of the exceptions explained earlier, or if you need to take extended time off. A Leave of Absence can last one or more quarters. Once you request a Leave of Absence, it remains in effect until you take action to return to the U.S. as an F-1 student.

A Leave of Absence is needed if you plan to take a gap year, complete military service, do an internship outside the U.S., take time off for personal or financial reasons, or have long-term medical leave.

When you request a Leave of Absence, your I-20 will be terminated for Authorized Early Withdrawal. This ends your SEVIS record and F-1 status. You must depart the U.S. within 15 days.

This also means that your on-campus employment eligibility ends on the date of your termination.

We also want you to know that taking a Leave of Absence can affect your future eligibility for CPT, OPT, and your next vacation quarter. These effects will be explained more in detail in later videos.

If you will be taking a Leave of Absence, please plan ahead! It is important that you request the Leave of Absence from ISS before you withdraw from classes in a current or upcoming quarter.

Thank you for watching our video about taking time off from study. The next video in this series will be about Requesting a Leave of Absence.