ISSS Frequently Asked Questions
Fall 2015

1. **How many credits should I register for next semester?**

   - You must register for a full-time course load (12 credits for undergraduate students, 9 credits for graduate students).

   - You may only reduce your course load if your reason is authorized by the U.S. government AND you receive *written permission* from the ISSS office to do so. The Reduced Course Load Request form is located [here](#) under “Full-Time Study,” and once it is signed by your advisor, it must still be approved by the ISSS office. Please drop this form off at the ISSS office if you need to make a request; the deadline to do so is February 1, 2016. *Keep in mind that submitting a Reduced Course Load Request form does not guarantee that your request will be granted; ISSS must evaluate your situation and determine whether you are authorized. If not, you will be notified by e-mail and required to enroll in a full course load in order to maintain your F-1/J-1 status.*

2. **How many online classes may I take next semester?**

   **If you are an F-1 student in your last semester:**

   - With **one class remaining**: your class must be **on campus**.
   - With **two classes remaining**: you may take **one online and one on campus**.
   - With **three or more classes remaining**: please see below.

   **F-1 graduate students**: If Spring 2016 will not be your final semester or you have three classes remaining in your final semester, you may only take one online course. If you are taking additional courses above the full-time requirement (which is 9 credits), those courses may be online.

   **F-1 undergraduate students**: If Spring 2016 will be your last semester and you have three classes remaining, you must take 2/3 of your classes on campus. If you are not graduating in the spring or you have four or more classes remaining, you may only take one online course. If you are taking additional courses above the full-time requirement (which is 12 credits), those courses may be online.

   **J-1 graduate and undergraduate students**

   **None** of your required courses (9 credits for graduate students, 12 credits for undergraduate students) may be taken online.
3. **What if my I-20/DS-2019 end date is in December of 2015 but I am not finishing my classes this semester?**

   If your I-20/DS-2019 is ending this semester and you will need more time to complete your studies, you must **have your I-20/DS-2019 extended before its expiration date**. Please contact us immediately to apply for a program extension if you are in this situation. If you are scheduled to complete this term but are concerned your GPA may be too low, you should also apply for a program extension. Information and forms for applying for an F-1 program extension are on our website [here](#) under “Program Extension”; J-1 students should contact their **ISSS advisor**. **Deadline**: You should apply for a Program Extension I-20/DS-2019 at least two weeks before you will begin study in your new program. You cannot extend your I-20/DS-2019 after its end date, so you may need to apply for an extension as a precautionary measure.

4. **I have been accepted into a new degree program (master’s or Ph.D.). Do I need a new I-20/DS-2019?**

   If you are an F-1 student completing a degree program this semester and starting a new one **in the spring**, you must be issued a **Change of Level I-20**. If you have not already been in contact with ISSS about this, please review the “Change of Level Information and Checklist” on our website [here](#). **Deadline**: You should apply for a Change of Level I-20 no later than forty-five days after the program end date listed on your current I-20 and at least two weeks before you will begin study in your new program; you cannot apply for a Change of Level I-20 after the new semester has already begun.

   If you are a master’s student who has not yet finished your master’s requirements but have been accepted into a Ph.D. program, you must be issued a **Change of Program I-20** before you start taking Ph.D. classes. Please contact ISSS for details. **Deadline**: You should apply for a Change of Program I-20 at least two weeks before you will begin study in your new program.

   If you are a J-1 student completing a degree program this semester and starting a new one **at a higher degree level in the spring**, you must apply for and be issued a new **DS-2019 for “matriculation”** from one education level to another before beginning your new program of study. **Deadline**: This process must be completed before your current program end date. Please contact your ISSS advisor (listed [here](#)) to apply for a new DS-2019 for matriculation.

5. **I am going to travel outside the U.S. during Thanksgiving/the winter break. What should I do?**

   All current students in F-1 status should be in possession of the **new format** I-20. If so, in most cases, your I-20 is already signed for travel. Please check the second page of your new format I-20, and if there is a signature there, you do not need a new one. If you have not yet picked up your new format I-20, please do so at your earliest convenience.
If you do not have a valid travel signature, please stop by the ISSS office any weekday except Tuesday to have your I-20/DS-2019 signed. When you come, you must have the following documentation: Travel Signature Request form (download it here under “Travel”), passport, and most recent I-20/DS-2019. You must drop off your documents before 3 PM, Monday through Friday (except Tuesdays), and will be able to pick them up the same day after 4 PM. **Be sure to check the 2nd page of your I-20 or the 1st page of your DS-2019 before you come for a signature to be sure you actually need one. Travel signatures are valid for one year for current F-1 students and all J-1 students and 6 months for F-1 students on OPT. If you will return to the U.S. before your most recent travel signature expires, you do not need to request a new one at this time. Please also review our travel guidance before you travel.

6. **When should I apply for Optional Practical Training (OPT) or Academic Training?**

If you are graduating this semester and would like to apply for post-completion OPT (F-1) or Academic Training (J-1), it’s not too late! For F-1 students, you must submit an application to our office at least two weeks before your F-1 status ends (i.e., no later than 45 days after the program end date on the first page of your I-20); we recommend that you apply now if you know that you want to do OPT. For J-1 students, you must apply for Academic Training at least 2 weeks before the end date on your DS-2019. As a reminder, information about all types of F-1 work authorization and videos about CPT and OPT are located on our website here under “Off-Campus Employment.” Information about J-1 Academic Training is located here.

7. **I would like to invite my friend or family member to visit me in the U.S. What should I do?**

Full instructions for how to do this are located on our website here.

8. **I have other questions. Who is my ISSS advisor?**

All ISSS points-of-contact are listed on the ISSS homepage here.