



## Leave of Absence from Studies

The Student Exchange Visitor Program rules require all F-1 international students to enroll in a full course of study each fall and spring semester. There are very limited exceptions to this requirement and you may go [here](#) for more information. If a student does not enroll in classes for the fall or spring semester then they could face serious issues with their visa status. Students may take a “leave of absence” from a fall/spring semester or longer for military service and return to their home country. Below is a list of frequently asked questions for a leave of absence:

1. **What is considered a leave of absence?** If an F-1 student is outside the U.S. for *less than five months* then SEVP may consider this a temporary leave of absence. The ISSS is still required to terminate the student’s SEVIS record and I-20. SEVP may allow a school to request the terminated I-20 be corrected to active status again but *only in very limited circumstances*. The ISSS reserves the right to determine if a correction request will be made for a student on a temporary leave of absence.

Students outside the U.S. for more than 5 months are not considered on a leave of absence and will require a new I-20 with a new SEVIS number and new payment of the SEVIS I-901 fee before they will be permitted to return to the U.S. to resume their studies.

2. **What will happen if I do not enroll in classes for the fall or spring semester?** If you do not enroll in classes for fall or spring semester then the ISSS is required to report this to SEVP. Your I-20 will be terminated and will no longer be valid for entry to the U.S.

As mentioned in question 1, SEVP may allow the ISSS to request a terminated SEVIS record and I-20 be corrected to active status for students *outside the U.S. for less than five months* but this is in *very limited circumstances at the discretion of the ISSS*.

For students who are outside the U.S. for more than 5 months, they will require a new I-20 (SEVIS record) which will have a new SEVIS number and they will be required to pay the SEVIS I-901 fee for their new SEVIS record.

3. **What about my visa...will it still be valid?** Please note the U.S. Department of State (DOS) makes all decisions related to the F-1 visa. You may contact the U.S. Embassy or Consulate in your home country to verify the validity of your visa. Please see below for DOS guidance:
  - a. If a student is outside the U.S. for less than 5 months then the F-1 visa is still valid as long as it has not expired.
  - b. If a student is outside the U.S. for longer than 5 months then the F-1 visa is no longer valid regardless of the expiration date.
4. **Will taking a leave of absence impact my eligibility for Optional Practical Training or Curricular Practical Training?** Taking a leave of absence can impact a student’s OPT and CPT eligibility because the one academic year of study “clock” for practical training eligibility is reset if a student takes a leave of absence.

5. **What do I need to do if I plan to return to my home country and not study at A&M-Commerce the next semester (does not include summer)?** You will need to send an email to [Intl.Stu@tamuc.edu](mailto:Intl.Stu@tamuc.edu) with the following information:

Your full name

Campus wide ID number

Brief summary of your plans (not returning for personal reasons/military service)

You will need to be sure to return to your home country prior to the start of the next semester if you do not plan to study to avoid problems with your visa status. SEVP rules require a student to depart no later than 15 days after the termination of their SEVIS record and I-20.

6. **What is the process once I notify the ISSS that I will take a leave of absence?** The ISSS will keep a record of your information. We will review your file and make note you informed us you would not return and then we will terminate (make invalid) your SEVIS record and I-20. Your I-20 will no longer be valid for entry to the U.S. or to apply for any F-1 visa benefits.
7. **What if I inform the ISSS that I plan to not return but then change my mind?** If you change your mind prior to the start of the semester then return and continue your studies. You will also need to email the ISSS at [Intl.Stu@tamuc.edu](mailto:Intl.Stu@tamuc.edu) to notify them you are not taking a leave of absence. The ISSS will not terminate (make invalid) your SEVIS record and I-20 until after the start of the fall semester.
8. **How do I return to A&M-Commerce after a leave of absence?** You will need to contact the admissions office at A&M-Commerce at least 3 months before you plan to return to discuss your re-admission to the school. You will need to submit the following documents:
- New [undergraduate application](#). Graduate students may contact the [Graduate School](#) to confirm their continued admission.
  - New [bank and sponsor statement](#) for I-20
  - Transcripts if you studied at any school during your leave of absence
9. **What will happen once I am re-admitted?** Once you are re-admitted you will need to email the ISSS at [Intl.Stu@tamuc.edu](mailto:Intl.Stu@tamuc.edu) to let us know you plan to return. The ISSS will issue you a new I-20 once you are re-admitted and mail the I-20 to you. You will need to apply for a new F-1 visa and plan to attend the [new student check-in and international student orientation](#) prior to your first semester back.
10. **What if I decide to study at another school after my leave of absence?** Once you are admitted to your new school you will need to receive a new I-20 and apply for a new visa for your new school. ***Your SEVIS record and I-20 from A&M-Commerce will no longer be valid and cannot be transferred to your new school.*** You may need to request your transcripts from A&M-Commerce because your new school will need a copy. You may request your transcripts from the Registrar's Office.