

UNIVERSITY OF MINNESOTA  
**Driven to Discover<sup>SM</sup>**

**Graduate Education Policy Guide**

**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

## CHANGES TO THE POLICY - WHAT'S DIFFERENT

Not applicable (new policy).

## RESPONSIBILITIES AND ISSUES TO CONSIDER

### COLLEGE RESPONSIBILITIES

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**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?**

- 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?**
  - Consistency ensures equity and fairness for students within the college

## **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

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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

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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

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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

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Academic Support Resources is responsible for:

- Providing college staff with training/assistance needed to make LOA/Reinstatement updates to PeopleSoft

## POLICY COMPLIANCE CHECKLIST

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