# Leave of Absence and Reinstatement from a Leave: Graduate Students

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Policy Summary

Leave of Absence and Reinstatement from a Leave: Graduate Students

Policy Purpose
Governs the circumstances for granting a leave and/or reinstatement from a leave

Policy Location
http://z.umn.edu/gradstudentleave

Effective date
August 2011

Highlights
• Graduate students are expected to maintain active status
• Students who do not obtain an approved leave of absence prior to interrupting enrollment (excluding summer) may be terminated or held to new requirements if readmitted
• Students whose leave expires and have not registered for the following term (excluding summer) will be discontinued and must apply for readmission
• Students on leave may not use University facilities or services available only to registered students
• Term(s) and year(s) on an approved leave will not count towards time to degree

College Responsibilities
• Establish and publicize college-specific LOA/Reinstatement policies and related processes
• Determine and publicize circumstances, if any, that may argue for exception to the college-specific LOA/Reinstatement policies
• Establish and publicize its own process for reviewing/taking action on exception requests to college-specific LOA/Reinstatement policies
• Develop and publicize any additional criteria consistent with the U-wide policy

Program Responsibilities
• Include U-wide and college-specific LOA/Reinstatement policies in student handbooks
• Identify individual(s) responsible for responding to and/or advising students regarding LOA
• Determine review/approval process for LOA/Reinstatement requests

Graduate School Responsibilities
• Coordinate (with ASR) on-going consultative process regarding policy effectiveness
• Track impact of LOA/Reinstatements on students’ time-to-degree, and report to colleges and/or University
• Adjudicate academic student complaints related to the LOA/Reinstatement policy not successfully addressed at the college level
• Coordinate consultative process for formal review of LOA/Reinstatement policy

Graduate Student Responsibilities
• Submit the Leave of Absence Form for Graduate Students when planning a leave of absence
• Submit the Application for Reinstatement for Graduate Students prior to intended term of return

Academic Support Resources Responsibilities
• Provide college staff with training/assistance needed to make LOA/Reinstatement updates to PeopleSoft

Revised: November 8, 2012
CHANGES TO THE POLICY - WHAT'S DIFFERENT

Not applicable (new policy).

RESPONSIBILITIES AND ISSUES TO CONSIDER

COLLEGE RESPONSIBILITIES

Each college is responsible for:
1. Establishing and publicizing college-specific LOA/Reinstatement policies and related processes
2. Determining and publicizing circumstances, if any, that may argue for exceptions to the college-specific LOA/Reinstatement policy
3. Establishing and publicizing its own process for reviewing/taking action on exceptions to college-specific LOA/Reinstatement policy requests
4. Developing and publicizing any additional criteria consistent with this University-wide policy

1A. Establishing college-specific LOA/Reinstatement policies

Per the U-wide LOA/Reinstatement policy, collegiate units may develop additional rules governing leaves of absence, as long as they are consistent with the U-wide policy.

When establishing college-specific LOA/Reinstatement policies, issues to consider might include some/all of the following, and/or additional issues raised by the college:

- Who gets to decide what the policies will be?
  - College administrators only?
  - College administrators and graduate program representatives? Program faculty, staff, and/or students?
  - New or existing college committee that determines college-wide policies like the LOA?

- What are the college’s priorities/principles with regard to LOAs?
  Priorities might include:
  - Equity among graduate programs and the students in those programs
  - A fair and transparent process
  - Impact of LOAs on the students’ degree progress and degree completion
  - Impact of LOAs on the students’ financial support
  - Impact of LOAs on international students’ visas
  - Coordination of LOA/Reinstatement decisions with multiple graduate programs (when student is pursuing concurrent degrees within the college)
  - Coordination of LOA/Reinstatement decisions with multiple colleges (when student is pursuing concurrent degrees across colleges)
  - An efficient process that leverages existing resources
  - Other?
Which of those college priorities/principles, if any, are non-negotiable? Why or why not?
  - Identifying non-negotiable priorities may inform subsequent decisions regarding acceptable circumstances/criteria to consider when reviewing requests for college-specific LOA/Reinstatement policy exceptions.

What circumstances would the college accept as an argument for an LOA?

Situations that prevent the student from participating in the University community as a student (including, but not restricted to taking classes, studying for milestone examinations, conducting research, [re]writing thesis/dissertation drafts) might include:
  - Medical (physical and/or psychological) condition(s)
  - Birth or adoption of a child
  - Care-giving responsibilities for a chronically or terminally ill family member
  - Military service
  - Other?

What, if any, supporting documentation would the college require to review/take action on an LOA request?

Required documentation might include:
  - Letter of support from physician(s) that recommends the LOA as an appropriate accommodation, and includes the diagnosis and expected time frame for recovery
  - Letter of support from Disability Services
  - Letter of support from individual/unit by which the student is employed as a graduate assistant
  - Letter of support from unit from which student has been awarded a fellowship
  - Adoption documents, military orders
  - Other?

What deadlines will the college establish for submission of LOA requests?

Issues to consider might include:
  - Students are expected to submit LOA requests prior to the proposed term/year of the LOA (per instructions on the LOA request form)
  - Will the college consider LOA requests for a term that has already begun? If so,
    - Under what circumstances? (Examples might include accidents or personal/family emergencies that occur during the term, and that prevent the student from attending to academic work for the remainder of the term)
    - Are you comfortable with setting the precedent?
    - How late in the term would such a request be considered? Why?

What deadlines will the college establish for submission of LOA Reinstatement requests?

Issues to consider might include:
  - Students are advised to initiate the reinstatement process with their adviser(s), DGS, and college at least two months prior to the term/year they wish to return from the LOA (per instructions on the LOA Reinstatement form).
  - Will the college follow LOA reinstatement guideline (i.e., reinstatement initiated by the student two months prior to the term/year of return), or establish a different guideline? If a different time frame,
    - Will the college require more or less advance notice?
  - Will the college consider LOA Reinstatement requests for a term that has already begun? If so,
- Under what circumstances?
- Are you comfortable with setting the precedent?
- How late in the term would such a request be considered? Why?
  - What does the college consider to be an acceptable turn-around time for making LOA Reinstatement decisions and communicating their decisions to students?
  - Who in the college office will review/take action on LOA Reinstatement requests? An individual? A committee?
  - If an individual is responsible, how much lead time will s/he need – given other job duties – to ensure timely review of/action on the LOA Reinstatement request?
  - If a committee is responsible, what is their meeting schedule? What deadline must be met to ensure the committee’s timely review/action?

- What circumstances would argue against college approval of an LOA Reinstatement request?

Issues to consider might include:
  - Per the University-wide LOA policy, students who did not obtain a college-approved LOA are not eligible
  - If the student violated the University’s Student Conduct code during their LOA, and that violation would have been grounds for suspension or expulsion had the violations occurred while they were enrolled

1B. Publicizing college-specific LOA/Reinstatement policies

When publicizing college-specific LOA/Reinstatement policies, issues to consider might include some/all of the following, and/or additional issues raised by the college:

- How will the college publicize its college-specific LOA/Reinstatement policies?

Issues to consider:
  - Where will you include college-specific LOA policy information on your college web site? Who will be responsible for maintaining that information?
  - How will you ensure that the college-specific policy information is provided by the graduate programs within your college?
  - How will you ensure that the publicized college-specific LOA/Reinstatement policy information is consistent across graduate programs within the college?
    - Provide text/links for graduate programs to use on their web sites, graduate handbooks and for their program-specific orientations?
    - Other?
  - How will you ensure that the procedure for reviewing/taking action on student appeals to denied LOA/Reinstatement requests will be consistent?
  - Ensure that the link to University's procedure for appeals is included on college/graduate program websites
  - Ensure that the link to U-wide LOA/Reinstatement policy is included on college/graduate program web sites
  - Other?

1C. Establishing college-specific LOA/Reinstatement processes

When establishing college-specific LOA/Reinstatement processes, issues to consider might include some/all of the following, and/or additional issues raised by the college:
What college-specific LOA/Reinstatement policies have we established?
Issues to consider might include:
- Clearly articulated policies inform effective process development, as well as effective and consistent decision-making

Intake stage of the LOA/Reinstatement process
Issues to consider might include:
- Who is the college contact person for inquiries related to the policy?
- Are requests to be reviewed by an individual in the college or by committee?
- Will the college assign someone to “pre-screen” the requests for the individual/committee?
- If so, what would the “pre-screener’s” responsibilities entail?
  - Checking for accurate information (student name, ID, major, etc.)?
  - Checking for signatures?
  - Ensuring that any college-required supporting documentation is included?
  - Communicating with the student/adviser/DGS regarding any incorrect information and/or missing documentation?
  - Immediately denying requests that arrive after college-specific deadlines?
  - Forwarding requests to the assigned reviewer(s)?
  - Scheduling the committee meeting (if requests are reviewed by committee)?
- Will the intake of LOA requests be handled differently than the LOA reinstatement requests with regard to the above? If so, how?

Review stage of the LOA/Reinstatement process
Issues to consider might include:
- Who in the college office will review/take action on LOA requests? An individual? A committee?
- Who in the college is authorized to review/take action on requests in the assigned reviewer’s absence?
- Will the assigned reviewer/committee consider requests as they come in? Weekly? Other?
- If an individual is responsible, how much lead time will s/he need – given other job duties – to ensure timely review of/action on the LOA request?
- If a committee is responsible, what is their meeting schedule? What deadline(s) must be met to ensure the committee’s timely review/action?
- How will the reviewer communicate with the student/adviser/DGS if questions arise? Will s/he assign that task to an assistant? Communicate with the individuals him/herself?
- What does the college consider to be an acceptable turn-around time for making LOA decisions and communicating their decisions to students?
- Will the review of LOA requests be handled differently than the LOA reinstatement requests with regard to the above? If so, how?

Decision stage of the LOA/Reinstatement process
Issues to consider might include:
- How will the decision be communicated to the student? By whom?
- Will the decision also be communicated to the student’s program office/adviser/DGS? If so, how? By whom?
- If the request is denied, will the student be advised to consult with the assigned reviewer if they have questions? If not, who in the college will field these inquiries?
- Will the decision stage for LOA requests be handled differently than the LOA reinstatement requests with regard to the above? If so, how?
Post-decision stage of the LOA/Reinstatement process

Issues to consider might include:

- Who in the college will be responsible for ensuring that the LOA request and/or reinstatement decision is entered into/removed from PeopleSoft? How will that responsible party be informed of the decision, and by whom?
- Who in the college will be responsible for maintaining LOA/Reinstatement requests and related documentation?

1D. Publicizing LOA/Reinstatement process information

When publicizing college-specific LOA/Reinstatement process information, issues to consider might include some/all of the following, and/or additional issues raised by the college:

- How will the college publicize information regarding its college-specific LOA/Reinstatement processes?
  
  Issues to consider:
  
  - Information needs to include
    
    - Contact information for individual(s) with the college responsible for responding to inquiries related to LOA/Reinstatement
    
    - Contact information for individual(s) within the college responsible for LOA/Reinstatement decisions
    
    - Where do students submit the requests?
    
    - Who do students contact if they have questions about the status or outcome of the request?
    
    - Links to University LOA/Reinstatement forms are included on college/graduate program web sites
    
    - Where will you include college-specific LOA process information on your college web site? Who will be responsible for maintaining that information?
    
    - How will you ensure that graduate programs within your college publicize information regarding your college-specific LOA/Reinstatement processes?
    
    - How will you ensure that the publicized LOA/Reinstatement policy criteria are consistent across the graduate programs within the college?
    
    - Provide text/links for graduate programs to use on their web sites, graduate handbooks and for their program-specific orientations?
    
    - Other?

2A. Determining circumstances, if any, that may argue for exception to the college-specific LOA/Reinstatement policy

It is expected that no exceptions to the U-wide LOA/Reinstatement policy will be considered; however, it is within the colleges’ purview to consider and grant exceptions to college-specific LOA/Reinstatement policies.

- What are the college’s priorities with regard to their college-specific LOA/Reinstatement policy, and of those which (if any) are non-negotiable? (See 1A, above.)
  
  - Being clear about priorities will help the individual(s) responsible for taking action on exception requests to make decisions that support the those priorities

- How will exception requests be reviewed, and by whom?
2B. Publicizing circumstances, if any, that may argue for exception to the college-specific LOA/Reinstatement policy

Graduate programs and their students must be reminded that only exceptions to college-specific policies can be considered (if, indeed, the college will entertain such exception requests).

- Does the college wish to publicize information regarding college-specific exceptions?
  - If so, issues to consider:
    - Information needs to include
      - Contact information for individual(s) with the college responsible for responding to inquiries
      - Contact information for individual(s) within the college responsible for review/approval of exception requests
      - Where and how do students submit the exception requests?
      - Who do students contact if they have questions about the status or outcome of the exception request?

3A. Establishing process for reviewing/taking action on requests for exceptions to college-specific LOA/Reinstatement policies

It is expected that no exceptions to the U-wide LOA/Reinstatement policy will be considered; however, it is within the colleges’ purview to consider and grant exceptions to college-specific LOA/Reinstatement policies.

- How will exception requests be reviewed, and by whom?
  - Will authority rest with the individual(s) responsible for routine requests? If not, who will have the authority for these decisions?
- How will consistent review/action on exception requests be assured?

3B. Publicizing the process for reviewing/taking action on requests for exceptions to college-specific LOA/Reinstatement policies

Graduate programs and their students must be reminded that only exceptions to college-specific policies can be considered (if, indeed, the college will entertain such exception requests).

- Does the college wish to publicize information regarding its process for reviewing and taking action on college-specific exceptions?
  - If so, issues to consider:
    - Information needs to include
      - What, if any, college-specific LOA/Reinstatement policies are not eligible for exception requests?
Contact information for individual(s) with the college responsible for responding to inquiries
Contact information for individual(s) within the college responsible for review/approval of exception requests
Where and how do students submit the exception requests?
Who do students contact if they have questions about the status or outcome of the exception request?

PROGRAM RESPONSIBILITIES

Programs are responsible for:

- Including U-wide and college-specific LOA/Reinstatement policies in their student handbooks
- Identifying individual(s) within the program responsible for responding to students’ questions regarding the LOA/Reinstatement policy/process, and publicizing their contact information
  - Are all advisers expected to provide policy/process information?
  - DGS? DGS Assistant?
  - Other?
- Determining review/approval process for LOA/Reinstatement requests
  - Will requests be reviewed only by adviser and DGS prior to submission to the college?
  - Will an internal academic committee be involved with the review?
  - Will the program assist student with contacting other programs/colleges (if student is pursuing concurrent degrees) to coordinate LOA/Reinstatement requests, or is the student solely responsible for this?
  - How will the student be notified of the program’s LOA/Reinstatement decision? By whom?
  - Will student be responsible for submitting the LOA/Reinstatement requests to the college(s) for final review/action, or will the program assume responsibility? If up to the program, who within the program is responsible?
  - In instances where the program denies an LOA/Reinstatement request, who is responsible for communicating that decision? How will requests to reconsider be handled, and by whom?
  - How will the program record LOA/Reinstatement requests (both approved and denied)? Who will be responsible?
- Conferring with student regarding the academic advantages and disadvantages of taking a LOA versus other options (e.g., Grad 999; incompletes; stopping out/requesting readmission at later date; leaving the program) to determine which option is best for them
  - Could the student realistically work on research and/or writing? (If so, the student will need to be registered to have access to U resources, including faculty time, the library, etc.)
  - Is the student otherwise making good academic progress? If not, is an LOA really going to help the student, or delay what may be a difficult discussion regarding their fit with the program?
STUDENT RESPONSIBILITIES

Graduate students are responsible for:

- Conferring with their advisor and Director of Graduate Studies for each degree they are pursuing to determine whether an LOA is the best option for them.
- Conferring with other relevant offices (e.g., International Student and Scholar Services, Office of Student Finance, Graduate Assistant Employment) to identify advantages/disadvantages related to taking a LOA
  - Students on LOA may lose UM health coverage
  - International students must work with ISSS to determine whether/how an LOA impacts their visa status
  - Students on an LOA cannot hold a graduate assistantship
  - LOAs may impact students’ financial support
- Submitting the LOA request form by the college-specific deadline when planning a leave of absence
- Submitting LOA request forms to multiple colleges (if pursuing concurrent degrees from more than one college)
- Submitting the LOA Reinstatement form prior to intended term of return, and no later than the college-specific deadline
- Submitting LOA Reinstatement forms to multiple colleges (if pursuing concurrent degrees from more than one college)
- Contacting the program(s) and college(s) as soon as possible if unforeseen circumstances (e.g., accident) occur after the start of the term
  - It is within the college’s purview to deny LOA requests after their deadline.
  - If the LOA request submitted during the semester is approved, the student would
    - be un-enrolled for that semester,
    - lose their tuition and fees for the term, and
    - not receive credit for their coursework.
  - If the LOA was approved near the end of the semester and the student met the conditions for receiving grades of Incomplete the student
    - might wish to take grades of Incomplete;
    - would need to follow current policy for making up Incompletes
GRADUATE SCHOOL RESPONSIBILITIES

Graduate School is responsible for:

- Coordinating (with Academic Support Services) on-going consultative process regarding U-wide LOA/Reinstatement policy effectiveness
- Tracking impact of LOA/Reinstatements on students’ time-to-degree and completion rates
- Adjudicating academic student complaints related to the U-wide LOA/Reinstatement policy not successfully addressed at the local level
- Coordinating consultative process for formal, required U-wide review of LOA/Reinstatement

ACADEMIC SUPPORT RESOURCES RESPONSIBILITIES

Academic Support Resources is responsible for:

- Providing college staff with training/assistance needed to make LOA/Reinstatement updates to PeopleSoft
# POLICY COMPLIANCE CHECKLIST

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>POLICY STATEMENT</th>
<th>EXCEPTION?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Graduate students are expected to maintain active status through continuous registration from the time they matriculate until they graduate.</td>
<td>NO</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Students must complete an LOA request form with their college that specifies the LOA's term(s)/year(s)</td>
<td>NO</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>An approved LOA may not exceed 2 academic years</td>
<td>NO</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Students who do not obtain a college-approved LOA before interrupting their enrollment (excluding summer) may be terminated from their graduate program or held to new requirements if subsequently readmitted</td>
<td>N/A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Students granted an LOA may not use UM facilities/services available only to registered students</td>
<td>NO</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The term(s)/year(s) of an approved LOA will not be counted toward time to degree</td>
<td>NO</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Students who obtain a college-approved LOA per policy are eligible for reinstatement if they enroll no later than term immediately following expiration of the LOA (excluding summer)</td>
<td>NO</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Colleges may specify reasonable conditions for reinstatement to active status, whether student returns early or at the expiration of the LOA</td>
<td>NO</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Colleges may deny reinstatement to active status based on crimes/other serious misconduct during LOA</td>
<td>NO</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Students whose LOA expired and who have not registered for the following term (excluding summer) will be placed on inactive status</td>
<td>NO</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Students placed on inactive status must apply for readmission</td>
<td>NO</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Colleges may develop additional rules governing LOAs as long as they are consistent with the U-wide policy</td>
<td>N/A</td>
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</tbody>
</table>