

Tompkins Cortland Community College
Global Initiative Office, Room 248

OFFICE USE ONLY

Date Received: _____

DSO Processing: _____

Date Processed: _____

Notes: _____

F-1 Leave of Absence Information

Overview and Your Responsibility

Your F-1/J-1 status is based on your full-time enrollment. If you are not going to be enrolled in courses full-time, you will need to take some kind of immigration action and must notify our office as soon as possible. If you are taking a leave of absence, working with The Global Office is required and a separate requirement from anything you must do or file for your academic department.

Please note: A leave of absence must be requested before the start of classes!

If you fail to notify The Global Office about your leave, even after arranging a leave with your department, your record will be terminated for "Failure to Enroll" and this could have serious consequences if you want to visit, study or work in the U.S. in the future.

What is a Leave of Absence for Immigration Purposes?

There is no true "leave of absence" for immigration purposes. Your F-1/J-1 record is based on your full-time registration. If there is a change in your registration or you are not going to be enrolled, some immigration action or process will need to occur.

Even if your leave has been approved by your academic department, you must still work with The Global Office to take care of your immigration record.

Before Taking a Leave of Absence or Withdrawing

Important Considerations:

- If your record is terminated, you cannot remain in the U.S. during your leave. You must leave the U.S. See below for more information.
- F-1 Students: If you take a leave of absence for more than **5 months**, you will not be eligible for CPT or OPT until you have completed three quarters of full-time enrollment after your return from your leave.
- If your leave is for a documentable medical reason, you can be authorized for a **reduced course load** based on medical conditions, and your SEVIS record will remain active. Please read more about a medical reduced course load before submitting your Leave of Absence Notification Form.
- You cannot be authorized for work authorization while you are on an official school leave
- If your leave will be more than 5 months (more than 5 months in between enrollments), you will be required to be enrolled full-time for one, full-time academic year before you are eligible for a vacation or break quarter when you return. If you come back from a leave in Winter or Spring quarter, you will be required to be enrolled full time during the following Summer quarter to meet your full-time enrollment requirement.

Applying for a Leave Absence

We recommend working with your adviser a few months before your leave begins to review your options. The later you contact our office, the fewer options you will have.

How to Apply for a Leave of Absence:

1. Plan ahead! Review the information listed about timing and how a leave may impact your eligibility for work authorization. Contact your adviser if you have any questions.
2. Submit the Leave of Absence Request Form below to The Global Office. Please do this at least two weeks before your leave will go into effect.

After submitting this form, **your SEVIS record will be terminated for "Authorized Early Withdrawal"**, which will not adversely affect your immigration record. The exact date of the termination will be based on the date you indicate on this form.

3. Depart the country within 15 days of the termination date (for "Authorized Early Withdrawal" only).

You cannot be in the U.S. with a terminated record. If you are terminated for another reason, such as a suspension or unauthorized employment, you do not have a grace period to leave and you must depart immediately.

4. If you're going to return from the leave, follow the instructions below 2-4 months before you plan to return.

Returning from a Leave of Absence

F-1 students returning from a leave of *fewer* than 5 months:

If the gap in your enrollment will be fewer than five months, The Global Office can usually request that your F-1 status is 'reactivated' by USCIS. Reactivation allows you to maintain your OPT/CPT eligibility and use the same I-20 and visa (if not expired).

Note that The Global Office can only request that your record is reactivated. USCIS approves the actual reactivation and often requires additional documentation from the school and the student to make the change. If your leave is for fewer than five months, you must:

1. Confirm with your academic department that you are eligible to return to the University. To be eligible for reactivation, you must be full time enrolled during the next available term (including summer).
2. Contact The Global Office (Less than 5 Months) up to **60 days** before the quarter begins and at least one month before you plan to return. This will give The Global Office time to request that your record is reactivated with USCIS. After the request is made, The Global Office will confirm once your record has been turned back to 'active'.

USCIS processing times vary and can take 2 to 6 weeks, so it is important to contact The Global Office well in advance. We cannot request reactivation more than 60 days before the return quarter begins.

In most cases, we must also confirm with your department that you are eligible to return to courses. This is typically done through email.

3. **Confirm you have a valid travel signature** on page 2 of your I-20. If not, you can request an updated signature from The Global Office.
4. **Check your email regularly.** USCIS often requires additional information to reactivate your status on very short notice (such as a transcript copy, proof of travel, or other documents). If additional documents are required, The Global Office will contact you via email. USCIS allows a very short response time, so you must submit required documents to us within 1-2 days. Once your request has been approved, The Global Office will notify you via email.
5. **Re-enter the U.S. with all required travel documents**, including a valid F-1 visa after your record is set back to 'active'. Note that reactivation times vary. The Global Office cannot guarantee when your record will be turned back to 'active'. Because you will not be able to enter the U.S. unless your record is 'active', you may want to wait until your request is approved before purchasing airfare.
6. **Enroll for one full academic year without a vacation/break semester.** When you come back from a leave of more than 5 months, you will receive a new, 'Initial' F-1 record. This means you are required to be enrolled full-time for one, full-time academic year before you are eligible for a vacation or break semester. If you come back from a leave in Winter or Spring semester, you will be required to be enrolled full time during the following Summer semester to meet your full-time enrollment requirement.

In most cases we cannot request the reactivation until after we have confirmed with your department that you are eligible to return to courses.

F-1 students returning after more than 5 months:

If there will be more than a five month gap between your enrollment, you will require a new, F-1 status and new 'Initial' I-20. This will be a completely new F-1 record. If your leave is for more than five months, you must:

1. **Contact The Global Office** (More than 5 Months) ~3 months before you plan to return to the College. This will allow time for the creation and receipt of your new SEVIS record/I-20.
2. **Coordinate with The Global Office** the re admissions Documentations needed. You will be required to provide financial documentation. We do not require physical copies of the financial statements.
3. **Receive your new Form I-20** from The Global Office. The Global Office will send your document via the mailing method.
4. Pay the SEVIS fee.
5. Get a new F1 visa
6. Travel to the U.S. no more than 30 days before the start date listed on your new I-20.

TOMPKINS CORTLAND COMMUNITY COLLEGE
GLOBAL INITIATIVE OFFICE, ROOM 248

OFFICE USE ONLY

Date Received: _____

DSO Processing: _____

Date Processed: _____

Notes: _____

LEAVE OF ABSENCE REQUEST FORM
(Must be submitted before the start of classes)

Last Name: _____

First Name: _____

TC3 Student ID Number: _____

SEVIS ID Number: N000 _____

Semester you are requesting a Leave of Absence (LOA) : _____ Year _____

Current Program at TC3: _____

Current Phone Number: _____

Current E-Mail: _____

Current Mailing Address: _____

Reason for Leave:

Do you plan to return to Tompkins Cortland CC in the Future? _____

If yes, approximately when would you return? _____

Students Signature_____
Date_____
DSO Signature_____
Date