

Graduate Student Leave of Absence Policy Proposal
Approved by Graduate Faculty, April 24, 2017

A *leave of absence* allows a student enrolled in the Wake Forest University Graduate School of Arts and Sciences to interrupt his or her studies for a compelling reason, for example, a medical condition or a personal or family matter requiring absence from the program. A leave of absence is defined as a temporary separation from the Graduate School. To be eligible for a leave of absence, students should be in good academic standing, fulfilling research, service and course obligations.

Students who intend to take a leave of absence must submit a Request for a Leave of Absence form to the appropriate Office of the Dean of the Graduate School of Arts and Sciences. A letter of support should be provided to the Dean of the Graduate School of Arts and Sciences (hereafter referred to simply as “Dean”), co-signed by the student’s graduate program director and advisor. This letter must indicate all unsatisfied degree requirements for the student. If available, other supporting letters should be included in the request for a Leave of Absence.

Until students are notified by the Office of the Dean that the leave has been approved, they remain registered and are expected to fulfill their responsibilities. A Leave of Absence will not be granted retroactively. The maximum time for a leave of absence is one year. The effective date of a Leave of Absence might take into account a reasonable time to arrange for the suspension or completion of ongoing experiments and projects, and proper withdrawal from courses.

Students on leave of absence should submit a request to return to the appropriate Dean at least one month prior to the first date of the semester or term in which a return is planned. This request may require a letter which addresses the suitability of the student’s return. Students who have decided not to return from a leave of absence should inform the appropriate Dean in writing. Students who fail to petition to return after a leave of absence will be withdrawn from The Graduate School of Arts and Sciences and need to apply for readmission in order to return.

Unless allowed by the funding agency or source supporting the student’s stipend, a student may not qualify for stipend support during a Leave of Absence. In all cases, the guidelines provided by the supporting agency will apply. Since these guidelines may vary from one agency to another, students are encouraged to consult agency program officials to determine the agency specific guidelines governing leaves of absence. If the student’s stipend is supported by internal funds, the Dean might be able to provide limited stipend support during a Leave of Absence.

If applicable, tuition is refunded on a prorated basis, and the refund schedule is set by the Wake Forest University Board of Trustees.

Approved leaves of absence automatically extend milestone deadlines by the length of the leave. This includes university and departmental requirements such as the qualifying exam deadline and prospectus deadline for PhD students, and the degree deadline. Leaves of absence do not exempt students from meeting the residency requirement or other Graduate School degree requirements.

Students on a leave of absence may not fulfill any degree requirements during the time on leave. If a student plans to be away from the University to work on a thesis, dissertation, or other degree requirements, this does not constitute a leave of absence and requires enrollment.

In order to facilitate communication between the student and the Graduate School, access to the campus network will be continued during the leave, but will be deactivated if the student does not return. Badge access will be deactivated during the period of leave.

Students who are granted a Leave of Absence must consult with their health insurance provider about the status of their policy while on leave. Students who have contracted for health insurance through the university should immediately contact the Student Health Insurance Coordinator. Health insurance is subject to federal and state laws and regulations.

International students who are granted a Leave of Absence must notify either the Office of Global Studies on the Reynolda Campus or the Office of International Studies on the Medical School Campus. Visa status is subject to federal laws and regulations.

Students on an approved leave of absence are not eligible for federal financial aid, including Federal Direct Loans. In some cases, student loans may not be deferred for the entirety of a leave. Students should contact Student Financial Services on the Reynolda Campus or the Office for Student Aid on the Medical School Campus for additional information.