

# MEDICAL LEAVE OF ABSENCE

In certain circumstances, where a student's health condition impedes their academic progress, a student may decide they need to temporarily leave the university to focus appropriate attention and effort on the treatment and recovery necessary for a healthy return to their academic pursuits. In these cases, the student may petition the dean of students' office in the Division of Student Affairs for a medical leave of absence from all courses prior to the last day of classes as published in the VCU Academic Calendars (<https://academiccalendars.vcu.edu/>), and before a final class grade has been assigned and/or posted to their academic record. A staff member in the dean of students' office (<https://students.vcu.edu/find-resources/dean-of-students/>) in the Division of Student Affairs (<https://students.vcu.edu/>) will meet with the student to discuss their need for a medical leave of absence and the extent to which reasonable academic accommodations may enable the student to remain enrolled. The staff member will provide information regarding the medical leave of absence and reinstatement processes, including any reasonable conditions the student will be required to satisfy in order to be reinstated. The university will determine appropriate conditions for reinstatement based on an individualized assessment of the student's reason for taking leave, including consideration of current medical knowledge and/or the best available objective evidence of the student's ability to function academically at the university with or without accommodations. Careful consideration will be given to available opinions and recommendations of a qualified health care professional who treated the student.

If the request for medical leave of absence is approved, the student's academic record will reflect a grade of W for all enrolled courses that term. No special designation for the reason of the withdrawals is made on the academic record, and tuition and fees are charged in the same manner as other withdrawals. Refunds of tuition and fees due to a leave of absence will follow the VCU refund policy, which is published in the Tuition, fees and expenses (<http://bulletin.vcu.edu/undergraduate/undergraduate-study/tuition-fees-expenses/>) section of this Bulletin. Certain academic programs have specific continuance standards; students in those programs should consult their program adviser to determine the impact of a leave of absence on the student's status and progress in the program. Students should consult the Office of Financial Aid to understand the potential negative impact of a leave of absence or withdrawal, for any reason, on their academic progress and future financial aid in relation to satisfactory academic progress.

An undergraduate student who needs to withdraw for health reasons from one or more particular courses, rather than from all courses, may request course withdrawal as an academic accommodation through the Student Accessibility and Educational Opportunity (<https://saeo.vcu.edu/>) office or, for students in health sciences programs, the Division for Academic Success (<https://das.vcu.edu/>). The university may grant selective course withdrawal as a reasonable accommodation to enable qualified students to continue in an academic program. More information about how to seek an accommodation for selective withdrawal for health reasons can be found on the SAEO website (<https://saeo.vcu.edu/>).

Requests for withdrawals for health reasons submitted after the last day of classes in a term are requests for retroactive action and are reviewed by the Academic Regulations Appeals Committee (<http://bulletin.vcu.edu/academic-regs/ugrad/arac/>).

Once a leave of absence has been granted, a registration hold is placed on the student's record, which prevents registration activity for any

future term. If the leave is granted after preregistration for the following academic term has begun, then, in addition to the registration hold, the student's registration for the following term(s) will be cancelled and all courses will be dropped. A student on leave must complete the university's medical leave of absence reinstatement process and be approved for reinstatement in order for the registration hold to be removed.

In the event that the university reasonably determines a student's health poses a significant risk to the health or safety of any member of the university community, including the student, patients or others, and the student is unable or refuses to initiate steps to take leave, administrative leave may be made by the dean of students' office in consultation with the senior vice provost for student affairs (or designee) and, as appropriate, relevant faculty and a qualified health care professional. The student placed on administrative leave may submit a written appeal to the senior vice provost for student affairs (or designee). The appeal must be filed within three business days (unless otherwise noted) of being placed on administrative leave.

## Medical leave of absence reinstatement process

Undergraduate students on medical leave are eligible to re-enroll at VCU once they have completed the medical leave of absence reinstatement process. The goal of the reinstatement process is for the student to demonstrate that they are ready to return to the university environment and resume study in their academic program. The student must provide evidence of their readiness to return, including documentation from a qualified health care professional who treated the student during their leave. More information regarding the reinstatement process, including all forms and documents, can be found on the dean of students' website (<https://students.vcu.edu/find-resources/dean-of-students/>).

The dean of students' office (<https://students.vcu.edu/find-resources/dean-of-students/>) in the Division of Student Affairs (<https://students.vcu.edu/>) will review the student's request for reinstatement and determine whether the student has completed all conditions for reinstatement, in consultation with Student Accessibility and Educational Opportunity (<https://saeo.vcu.edu/>), the Division for Academic Success (<https://das.vcu.edu/>), University Student Health Services (<https://health.students.vcu.edu/>) and/or University Counseling Services (<https://counseling.vcu.edu/>), as appropriate. Such review will consider any medical or other relevant information submitted by the student and will be based on an individualized assessment of each student, including consideration of current medical knowledge and/or the best available objective evidence of the student's ability to function academically at the university with or without accommodations. Careful consideration will be given to the available opinions and recommendations of a qualified health care professional who treated the student. As part of this individualized assessment, the student may be required to undergo an evaluation, including a medical or psychological evaluation, by an independent and objective health care professional designated by the university. The student may also be required to release the evaluation to University Student Health Services (<https://health.students.vcu.edu/>), University Counseling Services (<https://counseling.vcu.edu/>) and other administrators, as appropriate.