

Best Practices for Graduate and Professional Student Leave of Absence

Recommendations from the Graduate School Indianapolis

Schools on the Indianapolis campus are committed to advising and guiding students who are considering a leave of absence from their graduate or professional program. Short periods of time away from studies and work on campus may be helpful to students for well-being and renewing creativity and energy. The Graduate School Indianapolis encourages campus schools to support students in taking short breaks and time to refresh throughout the year. Students may find the transitions between semesters, campus holidays, and summer offer options for a short hiatus or leave while reducing disruptions to their enrollment and degree progression.

This document addresses questions relevant to situations where students may need a longer leave (more than 2-3 weeks) for medical, family care or other personal concerns which will disrupt enrollment or progression in their program of study. The information provided here is not meant to be an all-inclusive guide for student leave, as individual schools may have relevant leave plans or policies.**

Students should first turn to their school and director of graduate studies or faculty advisor to obtain guidance on their school's policies and plans regarding student leave. Students may want to consider a variety of factors in thinking about leave including:

1. International students should consult with the Office of International Affairs (OIA) to determine how a leave and changes in enrollment may impact their visa and financial support before making plans. Students should communicate with their director of graduate studies as well as course directors based on information from OIA when planning a leave.
2. Students should consult with the campus Office of Financial Aid to learn how a leave and changes in enrollment may impact their financial support and loan re-payments.
3. Students should consider the time required for the leave and whether a reduction or termination of enrollment for the semester is necessary. Discussions with their director of graduate study and course directors are highly recommended to ensure a smooth transition for leave and return to school. Students should remain in touch and update the director of graduate study of any changes in a student's leave plans.
4. Students taking a leave should discuss their plans to remain in good academic standing with course directors and director of their graduate program including requesting an extension in coursework and deadlines while remaining enrolled or reducing enrollment. Discussing faculty and student expectations prior to the start of a leave is important.
5. Schools or programs may require a written notification that a student is requesting/taking leave. Students should contact their director of graduate study and course directors to provide that notification or request for a leave.
6. The Graduate School requires academic degree programs under its administration to submit a leave of absence form signed by the Director of Graduate Study for their students enrolled in master's and Ph.D. degrees on campus: graduate.indianapolis.iu.edu/doc/forms/general/loa-

[form.pdf](#). When a student returns from leave, an additional form is required for submission to the Graduate School in Indianapolis: graduate.indianapolis.iu.edu/doc/forms/general/return-from-loa-form.pdf.

7. If a student is supported by an outside business or funding agency, the student will need to consult the leave policies of these external employers and funding agencies. Students should share the leave information for employers and funders with their director of graduate study and course directors.
8. For students working on campus, timely discussions with their supervisor are critical as well as meeting with their director of graduate study and course directors. This includes students supported as hourly workers, and student academic appointees.

Student Academic Appointees:

Some positions such as student academic appointments (SAA) require full-time enrollment for provision of university stipends and health care benefits. If a student holds an SAA, the program should first determine if a reduction in effort (not less than 37.5% FTE) is possible during the leave period; this would allow the SAA to continue to receive stipend, tuition benefits, and university health insurance.

If the student is unable to complete their assigned work (at or above 37.5% FTE) as an SAA and unable to enroll full-time, the program or campus office must notify HR and terminate the SAA during the leave period. An SAA taking leave for a medical or family care reason, may be eligible for a special plan which permits retention of university health insurance during the leave. This special plan is offered in rare circumstances for SAA who need to take leave for more than 2-3 weeks. If this special leave plan is requested and approved, faculty and school staff must recognize the student will not be providing work or participating in classes during the leave.

For this special plan, the student (SAA) must work with their program to submit the request for leave form to the Graduate School: graduate.indianapolis.iu.edu/doc/forms/general/loa-form.pdf. A copy of this form must also be attached to the appropriate HR eDoc for terminating the student appointment. Schools and departments must agree to pay the insurance premium for an SAA to be eligible for this special leave.

Guidance can be found at:

academicaffairs.indianapolis.iu.edu/Faculty-Affairs/graduate-students
[SAA Leaves of Absence and Insurance Coverage](#)

HR business professionals on campus are aware of the process for requesting this special plan for SAA to retain university insurance. The Graduate School along with HR will review the HR eDoc during routing. When the SAA returns from leave, an eDoc needs to be filed with HR. A form altering the Graduate School of the student's return is also required: graduate.indianapolis.iu.edu/doc/forms/general/return-from-loa-form.pdf.

Consult school leaders and the campus offices mentioned above as a first step for questions related to leave. The Dean in the Graduate School Indianapolis can be contacted for advice regarding situations which fall beyond academic school leave plans and policies.