

Leave of Absence FAQ

Please read through this FAQ to understand what taking a Leave of Absence means for your F-1 student status. You are meant to read these FAQs in order. If you skip reading a question, you may not understand a question that appears later.

Question:	I'm not sure if I should take a Leave of Absence. Can OISS help me?
Answer:	<p>It is perfectly normal to consider taking a temporary Leave of Absence from UCSB! Many students take a Leave of Absence for various reasons such as:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• To pursue professional development in your home country• To focus on your mental and physical health and well-being• To recover from an illness or medical emergency• To complete mandatory military service in your home country• To be with your family• To apply for a new F-1 visa in your home country• Or some other personal reason that you don't have to share <p>Taking a Leave of Absence is a very personal decision. OISS will be here to support you and help you understand the immigration aspect of taking a Leave of Absence. You will want to consider your personal situation and think about what would be best for you.</p> <p>Reading through this FAQ can help you understand what it means to take a Leave of Absence and how you can return to UCSB and continue your studies. Hopefully this can help make your decision easier. Please know that OISS is here to support you and help you make an informed decision. If you have any questions, you can always ask an advisor at OISS for guidance.</p>

Question:	What are the overall steps I should do in order to take a Leave of Absence?
Answer:	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Read through this Leave of Absence FAQ 2. Submit your Leave of Absence Request to OISS through UCSBGlobal 3. Submit your Withdrawal (undergraduate) or Leave of Absence (graduate) paperwork to the appropriate campus department 4. Apply for Readmission to UCSB 5. Become readmitted to UCSB 6. Submit a Returning from a Leave of Absence request through UCSBGlobal in order to request an I-20 so that you can return to UCSB and resume your studies

Question:	What does a "full academic year" mean to OISS?
Answer:	<p>To OISS, a "full academic year" means "three consecutive quarters of full-time enrollment" at UCSB.</p> <p>Full-time enrollment means that every quarter you were registered in at least 12 units if you are an undergraduate student and 8 units if you are a graduate student. An exception to the unit minimum is granted only if you have a valid and approved reduced course load.</p> <p>Summer session is an optional quarter, meaning you are not required to enroll in summer sessions, but are welcome to do so. Summer session enrollment counts as full-time enrollment if you take 6 units as an undergraduate or 4 units as a graduate student. If you decide to take multiple summer sessions, such as summer session A and B, you just need a total of 6 or 4 units for the entire summer.</p> <p>For example, the following scenarios are examples of a full academic year:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fall 2020, Winter 2021, Spring 2021 • Winter 2021, Spring 2021, Summer 2021 • Winter 2021, Spring 2021, Fall 2021 • Spring 2021, Summer 2021, Fall 2021 • Spring 2021, Fall 2021, Winter 2022 • Summer 2021, Fall 2021, Winter 2022

Question:	What are some acronyms I should be aware of?
Answer:	<p>CBP: Customs and Border Protection</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• CBP agents permit you to enter the US at the airport <p>SEVIS: Student and Exchange Visitor Information System</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• SEVIS is a database that manages foreign student and exchange visitor information. US schools use SEVIS to fulfill their legal responsibility to report and maintain information about international students so that you can maintain your F-1 student status. <p>SEVP: Student and Exchange Visitor Program</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• SEVP acts as a bridge for government organizations that have an interest in information on nonimmigrants whose primary reason for coming to the United States is to be students. SEVP also manages SEVIS. US schools receive an SEVP certification so that they can issue I-20s to international students.

Question:	What does taking a Leave of Absence mean?
Answer:	It means that you will be cancelling or withdrawing from your classes and that the I-20 associated with your F-1 visa will be terminated. Please note that only the I-20, not your F-1 visa, will be terminated. Your I-20 will be terminated for the reason of an "authorized early withdrawal."

Question:	How long can my Leave of Absence be?
Answer:	Your leave of absence can be as long as you'd like. Some common terms that students use is taking a "gap quarter" or a "gap year."

Question:	Can I stay in the US during my Leave of Absence?
Answer:	No, you cannot stay in the US during a leave of absence. You must depart the US in order to take a leave of absence. You may only remain in the US if you have a valid medical reason and applied for a Medical Reduced Course Load .

Question:	Will OISS approve my request to take a Leave of Absence?
Answer:	Generally, yes, OISS will always approve your request to take a Leave of Absence. After you submit your Leave of Absence request to OISS, you aren't waiting for approval. You're waiting for confirmation that your Leave of Absence has been processed.

Question:	What will happen to my I-20 if I take a Leave of Absence?
Answer:	<p>Your I-20 will be set to a terminated (inactive) status because you will be outside of the US and not pursuing your studies. A terminated status is not negative because you are being terminated for an "Authorized Early Withdrawal."</p> <p>You will also want to keep in mind that in order for you to take a Leave of Absence, OISS must select an I-20 termination date for you,</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • If you are currently mid-quarter and are cancelling the following quarter, your termination date will most likely be the last day of the current quarter. • If you are requesting a mid-quarter withdrawal or terminating your record during a scheduled school break, then your termination date will most likely be 5 business days from the date you submit your Leave of Absence request. <p>Please also keep in mind that if you are withdrawing mid-quarter, you are responsible for checking with your College Advisor to find out about drop/grading deadlines and to determine whether withdrawing from your courses is currently viable.</p>

Question:	What will happen to my F-1 visa? I heard about a "5 month rule."
Answer:	The "5 month rule" is no longer put into practice or enforced by CBP. Your F-1 visa will not be cancelled if you've been outside of the US for more than 5 months. Your F-1 visa will remain active if it has not yet expired and you can still use it to re-enter the US even if you have been outside the country for more than five months and/or if you receive a new I-20.

	<p>If your F-1 visa has already expired or will expire during your Leave of Absence, you will need to apply for a new F-1 visa using the new I-20 you will receive from OISS when you're ready to resume your studies.</p> <p>If you currently have a low cumulative GPA (~2.0), then there is a chance your F-1 visa application may be denied. If you are concerned, please consult with OISS.</p>
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Question:	I'm a graduate student. What should I keep in mind?
Answer:	OISS cannot answer questions about whether your funding and on campus employment opportunities will be affected if you take a Leave of Absence. Please communicate directly with your department of study and Graduate Division for these types of questions. OISS will guide you through the immigration aspect of taking a Leave of Absence.

Question:	I've paid my tuition. Will I receive a refund?
Answer:	<p>The tuition refund schedule is determined by the Office of the Registrar. As an international student, Schedule B applies to you. Depending on how many days have passed since the quarter start date, the refund percentage will decrease.</p> <p>Typically, if you've been in communication with OISS about taking your Leave of Absence since before the first day of the quarter, the Office of the Registrar takes this into account when determining your refund. Although OISS can advocate for you if you've been trying to take your Leave of Absence since before the quarter began, your tuition refund is ultimately decided by the Office of the Registrar.</p> <p>If you have further questions about a tuition refund, please contact the Office of the Registrar at registration@sa.ucsb.edu</p>

Question:	How do I return to UCSB for Fall, Winter, or Spring and continue my studies?
Answer:	<p>If you want to return to UCSB for a Fall, Winter, or Spring quarter, you need to apply to be readmitted in the quarter you want to return. We recommend that you begin the readmission process as soon as possible.</p> <p>You should review the Readmission page on the Office of the Registrar's website. Make sure you pay attention to the readmission deadlines for the quarter you want to return. It is your responsibility to seek readmission and enroll in a full course load during Pass 1 of your planned return quarter. If you have any questions about the readmission process, please contact the Office of the Registrar at Readmission@sa.ucsb.edu</p> <p>Again, keep in mind that by taking a Leave of Absence, all your future quarters will be cancelled and any classes you are registered in will be dropped. You have to apply for readmission to UCSB in order to register for classes again. For example, if you withdraw from Winter quarter and the readmission deadline for Spring quarter has already passed, you would effectively be withdrawing from both Winter and Spring.</p> <p>If the readmission deadline for your desired return quarter has passed, you must communicate with the Office of the Registrar to see if it'll be possible for you to request an exception. If an exception is not possible, you must plan on returning to UCSB for a later quarter.</p>

Question:	I want to return to UCSB for a Summer Session. What should I do?
Answer:	<p>If you want to return to UCSB for a Summer Session, you must do two things:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Apply to Summer Sessions with UCSB Summer Sessions 2. Apply for Fall readmission with the Office of the Registrar <p>You will need to submit a Summer Sessions application as a returning UCSB International Student. Please visit the Summer Sessions Information for International Student page and follow the application instructions. Any application and registration questions should be directed to Summer Sessions at international@summer.ucsb.edu.</p>

	<p>Please note that you will only be issued a Summer Sessions I-20 at this time. This means the I-20's program dates will only be for the Summer Session you are taking. If you plan to study at UCSB during the academic year, you must also request Fall readmission through the Office of the Registrar by following the directions in the previous question.</p> <p>Once you have been readmitted for Fall quarter, you will inform OISS so that we can issue you an updated I-20 with new program dates.</p>
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Question:	I am an undergraduate student. Will my readmission to UCSB be approved?
Answer:	<p>Generally, your readmission will be approved if you left the university in good academic standing, so long as space is available.</p> <p>If you have a cumulative GPA that is around 2.0, then this could affect your chances of being readmitted to UCSB. You will want to meet with an academic advisor in your college to confirm your readmission ability.</p> <p>Remember, all undergraduate readmissions are at the discretion of the college and the Registrar's office. Please coordinate with your college and the Office of the Registrar about the readmission process to determine if you are a good candidate.</p>

Question:	I am a graduate student. Will my readmission to UCSB be approved?
Answer:	<p>Your readmission requires approval from your department of study and Graduate Division. Your record will be evaluated in terms of your academic performance and the timely completion of your degree. If you have questions, please speak to your department directly.</p>

Question:	When I request a new I-20 to return to UCSB, will I keep the same SEVIS ID?
Answer:	<p>You can find your current SEVIS ID on the top left of your I-20. If you take a Leave of Absence it is not guaranteed that you will keep the same SEVIS ID.</p> <p>If you are eligible for an I-20 reactivation, you will be able to receive an I-20 with travel signature from OISS and keep your same SEVIS ID.</p> <p>If you are not eligible for an I-20 reactivation, you will need to return under a “new initial I-20” and be issued a new SEVIS ID.</p>

Question:	What is an "I-20 reactivation" and am I eligible for it?
Answer:	<p>In order to be eligible for an I-20 reactivation, you must meet the following criteria:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Your leave of absence is less than 5 months (you are taking a single gap quarter) • Your I-20 was terminated for an “Authorized Early Withdrawal” <p>This means that if your Leave of Absence is longer than a single quarter, you will not be eligible for an I-20 reactivation.</p> <p>If you are eligible for an I-20 reactivation, an OISS advisor will submit the reactivation request to SEVP. It is SEVP who ultimately makes the decision to either approve or deny the I-20 reactivation request. This means that I-20 revalidation is not guaranteed to be approved by SEVP.</p> <p>If your I-20 reactivation request is approved, you may be able to maintain your OPT and CPT eligibility and keep the same SEVIS ID. However, if the I-20 reactivation request is denied, you will be issued a “new initial I-20.”</p>

Question:	What is a “new initial I-20” and how is it different from my current I-20?
Answer:	<p>You may remember that when you first became an F-1 international student, whether at UCSB or at a previous school, you applied for a “new initial I-20” with a new SEVIS ID that you had to register by paying a SEVIS I-901 Fee. This was a one-time fee that all F-1 international students paid in order to register</p>

	<p>their new SEVIS ID. For more information about this fee, please view the U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement website.</p> <p>So, if you are not eligible for I-20 reactivation, you will be issued a "new initial I-20" with a new SEVIS ID that you must register by paying the SEVIS I-901 Fee.</p>
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Question:	What will happen to my <u>CPT</u> and <u>OPT</u> eligibility if I take a Leave of Absence?
Answer:	<p>Remember, <u>CPT</u> and <u>OPT</u> are US work authorizations. CPT is used to work off-campus before graduating. OPT is used to work in the US after graduating.</p> <p>It is possible that upon your return from your leave of absence, you may need to complete a full academic year of study (three consecutive quarters of full-time enrollment) in order to regain your CPT and OPT eligibility.</p> <p>If you were not eligible for I-20 reactivation, you must regain your CPT and OPT eligibility. The following scenarios are examples of studying for a full academic year (highlighted in yellow) in order to regain CPT and OPT eligibility:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Return Spring 2021, Study Summer 2021, Study Fall 2021, Can do CPT beginning Winter 2022 and apply for OPT after graduating • Return Spring 2021, Study Fall 2021, Study Winter 2022, Can do CPT beginning Spring 2022 and apply for OPT after graduating • Return Summer 2022, Study Fall 2021, Study Winter 2022, Can do CPT beginning Spring 2022 and apply for OPT after graduating • Return Fall 2021, Study Winter 2022, Study Spring 2022, Can do CPT beginning Summer 2022 and apply for OPT after graduating • Return Winter 2022, Study Spring 2022, Study Summer 2022, Can do CPT beginning Fall 2022 and apply for OPT after graduating • Return Winter 2022, Study Spring 2022, Study Fall 2022, Can do CPT beginning Winter 2023 and apply for OPT after graduating

Question:	When should I submit my Leave of Absence Request to OISS?
Answer:	As soon as you've decided you would like to take the Leave of Absence. Before submitting your request to OISS through UCSBGlobal, please be sure you would like to take the Leave of Absence. It can be difficult to withdraw your request once it has been processed by our office.

Question:	If I am currently in the US, when must I depart the US?
Answer:	<p>Remember that upon receiving your Leave of Absence request, OISS must select an I-20 termination date for you,</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • If you are currently mid-quarter and are cancelling the following quarter, your termination date will most likely be the last day of the current quarter. • If you are requesting a mid-quarter withdrawal or terminating your record during a scheduled school break, then your termination date will most likely be 5 business days from the date you submit all required Leave of Absence materials <p>You have 15 days from your I-20 termination date to exit the US. Please keep this in mind when booking your flight tickets. Please be sure to keep a copy of the flight ticket / itinerary that you will use or have used to exit the US. You will need to provide this flight ticket / itinerary to OISS if you are eligible for an I-20 reactivation.</p>

Question:	Should I save a copy of my current class schedule in GOLD?
Answer:	Yes, we recommend that you save a copy of your current class schedule for the quarter that you are cancelling or withdrawing, even if no classes have been added. This will serve as proof that you were registered in a quarter prior to taking the Leave of Absence. The class schedule might be requested by SEVP when requesting your I-20 reactivation.

Question:	I am an undergraduate student. How do I submit my Leave of Absence Request to OISS?
Answer:	<p>You would need to submit your request through UCSBGlobal. It takes approximately 7 business days for your request to be processed.</p> <p>You will also need to complete a DocuSign petition to either cancel the next quarter or withdraw from the current quarter. After you've completed the petition through DocuSign, there is no need to send a copy to OISS. The petition will automatically be sent to every office that needs to sign the petition.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Complete the Cancellation of Registration if one of the following are true: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ The quarter you want to cancel has not yet begun ○ The quarter you want to cancel has begun, but you have not paid your tuition • Please complete the Undergraduate Withdrawal if both are true: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ The quarter you want to cancel has begun ○ You have already paid your tuition

Question:	I am a graduate student. How do I submit my Leave of Absence Request to OISS?
Answer:	<p>You would need to submit your request through UCSBGlobal. It takes approximately 7 business days for your request to be processed.</p> <p>You will also need to upload a completed Graduate Division LOA Petition. Please read through Graduate Division's leave of absence policies and receive a signature from your department chair or graduate advisor before submitting the LOA request in UCSBGlobal.</p>

Question:	I've submitted my Leave of Absence request to OISS. Now what?
Answer:	It takes at least 7 business days to process your Leave of Absence request. In UCSBGlobal, you will be able to track the current status of your request. You will receive a confirmation email from advisor containing the following:

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Your I-20 termination date • Information about departing the US and returning to UCSB <p>While waiting for the confirmation email, please make sure you've done the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Apply for readmission to UCSB • Arrange for someone to take care of your pets, plants and home • End your apartment lease (or arrange a sublease) • Take care of car, bills and any other financial responsibilities and obligations (including tickets, citations received by law enforcement, or other violations)
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Question:	I've been readmitted to UCSB. How do I request a new I-20 and return from my leave of absenec?
Answer:	<p>You would submit a Returning from a Leave of Absence request through UCSBGlobal. Upon receiving the request, an OISS advisor will be able to determine whether you'd be eligible to request an I-20 reactivation. You will be asked to upload or confirm the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Passport biographical page • Proof of Financial Support for <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◦ \$66,107 USD for undergraduate students ◦ \$51,624 USD for graduate students ◦ \$85,781 for 9-month MTM students • Copy of class schedule showing enrollment in at least 12 units (undergraduate) or 8 units (graduate) for the quarter you're returning <p>Note: Students with dependents must verify an additional \$4,000 for spouse and \$2,000 per child</p> <p>If you are eligible for an I-20 reactivation, the OISS advisor may also request that you submit a copy of the flight ticket / itinerary that you used to exit the US, as well as a copy of the flight ticket that you will use to return to the US.</p>

Question:	What are examples of acceptable Proof of Financial Support documents?
Answer:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bank account statements (translated to English) • Proof of guaranteed loans • Award letter from government or other agency • Letter from UCSB Department outlining financial award • Other documents outlining liquid assets

Question:	I've read through this FAQ but I have more questions or need some clarification. What should I do?
Answer:	You can schedule a Zoom appointment or send an email to the OISS advisor who has been assigned to you! OISS advisors are assigned to students by last name. Please take a look at the Student Advising Page for more information.

Question:	Thoughts, comments, feedback?
Answer:	Is there anything in this FAQ you think could be changed or improved? Let us know by emailing oiss@sa.ucsb.edu . We appreciate your thoughts and comments because your feedback will help your fellow international student peers who may want to take a Leave of Absence in the future!

Question:	What is the contact information for departments that I may need to contact?
Answer:	<p>College of Letters and Science</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • intl_students@ltsc.ucsb.edu <p>College of Engineering</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • coe-info@engineering.ucsb.edu <p>College of Creative Studies</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • https://ccs.ucsb.edu/people/staff <p>Office of the Registrar</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Registration@sa.ucsb.edu <p>Office of the Registrar: Readmission</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Readmission@sa.ucsb.edu

Question:	How will I continue to receive OISS updates and announcements?
Answer:	Please make sure you're subscribed to OISS emails ! Communication with our international student community is critical. If it is difficult to access your UCSB email from your home country, feel free to add an email you can easily access.

Question:	Does UCSB offer a Virtual Private Network (VPN) to students?
Answer:	<p>UCSB offers the Pulse Secure Campus VPN for all students. You can also check out their FAQ for some commonly asked questions. If you have any questions about using or downloading the VPN, please contact the VPN support team at vpn-support@ucsb.edu.</p> <p>We recommend that you download the VPN onto your laptop or cellular device before leaving the US.</p> <p>Please contact the VPN support team as well if you need a direct download link for an Android package (APK) or iOS App Store Package (.ipa) because you can't download the VPN to your phone from the Google Play Store or Apple App Store.</p>