

LEAVE OF ABSENCE FOR GRADUATE STUDENTS

ASK A QUESTION OR SUBMIT FEEDBACK ON THIS POLICY

Effective Date: August 2024

Last Reviewed: March 2013

Last Revised: August 2014

Next Review: February 2028

Policy Statement

A leave of absence may be granted for graduate students who must be away from their studies for personal, family, financial, medical, pregnancy, parenting, active-duty service or other compelling reasons.

In agreement with the program area, graduate students may request an absence for the following lengths:

- **Short-term leave of absence** – more than five consecutive Monday-Friday days and up to six weeks. For shorter absences, consult the policies regarding class attendance or graduate assistantship.
- **Long-term leave of absence** – more than one term and up to three consecutive terms (e.g., fall, spring, summer).

The time taken on an approved leave of absence is not included in the time limitations for degree completion and advancement to candidacy, except for programs where accreditation requirements stipulate otherwise (e.g., the Doctor of Podiatric Medicine degree and certain nursing degrees). Students need to consult with their academic unit for specific details and procedures before requesting a long-term leave of absence.

Prior to applying for a leave of absence, students should consider its potential implications for such matters as funding (including assistantship and veterans' benefits), loan repayment, immigration status, health insurance, university housing and time-to-degree completion.

Eligibility

To be eligible for a leave of absence, students must

- Hold active status as a student and
- Be admitted to a graduate degree or non-degree program and
- Long-term leave of absence only: Completed a minimum of one full term of enrollment prior to the date the leave is to begin.

International students should contact the Office of Global Education to ensure compliance with immigration regulations and visa restrictions before starting a leave of absence that is expected to last more than five consecutive Monday-Friday days and before returning to campus.

Reason for Policy

An approved leave of absence encourages students to develop concrete plans for returning to their studies while not penalizing them by counting the time on leave against their time to degree and by guaranteeing their return to the program at the end of their leave.

Procedures

Requesting a Leave

Students requesting a leave of absence must submit the Request for Leave of Absence form by the following deadlines::

- Short-term leave of absence: No later than the last day of classes in the term during which the leave is needed.
- Long-term leave of absence: Before the start of the term for which the leave is requested.

A leave of absence will not be granted retroactively for a prior term.

Requests for long-term leave of absence are submitted through Graduate College for final approval. For questions regarding specific rationale for leave of absence approval, contact the Graduate College.

Students who received an extension of their degree time limit may need additional approvals.

When an academic unit grants a long-term leave of absence, that unit will be willing to re-enroll the student into their program, and any graduate assistantship held by the student before the leave will be re-offered provided all conditions of the assistantship are met and contingent upon available funds. A plan for return, including any conditions that must be met, should be put in writing and clearly understood by all parties prior to the start of the leave. If an extension of the long-term leave of absence is requested, a revision to the plan for return is required and understood by all parties.

For both short- and long-term leave of absences, graduate assistants are required to notify their supervisor and academic unit in a timely manner for a replacement to be arranged as necessary.

Course Registration

Students requesting a short-term leave of absence may need to drop or withdraw from their courses or request an Incomplete mark in consultation with their instructors, depending on the requested length and timing of the leave.

Students requesting a long-term leave of absence must drop or withdraw from all courses after the request has been approved and before taking the leave. Course withdrawal does not negate a student's financial obligation, and students will be held responsible for all balances due to the university. Any applicable refunds will be processed per the policy regarding tuition credit for dropped courses. Students are advised to check with the Financial, Billing and Enrollment Center prior to taking an approved leave of absence to determine the status of their student accounts. Accounts that are overdue will be subject to regular procedures in accordance with university guidelines, notwithstanding any approved leave of absence.

Students applying for a leave of absence after the course withdrawal deadline should address grading and course completion issues with their individual instructors. To consider any variation from this rule for reasons of extenuating circumstances, students must submit a Petition for Exception to Registration to the University Registrar.

Student Resources

Students on a short-term leave of absence continue to have an active student status; therefore, they maintain their current rights, privileges and access to university resources and support. Graduate assistants will

continue to receive stipends and access to subsidized health insurance where applicable.

Students on a long-term leave of absence have an inactive student status; therefore, they do not have the rights and privileges of active students, including course pre-registration and access to the recreational center. However, they will continue to have access to the university libraries and university health services (the latter service is limited to students who have purchased student health insurance). Once on long-term leave, students cannot fulfill any official department/school or university requirements during the leave period, such as taking qualifying exams or submitting a thesis or dissertation.

Extension of a Leave of Absence

Students on a long-term leave of absence may request an extension for a maximum of one additional term. Although a leave may be taken for as many as three terms, students are encouraged to return to graduate study as soon as is reasonably possible to minimize the impact of the leave on their degree progress.

Returning from a Leave

Students on a long-term leave of absence must complete the Application for Graduate Re-Enrollment form to register for classes and have the rights and privileges of registered students.

Students who do not return from a long-term leave of absence within the approved period for which the leave was granted will be considered as having withdrawn from the program. To be reconsidered for graduate study, students must formally apply to their program of interest, including the submission of an application, the nonrefundable application fee and any necessary application materials.

Forms/Instructions

- Request for Leave of Absence form
- Application for Graduate Re-Enrollment form

Additional Resources

- Office of Global Education
- Graduate College
- Graduate Forms Library
- Class Registration Dates
- Student Forms

Frequently Asked Questions

- 1. What are the benefits of taking a leave of absence?**
The main benefit of a leave of absence is that the time taken on an approved leave of absence does not count in the time limitations for your degree completion and advancement to candidacy.
- 2. Am I able to take a leave of absence for parental reasons?**
Graduate students are permitted to a parental leave of absence in the event of pregnancy, birth, adoption or placement of a foster child with legal custody or guardianship, for themselves or their domestic partner.
- 3. Who will know the reason I request a leave of absence?**
The academic unit administrator, college graduate dean (or designee) and the Graduate College will review your leave of absence request but will not share details with other individuals.

Additional FAQ: Leave of Absence for Graduate Studies

Definitions

Academic unit: College or a department or school within a college that offers degree programs.

Active student: Student who is eligible to register for classes in each term.

Long-term leave of absence: Student on approved leave for for a period of time of more than one term and up to three consecutive terms (e.g., fall, spring, summer).

Short-term leave of absence: Student on approved leave for a period of time from more than five consecutive Monday-Friday days and up to six weeks.

Term: Kent State University is on the semester system with three terms for each academic year: fall, spring and summer.

Related Information

- Administrative Policy Regarding Class Attendance and Class Absences
- Administrative Policy Regarding Military Leave of Absence
- University Policy Regarding Graduate Assistantships
- Time Limits for Graduate Degrees
- University Policy Regarding Tuition Credit for Dropped Courses
- Enrollment - Graduate
- Graduate Aid and Assistantships
- Operational Procedures and Regulations Regarding Jury Duty Absences for Students
- Registration Policies
- Grading Policies and Procedures

Revision History

Amended August 2024: Revised policy provides specific guidance for absences of different lengths and conditions; eliminates language requiring "good academic standing"; and provides clarification for situations when a leave of absence is necessary and/or acceptable, as well as continuation of services and benefits to students on leave.

Amended August 2014: Revised policy aligns with the Enrollment - Graduate policy, with the approved length of time of the absence changing from one year to three consecutive terms with the allowance of an extension of one semester.

Effective August 2012: Establishes a formal leave of absence policy and process for graduate students to take a temporary leave (for personal, family, financial and other compelling reasons). Students who take an approved leave are not penalized in that the time spent on leave is not counted against time limitations for degree completion.