

Graduate Student Leave Guidelines

Graduate students may occasionally need to seek a leave of absence. The nature of the leave may be for personal, familial, financial, or other compelling reasons. The following guidelines are to provide support to the students and units in defining the conditions of academic leave. These guidelines do not cover circumstances such as vacations.

Before seeking an academic and/or assistantship leave, it is the student's responsibility to understand the implications of the leave on his/her university support (graduate assistantship, university employment, financial aid, insurance, housing, and international status, as applicable). Financial, medical, international, housing, and other issues vary significantly and cannot be addressed individually within this document.

This document includes two sections. Section I, "Academic Leave Guidelines," applies to all graduate students requesting leave from an academic course or program. Section II, "Graduate Assistant Leave Guidelines," applies to students who are requesting leave from a graduate assistantship. Please read all sections carefully.

I. Academic Leave Guidelines

A leave of absence of up to one semester may be granted to eligible graduate students enrolled in degree-seeking graduate programs provided the following eligibility criteria apply: *

- Student must have completed one full term of enrollment prior to the leave
- Student must be in good academic standing within his/her program of study and overall
- Student must be making satisfactory progress toward a degree
- Student must be within his/her degree time limit (six years for Master's; ten years for Doctoral)
 - Degree time limit will NOT be extended as a result of the leave
- Departments or programs may include additional criteria

*exceptions will be considered on a case-by-case basis

Student Responsibilities:

- Complete the Leave Request Form and obtain all appropriate signatures

If reason for leave is foreseeable:

- Student must complete Leave Request Form prior to the start date of the requested leave

If reason for leave is not foreseeable:

- Student must complete Leave Request Form as soon as possible, but no later than the last day of regular classes in the semester the leave is requested
- Student must consult with appropriate advisors, professors, and other relevant faculty to make a plan for continuing progress after their leave
 - If the student does not establish a clear plan for reenrollment at the end of the leave, or does not return to responsibilities as planned, the student will be considered withdrawn from the program and the program must notify the Graduate School.
 - If the student decides to withdraw from classes, the student is responsible for doing so
 - Any student wanting to return thereafter must reapply to the program, submitting all application materials and paying all fees

II. Graduate Assistant Leave Guidelines

If the student is a Graduate Assistant, they must not only address the Academic Leave Guidelines (above) but must also follow these additional guidelines.

A. Graduate Assistant Leave from Teaching Duties

1. Short-term Leave (≤ 3 weeks)

A paid leave of absence of up to three weeks (fifteen weekdays) may be granted to eligible graduate students enrolled in a degree-seeking graduate program and serving as Teaching Assistants in the classroom. The following eligibility criteria apply:

- Student must have completed one full term of enrollment prior to leave
- Student must be in good academic standing within his/her program of study and overall
- Student must be making satisfactory progress toward a degree
- Student must be within his/her degree time limit (six years for Master's; ten years for Doctoral)
 - Degree time limit will NOT be extended

Student responsibilities:

- Student must inform supervisor and department chair as early as possible
- Student must make up the hours upon return, working with supervisor and department chair
 - A plan, preferably in writing, should be agreed to by all parties
 - It is the responsibility of the department (e.g., advisor/instructor/or chair) to monitor the makeup hours
- If the student does not return to TA duties on or before the end of the three-week period, the student will forfeit the remaining assistantship and will be dropped from classes
- If the student wishes to keep his/her classes, the student will be charged a pro-rated tuition rate consistent with the GA contract guidelines

2. Long-term Leave (> 3 weeks)

If the leave is greater than three weeks, the student will forfeit the remaining assistantship.

Student responsibilities:

- Student must inform supervisor and department chair as early as possible
- It is the student's responsibility to withdraw from classes
- If the student wishes to keep his/her classes, the student will be charged a pro-rated tuition rate consistent with the GA contract guidelines
- The student should be eligible for consideration of future Graduate Assistantships without bias

B. Graduate Assistant Leave from Lab/Research duties

If the student is a Graduate Assistant serving as a Research Assistant, the student must work closely with his/her advisor and department chair, as well as adhere to any guidelines of the funding agency. Leave will ultimately be left to the advisor to determine. If at all possible, the Graduate School suggests the advisor follow similar guidelines utilized for Teaching Assistants. For any consideration, the following eligibility criteria apply:

- Student must have completed one full term of enrollment prior to leave
- Student must be in good academic standing within his/her program of study and overall
- Student must be making satisfactory progress toward a degree
- Student must be within his/her degree time limit (six years for Master's; ten years for Doctoral)
 - Degree time limit will NOT be extended

Student responsibilities:

- Student must inform supervisor and department chair as early as possible and work to find a reasonable resolution

If the decision is to cancel the Research Assistantship:

- The student will forfeit the remaining assistantship
 - It is the student's responsibility to withdraw from classes
- If the student wishes to keep his/her classes, the student will be charged a pro-rated tuition rate consistent with the GA contract guidelines
- The student should be eligible for consideration of future Graduate Assistantships without bias

III. Additional Issues

The following information applies to both students and departments.

A. Confidentiality

Throughout the process of leave, students remain entitled to protections including FERPA and other confidentiality. Every effort should be made to comply with a student's request for privacy about these issues. The student's situation should not be discussed beyond the necessary parties identified here.

B. Documentation for Leave

Students may need to provide documentation to demonstrate their need for leave. However, this documentation may still provide confidentiality, particularly about medical conditions. Documentation from relevant professionals need not include specifics of diagnosis, treatment, or other confidential information.

C. Timelines and Appeals

Due to the nature of unexpected leave situations, a precise timeline cannot be established for these leave procedures. However, all parties should endeavor to respond to materials in as timely a manner as possible. Students should begin leave discussions with the faculty identified in this document. If necessary, students may appeal to the Dean of the Graduate School to help consider the issues of their case.

Graduate Student Leave Request Form

- I. **Academic Leave** – *This section is to be filled out by degree-seeking graduate students requesting either short- or long-term leave from a graduate program*

Graduate Student Name: _____ ID#: _____

Email Address: _____ Graduate Program: _____

Leave Request (Circle one): SHORT (<3 weeks) LONG (>3 weeks)

Briefly describe reason for request:

Leave Period: Starting Date _____ Ending Date _____

Dept Chair Signature: _____

College Dean Signature: _____

Graduate School Dean Signature: _____

- II. **Graduate Assistant Leave** – *This section is to be filled out by degree-seeking graduate assistants requesting either short- or long-term leave from assistantship duties*

Faculty Instructor (if Teaching Assistant): _____ OR

Faculty Advisor (if Research Assistant): _____

Dept Chair Signature: _____

College Dean Signature: _____

Graduate School Dean Signature: _____

(If student is requesting an academic and assistantship leave, chairs and deans need only sign once.)

Student Signature: _____ Date: _____

By signing this, the student acknowledges that they have considered the impact of leave on issues pertaining to financial, medical, international, housing, and program time limit (as applicable).