LEAVE OF ABSENCE

I've decided to leave UB temporarily, but would like to return in the future. Why should I apply for a Leave of Absence?

If you intend to return to UB in the future, applying for a Leave of Absence will make it easier for you to return to UB. If you are approved for a Leave of Absence, you will not need to reapply to UB since your Leave of Absence will preserve your place in your current degree program. The Leave of Absence will also ensure that your UB email address is active during your leave.

How long can I be on a Leave of Absence?

Undergraduate students are allowed a maximum of four semesters of approved leave during their degree program.

Graduate student leaves are granted for a maximum of one year, but may be extended for up to one additional year if circumstances warrant it.

I am an Undergraduate student. How do I apply for a Leave of Absence?

1. Meet with your Academic Advisor to discuss your eligibility for a Leave of Absence. If you meet the eligibility requirements, your Academic Advisor will sign the "Undergraduate Leave of Absence Request" form.

2. Bring the completed Undergraduate Leave of Absence Request form to ISSS, Talbert Hall 210. Review your plans with an ISSS staff member, who will explain how the leave will impact your immigration status.

3. Read and sign the "ISSS Leave of Absence" form (attached). It is extremely important that you understand how a Leave of Absence impacts your immigration status, that your SEVIS record will be terminated while you are on your leave and that you follow specific procedures in order to return to UB. If you have any questions about the information included on the ISSS Leave of Absence form, please ask an ISSS staff member. Note: The form must be submitted to ISSS along with your Undergraduate Leave of Absence Request form, which an ISSS staff member will sign and return to you.

4. Submit the Undergraduate Leave of Absence Request form to the Office of the Registrar (located in 1Capen) before the deadline to apply. (If you are completing this process...
from outside the U.S., ISSS will submit the Undergraduate Leave of Absence form to the Office of the Registrar for you.). The deadlines, which are available here, are the 7th day of classes of the first term you are requesting the leave. (This includes Saturday, but not Sundays or holidays.) If you miss the deadline to apply, then you will not be eligible for a Leave of Absence. In that case, please refer to page four of this handout to find out what you need to do to return to UB in the future.

5. If you have registered for classes for the semester during which you will be on a leave, you must drop your classes. Approval for a Leave of Absence does not mean that your classes are automatically dropped. If you do not drop your classes before the “last day to drop without financial penalty”, you will be required to pay any tuition or fees that you owe. For more information, visit here.

I am a Graduate student. How do I apply for a Leave of Absence?

1. Speak with the Graduate Secretary and/or Academic Advisor in your academic department to discuss your eligibility for a Leave of Absence. If you meet the eligibility requirements, you must obtain the required signatures on the “Graduate Student Petition for a Leave of Absence” form. Complete the form and submit a copy to ISSS, Talbert Hall 210. Submit the original form to the Office of the Registrar, located in 1Capen.

2. Contact ISSS to review your plans and discuss how a leave will impact your immigration status. You will be asked to read and complete the “ISSS Leave of Absence” form (attached). It is extremely important that you understand how a Leave of Absence impacts your immigration status, that your SEVIS record will be terminated while you are on a leave and that you follow specific procedures in order to return to UB. If you have any questions about the information included on the ISSS Leave of Absence form, please ask an ISSS staff member.

3. If you have registered for classes for the semester during which you will be on a leave, you must drop your classes. Approval for a Leave of Absence does not mean that your classes are automatically dropped. If you do not drop your classes before the “last day to drop without financial penalty”, you will be required to pay any tuition or fees that you owe. For more information, visit here.

Am I required to leave the U.S. while I am on a Leave of Absence?

Yes. You cannot be inside the U.S. as a student if you are not enrolled in classes. However, there are two exceptions to this rule:

1. Students who are approved for a Medical Reduced Course Load and are receiving treatment for their medical condition inside the U.S. are allowed to remain in the U.S. while on a Leave of Absence.

2. Students who are approved for a leave of absence from UB, but who transfer to another U.S. school (and are registered full-time at that school) may also remain in the U.S.

If you do not meet one of the above exceptions, you cannot remain in the U.S. while on a Leave of Absence. If you do, you will be in violation of your F-1 status. For that reason,
you must provide your date of departure and date of re-entry before ISSS can issue you a new I-20 or re-activate your SEVIS record.

I will return to the U.S. within 5 months of my last date of enrollment. What must I do before returning to UB?

1. Confirm that you have been outside the U.S. for no more than five months. The five months are counted starting the day after the last date you attended classes and ending on the first day of classes. In other words, there cannot be more than five months between your last day of classes or exams and the start of the semester in which you will return.

2. Email ISSS (isss@buffalo.edu) 2-3 months before you plan to return to UB and inform us that you will return from your Leave of Absence. Include the following in your email:

   a. Your date of departure from the U.S. and the date you intend to return. The process to re-activate your SEVIS record can take several days to complete. **Note:** You may not re-enter the U.S. in F-1 status during a semester in which you are not enrolled. The earliest that you can re-enter the U.S. to resume studies is 30 days before the start of classes.

   b. Your flight itinerary indicating your date of arrival

   c. Proof of full-time course registration since you must register full-time during the semester in which you will return. (We can confirm your course registration for you; however, you must ensure that you are registered). **If you will return to UB for summer classes, you MUST enroll in at least six credits during the first summer session immediately after your return. If you will return to UB for Winter Session, you must enroll in five credits during Winter Session.**

   d. Completed International Student Information Form

   e. Expiration date of the signature on page 2 of your I-20. The signature is only valid for one year. If your signature will be more than one year old on the day you will return, you will not be allowed to enter the U.S. Please inform the ISSS staff member if your I-20 signature will expire before your return date.

Once we have all of the information listed above, we will make a request to re-activate your SEVIS record. The earliest that we can make the request is 60 days before classes begin. We will notify you via email when your SEVIS record is active again.

I will return to the U.S. more than 5 months after my last date of enrollment. What must I do before returning to UB?

1. Email ISSS (isss@buffalo.edu) 2-3 months before you plan to return from your Leave of Absence. Tell us your date of departure from the U.S. and the date you intend to return. **Note:** You may not re-enter the U.S. in F-1 status during a semester in which you are not enrolled. The earliest that you can re-enter the U.S. to resume studies is 30 days before the start of classes.

2. Before you can return to the U.S., you must receive a new I-20. To request the I-20, please provide the following:
a. **New financial documents** showing that you can cover the costs of your UB education and support yourself. When you contact ISSS, we will tell you how much money you must show. For information on acceptable forms of financial documents, please read [here](#).

b. **Completed International Student Information Form**

c. **Copy of the biographic page of your passport**

d. If you will return for summer classes, you MUST enroll in at least six credits during the first summer session immediately after you return. (If you cannot enroll in six credits during the same summer session, then you may not return in the summer. Instead, you will be issued an I-20 with a fall semester start date.) If you will return for Winter Session, you must enroll in five credits during Winter Session.

e. **Information on where we should mail your I-20 and how you would like it mailed.** You may choose between U.S. Airmail (free, but not recommended because it takes longer than express courier and there is no way to track your package) or express courier. You may also request that a friend collect your I-20. 

   *Note: To have your I-20 sent via express courier, you must either purchase a pre-paid shipping label or provide us with your UPS or Fedex account number.*

   *Note: Once we receive all of the documents listed above, it will take 5-7 days to create your new I-20.*

3. After you receive your I-20, you must:
   a. **Pay the SEVIS Fee.** For more information on how to pay the fee, please visit [here](#).
   b. **Apply for a new F-1 Visa Stamp.** For more information on what to prepare for a visa interview, please visit [here](#).
   c. **Contact your academic advisor or academic department to request that your HUB record be “term activated” so you will have access to your student account.** *Note: Your record must be “term activated” before you can register for classes.*

### What happens if I exceed the maximum time allowed on a Leave of Absence or I am not eligible for a Leave of Absence?

Before you can return to UB, you must re-apply for admission.

*If you are an Undergraduate student:* You must complete the Re-Entry application and receive admission to UB. Please contact the Office of International Admissions ([intadmit@buffalo.edu](mailto:intadmit@buffalo.edu)) to request information on Re-entry. If you are re-admitted to UB, the Office of International Admissions will issue you a new I-20. ISSS is not involved in the re-admission process and will not issue you a new I-20 in this case.

*If you are a Graduate Student:* You must contact your academic department. They will inform you of the procedures necessary to return to UB.

### Can I return to UB to resume studies earlier than I originally planned?
You may not return to the U.S. during a semester in which you are not enrolled. However, if, for example, you are approved for a 3-semester Leave of Absence and decide to return to UB after only one semester outside the U.S., this will only be possible if there is sufficient time to reissue your I-20 and for you to book your flight, renew your U.S. visa (if needed), etc. Please discuss your plans with an International Student Advisor, who will review your plans and determine if there is enough time for you to return.

**How do I know if my Leave of Absence is approved?**

You should receive an email when your Leave of Absence application has been processed. It will inform you if it has been approved or if there is a problem with your application. If you do not receive an email from the Office of the Registrar, you may contact ISSS (isss@buffalo.edu, 716-645-2258) to find out if your Leave of Absence has been approved.

**What should I do after I return to the U.S.?**

1. **Check in with ISSS within one week of your arrival.** You will be provided instructions on how to upload copies of your U.S. visa stamp and admission stamp. **Note:** If you were away from UB for one year or more, you will be required to attend an Immigration Session again and will have an IS Hold, which will prevent you from registering for classes until you attend the Immigration Session. When you check in with ISSS, you will be given dates of upcoming Immigration Sessions.

2. **Update your U.S. address in the HUB Student Center.** This is very important! Without your U.S. address in HUB, we cannot activate your SEVIS record.

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