



**UNIVERSITY OF ST ANDREWS**

**POLICY ON LEAVE OF ABSENCE**

<b>Policy Title</b>	<b>Leave of Absence</b>
<b>Scope</b>	<b>Applies to all Undergraduate, Postgraduate Taught and Postgraduate Research students</b>
<b>Relationship with other policies</b>	<b>Student Absence policy, Assessment Policies &amp; Procedures.</b>
<b>Owner</b>	<b>Proctor's Office</b>
<b>Approving Committee</b>	<b>Learning &amp; Teaching Committee (LTC), then Academic Council</b>
<b>Policy approved date</b>	<b>LTC, 6 May 2015</b>
<b>Policy effective from date</b>	<b>May 2015</b>
<b>June 2016 updates to Policy</b>	<b>Amended to include Postgraduate Research Students</b>

# UNIVERSITY OF ST ANDREWS

## POLICY ON LEAVE OF ABSENCE

### UNDERGRADUATE AND TAUGHT POSTGRADUATE STUDENTS

#### Principles

The term 'Leave of Absence' is used to denote a period of time where the University permits a student to disengage with their studies and return at a later date. Where a student is granted Leave of Absence during a semester, any progress in all modules within that semester will be removed from the student's record and replaced with an indication that Leave of Absence was taken. Leave of Absence can be applied for by a student but is not a guaranteed right, and falls within the scope of Senate regulations.

The granting of Leave of Absence may also alter the student's circumstances in such a way that non-University legislation and policy are affected (such as funding body requirements, visa regulations and council tax liability). It is the student's responsibility to ensure that they make themselves aware of the implications, and meet any additional requirements that a change of circumstances may impose upon them.

While the University cannot guarantee that the same programme of study will still be available following a Leave of Absence period, the University keeps a note of students on leave and will ensure when making such changes that there are acceptable pathways available for completion.

#### Conditions for Requesting a Leave of Absence

A student may apply to the Registry Officer (Student Support) for a Leave of Absence in any semester where exceptional circumstances have affected, are currently affecting, or will affect the ability of the student to engage with their studies. In addition the following circumstances are likely to apply.

- The student or University feels that these circumstances cannot reasonably be accommodated by other means such as allowance for absence or extensions or deferrals.
- The student has not completed all the assessments for the module.
- The request for a Leave of Absence has been made during the teaching weeks or in advance of the semester. Requests for a Leave of Absence that are made after the end of teaching will not normally be approved and will therefore be escalated to the Pro Dean (Undergraduate) for consideration.

If a student requesting Leave of Absence is not able, or permitted, to complete 20 credits in the semester affected by the request, substantial evidence will be required for a leave of absence request to be considered.

If a student fails two attempts to re-engage following an agreed leave of absence, e.g returns to study on an agreed date but fails to complete the expected period of study, they will be subject to the Termination of Studies process unless there are exceptional circumstances which the University considers merit a different outcome.

A student may apply for Leave of Absence for up to a maximum of four consecutive or non-consecutive semesters in total during their period of registration. Additional semesters may be requested in exceptional circumstances.

#### Duration of Leave of Absence

- For undergraduate students the minimum duration of a Leave of Absence is one semester.

- For taught postgraduate students during teaching weeks, the minimum duration of a Leave of Absence is one semester. Shorter periods of leave may be granted during the dissertation period of the PGT programme.
- Students on inbound study abroad or exchange programmes will only be granted a Leave of Absence if their programme of study specifies that they are to return after their Leave of Absence is due to finish, for a minimum of one semester.
- Non-graduating, credit-only lifelong learning students will not be permitted to take a Leave of Absence.

### **Compulsory Leave of Absence**

If a student fails to meet the University Senate Regulations for attendance, a compulsory Leave of Absence will normally be required.

### **Date of Final Attendance**

Leave of Absence is granted on the basis of the student's last date of attendance, not the date the application is made or approved.

### **Other Implications**

Students should note that Leave of Absence may have significant financial and visa consequences, as well as implications on the right to remain in University accommodation.

### **Re-engagement**

Students wishing to re-engage must provide evidence to show that the circumstances for which they were granted a Leave of Absence have now been managed and that any conditions for re-engagement have been met. When a student is due to return in Semester One from a Leave of Absence, and has any deferred exams, they will be re-engaged in time to sit deferred exams in the August re-sit diet.

If a student has not re-engaged or re-registered at the end of a period of Leave of Absence, this will be handled under the Failure to Register policy.

### **Exceptions to policy**

Any exceptions to the policy must be referred to the relevant Pro Dean.

### **Appeals and Complaints**

Students have the right of appeal through the University's appeals process: <http://www.st-andrews.ac.uk/students/rules/appeals/policy/>

## **POSTGRADUATE RESEARCH STUDENTS**

### **Principles**

The term 'Leave of Absence' is used to denote a period of time where the University permits a student to disengage with their studies and return at a later date. Leave of Absence can be applied for by a student but is not a guaranteed right, and falls within the scope of Senate regulations.

The granting of Leave of Absence may also alter the student's circumstances in such a way that non-University legislation and policy are affected (such as funding body requirements, visa regulations and council tax liability). It is the student's responsibility to ensure that they make themselves aware of the implications, and meet any additional requirements that a change of circumstances may impose upon them.

While the University cannot guarantee that the same programme of study will still be available following a Leave of Absence period, the University keeps a note of students on leave and will ensure when making such changes that there are acceptable pathways available for completion.

### **Conditions for Requesting a Leave of Absence**

A student may apply to the Postgraduate Research Pro Dean, via MMS, for a Leave of Absence at any point in their studies where exceptional circumstances have affected, are currently affecting, or will affect the ability of the student to engage with their studies. Leave of absence cannot be granted retrospectively except in very exceptional circumstances.

If a student fails two attempts to re-engage following an agreed leave of absence, e.g. returns to study on an agreed date but fails to complete the expected period of study, they will be subject to the Termination of Studies process unless there are exceptional circumstances which the University considers merit a different outcome.

### **Process for Requesting a Leave of Absence**

Application for leave of absence should be made to the Pro Dean, via MMS, and the following information may be required:

- The duration of the period of leave of absence requested, including initial and final dates
- The grounds for leave of absence, e.g. medical or personal, giving brief details of the circumstances.
- Documentary support for the request if appropriate. This should always be provided if the request is on medical grounds. It is the responsibility of the student to obtain such medical evidence, e.g. in the form of a certificate from his/her doctor.
- A realistic and full plan for completion by the end of the recalculated period, which has been approved by the principal supervisor, and will include specific details and timings.
- A supporting letter from the principal supervisor or programme co-ordinator.
- If notification to a research council is required, then all information required by the research council should be submitted with the request.
- The request should be made as soon as possible. If, for example, there is a possibility that an illness may be long term, then a reasonable initial period of leave should be requested, and further periods requested as appropriate.
- If leave of absence is approved, Registry will send a notice stating the dates for which leave has been granted. If a student is sponsored by a UK research council or similar body, it is important that these dates are adhered to in correspondence with the research councils or sponsoring bodies.

### **Duration of Leave of Absence**

- The minimum duration of a Leave of Absence is one month.
- The maximum duration of an initial Leave of Absence request is 1 year.
- A research postgraduate student may request multiple leaves of absence, but may not exceed a total of two years.
- Students may not request a Leave of Absence extending beyond their current expected end date.

### **Compulsory Leave of Absence**

If a student fails to meet the University Senate Regulations for attendance, a compulsory Leave of Absence will normally be required.

### **Date of Final Attendance**

Leave of Absence is granted on the basis of the student's last date of attendance, not the date the application is made or approved.

### **Other Implications**

Students should note that Leave of Absence may have significant financial and visa consequences, as well as implications on the right to remain in University accommodation.

**Re-engagement**

Students wishing to re-engage must provide evidence to show that the circumstances for which they were granted a Leave of Absence have now been managed and that any conditions for re-engagement have been met.

If a student has not re-engaged or re-registered at the end of a period of Leave of Absence, this will be handled under the Failure to Register policy.

**Exceptions to policy**

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