

[Graduate Student Leave of Absence Policy](#)

During the course of graduate study, students may find themselves in circumstances which require them to interrupt their graduate work. When these occasions arise, the University allows students to request a leave of absence for either personal or medical reasons. The information provided below will assist students in making a smooth transition away from and back to graduate study. Students are required to submit the [Leave of Absence Request form](#) a [Return from Leave of Absence form](#) or in some cases a [Permanent Withdrawal form](#) to the Office of Graduate Student Life. If eligible, the Academic Advisor, Program Director, Chair, the Graduate Associate Dean of their college and the Registrar will be notified. Students are strongly encouraged to meet with their advisor in order to keep open lines of communication and to consult on plans to maximize successful return to graduate school.

Please note that a “withdrawal” indicates the student intends to discontinue graduate study whereas a “Leave of Absence” indicates that the student intends to return at a specified later date.

Important Information

- Only students who have successfully completed one semester of graduate work and are in good academic standing are eligible for a leave of absence. Students in their first semester who request a leave will need to petition for readmission.
- Funded students who are requesting a leave due to the birth or adoption of a child should apply for a [Graduate Student Parental Leave](#).
- The University will grant a leave of absence for up to one year. If more time away is required, students may request a second year of leave. Should students require more than two years away from the University, they will be required to apply for readmission to the program. A leave that commences during the semester will count as an entire semester away in terms of total leave time allowed.
- If students take a leave during the semester, they may be required to submit a [drop/add form](#) to the Registrar’s Office. Students may be eligible for a prorated refund. Please consult the [Bursar’s Office](#) for details.
- An approved leave of absence extends time-to-degree deadlines for the duration of the approved leave up to a maximum of two years.
- While on leave, students are not registered with the University. This has important implications:
 - The student may not submit work, take exams, or use faculty time.
 - The student will not have access to University services including the Health and Counseling Centers, the Fitness Center, and Library and Technology Services, which includes the suspension of the student’s email account. However, the College Dean’s Office may request that the email account and library privileges remain active during the term of the approved leave up to a maximum of two years.
 - Funded students will cease receiving stipend payments from the start of the approved date of the leave. Students on external grants should consult with sponsoring Advisor

regarding rules and procedures. Although programs will attempt to restore assistantships, they cannot guarantee availability of funding.

- o Student loans may come out of deferment and the student may be required to begin repaying their loans. Please consult [Financial Aid](#).
 - o Immigration status may be affected for international students. Please consult the [Office of International Students and Scholars](#).
 - o Students living in campus housing will need to make other living arrangements. Residential Services cannot guarantee space upon return.
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- Students enrolled in the [University health insurance plan](#) may be able to keep their health insurance during the term of the health insurance contract. In this case, students can contact the University Health Center to obtain a list of primary care doctors in the community to use during their leave of absence. Please consult the student health insurance brochure for eligibility restrictions.
 - Students requesting a leave for medical or psychological reasons must include documentation from their health provider which indicates a recommendation for the leave and expected time away. The documentation is submitted and only available to the Director of Graduate Life and is kept confidential.
 - The University may require an involuntary leave of any student who appears to have a serious physical, psychological or emotional disorder which offers reasonable cause to believe he or she may be a danger to self or others, or may disrupt proper activities of the University community and its members, or may be unable to look after his or her affairs adequately. An involuntary leave of absence is included in the maximum leave of two years. Please consult the Student Handbook for more information.
 - Time-to-degree deadlines are not extended for students who are suspended due to Code of Conduct violations.
 - Students who need to be absent within the semester (no more than a few weeks in duration) must consult with their professors about the possibility of making up missed work for classes and, if applicable, their assistantship. In these circumstances, students do not need to submit an official Leave of Absence request. Students may consult the Associate Dean for Graduate Student Life with questions and concerns (kaha@lehigh.edu).
 - When ready to resume graduate study, students are encouraged to contact their program as early as possible to consult on registration. Students may only re-enroll for the beginning of a semester or summer session and need to be aware of registration deadlines. Students who take a leave from graduate study without requesting an official leave of absence will be required to petition the Standing of Graduate Students (SOGS) committee for readmission if they've been away from the University for more than one year. Unapproved leaves count toward the two year leave maximum.