

LEAVE OF ABSENCE

Note: This leave of absence regulation applies only to graduate and first-professional students; it does not apply to undergraduate students.

Graduate and first-professional students may request a leave of absence from a program through written appeal to their program director. The program director will forward the request to the appropriate school dean/dean designee who, following departmental governance procedures, will forward their recommendations and any supporting documentation for final approval as necessary.

Students who are out of compliance with continuous enrollment policies (see Graduate registration policies (<https://bulletin.vcu.edu/academic-regs/grad/registration-policies/>)) and who have not been granted approved leaves of absence by the appropriate dean must reapply for admission to VCU and to their degree programs.

Graduate students with approved leaves of absence are exempted from continuous enrollment requirements for the LOA period. Students should note that while leaves of absence temporarily suspend continuous enrollment requirements, they do not extend time limits for completion of degrees. (See policy on Exceptions (<https://bulletin.vcu.edu/academic-regs/grad/exceptions/>)).

Leaves of absence must be requested and approved before or during the first term of leave. Requests for retroactive leaves of absence will not be approved.

The leave of absence prevents registration for the approved leave of absence period. If the student wishes to return to academic study before the end of the approved leave of absence period, they should notify the appropriate school or college to request that the leave of absence be shortened and the registration hold removed.

Because curricular and course content changes may occur and a student's progress toward a degree may be adversely affected because of an extended absence, specific limits may be imposed by individual schools and colleges with respect to the length of time allowed for absences. Extended leaves of absence may also impact financial aid; students should consult the Office of Financial Aid to understand the potential impact of a leave of absence. If there is a delay in return beyond the allotted time period without written consent of the dean of the school or college, the student may be required to reapply for admission.

Students on leave are eligible for reinstatement of their enrollment through the end of their approved leave period, and many students who take a leave will have no requirements attached to their reinstatement. The dean of the student's school or college may establish specific requirements for reinstatement if the circumstances of the student's departure warrant it. The goal of such conditions is to prepare the student for a successful return to the university; for example, a student may be asked to complete preapproved course work at an outside institution in order to demonstrate readiness to return to rigorous academic work or to participate in a reinstatement consultation with Student Accessibility and Educational Opportunity, Division for Academic Success, University Student Health Services, or University Counseling Services, to facilitate a successful return. If the leave is health-related, any conditions or requirements for reinstatement 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

opinions and recommendations of a qualified health care professional who treated the student, if available.