

# LEAVES OF ABSENCE

Leaves of absence are defined as a temporary separation from the University. Students who need to interrupt their progress towards degree may petition to withdraw for a leave of absence. There are various types of leaves:

- Medical Leave of Absence (p. 1): For students who must temporarily interrupt progress toward degree due to a physical or mental health condition.
- Parental Leave of Absence (p. 1): For students who become new parents (whether by childbirth or adoption).
- General Leave of Absence (p. 2): For students who elect to temporarily interrupt their progress and are not eligible for a medical or parental leave.

## Stipulations

All leaves of absence must be approved by the appropriate University offices/programs. The procedure for requesting a leave and the specific approvals required depend on the type of leave. The general policies are:

- Mid-quarter leaves of absence with an "effective date" through the end of the sixth week of classes will result in an entry on the transcript documenting the withdrawal date. Leaves of absence with an "effective date" after the end of the sixth week will result in withdrawn courses, with grades of "W" being posted on the transcript along with the withdrawal date.
- Medical leaves of absence must be requested by the deadlines established by the Dean of Students office (<https://www.northwestern.edu/studentaffairs/dos/programs-services/medical-leave-of-absence/determination-deadlines/>).
- During a leave of absence, students are not permitted to enroll at the University, are not to make degree progress, and are not considered active students. Students on a leave of absence are not to fulfill degree requirements during the time on leave. If a student plans to be away from the University to work on a thesis, a dissertation, or other degree requirements, this does not constitute a leave of absence and requires enrollment.
- International students must consult with the Office of International Student and Scholar Services (<https://www.northwestern.edu/international/>) in advance of requesting a leave regarding how the leave will impact their immigration status.
- There may be financial implications of withdrawing to take a leave of absence, including for those receiving or deferring student loans. Depending on the effective date of the leave of absence (withdrawal from the quarter), it may be the case that only a portion of tuition will be refunded and/or that student loan recipients must return a portion of their funds/assistance. Before requesting to withdraw for a leave of absence, students must review the Student Finance withdrawal policy (<https://www.northwestern.edu/sfs/payments/withdrawing-from-the-university/>), The Graduate School's withdrawal policy, and information on withdrawals and financial aid and follow up with the relevant offices with any questions. Students on an approved leave of absence are not eligible for federal financial aid, including Federal Direct Loans. In some cases, student loans may not be deferred for the entirety of a leave. Students should contact Graduate Financial Aid (<https://www.northwestern.edu/evanston-graduate-financial-aid/>) or their loan originator with questions.
- Approved general and medical leaves of absence automatically extend future TGS milestone deadlines by the length of the leave.

Parental leaves provide a four-quarter extension. This includes the qualifying exam deadline and prospectus deadline for PhD students, and the degree deadline for master's and PhD students. Leaves of absence do not extend deadlines that have passed as of the date the leave goes into effect, nor exempt students from meeting degree requirements.

- A student on a leave of absence has limited access to University facilities normally available to enrolled students, including:
  - NetID: The NetID is deactivated after a period following the start of the leave of absence, following the NUIT NetID Expiration schedule (<https://services.northwestern.edu/TDClient/30/Portal/KB/ArticleDet/?ID=1890>).
  - Library: Students on a leave of absence may request a Borrower's Card (<https://www.library.northwestern.edu/find-borrow-request/borrowing-materials/privileges.html>) to access the University Library.
  - Health Insurance: Students who are on an approved leave of absence are permitted to remain enrolled in NU-SHIP for the year in which they start on a leave and may elect to re-enroll for one subsequent year. Students may apply for coverage in the fall quarter through the Health Insurance Office (<https://www.northwestern.edu/student-insurance/forms-resources/nu-ship-forms/>). Students who elect to re-enroll for a subsequent year may not be eligible for the health insurance subsidy (<https://www.tgs.northwestern.edu/services-support/health-wellness-services/health-insurance/payments-deadlines.html>).
  - University Housing: Students planning to take a leave of absence who reside in University Housing must contact the Graduate Housing Office (<https://www.northwestern.edu/living/housing-options/graduate-housing/>) as soon as possible to make arrangements.
- Students on a leave of absence must request return in advance of the quarter in which they wish to return. Instructions and the timeline for requesting a return from leave are detailed below.

## Medical Leave of Absence

A student who must temporarily interrupt their progress toward degree due to a physical or mental health need may request a medical leave of absence through the Dean of Students Office (<https://www.northwestern.edu/studentaffairs/dos/programs-services/medical-leave-of-absence/>). Additional information about medical leaves of absence, including the process for a student to request a medical leave of absence and reinstatement from medical leave, is outlined on the Dean of Students, Medical Leave of Absence website (<https://www.northwestern.edu/studentaffairs/dos/programs-services/medical-leave-of-absence/>).

Funded PhD and MFA students who are scheduled to be funded during the quarter(s) in which they are taking approved medical leave are eligible to receive paid medical leave (<https://www.tgs.northwestern.edu/funding/about-graduate-funding/paid-medical-leave-and-parental-accommodations.html>) for up to the first six months of the medical leave period.

## Parental Leave of Absence

Parental leaves are available to active students of all gender identities and gender expressions in The Graduate School who experience the birth or adoption of a child for whom they have parental responsibilities.

- Those adopting children over the age of 18 or a spouse's or partner's child are not eligible for parental leave. Those residing in localities where legal adoption is not an option but who are assuming parental responsibilities and otherwise meet the eligibility criteria are eligible for parental leave.
- Individual students may request one, continuous 12-week leave per childbirth or adoption event.
- Students are eligible who have not utilized a parental leave during the previous 12 months before the requested leave start date. Students who have had a prior parental leave within the past 12 months may not request another parental leave but may request a medical or general leave of absence.

Funded graduate students (graduate assistants, research assistants, teaching assistants, fellows) who are eligible to receive tuition and stipend from the University during the leave period may request paid leave from their duties for a 12 week leave period. Funding will be provided by The Graduate School during the 12 week leave period. Graduate students who are funded from an external sponsor are obliged to inform their funding agency and should consult with TGS Student Funding. If a student is not receiving funding as of the start date of the parental leave, none will be provided by this leave. Unfunded graduate students (those who are not receiving funding as of the start date of the parental leave) may request unpaid leave from their studies for up to a 12 week leave period.

Students on approved parental leave will receive a four-quarter extension of future TGS milestone deadlines (qualifying exam, prospectus, degree deadline). Programs must extend future, program-specific deadlines by the same length. Students, Directors of Graduate Studies (DGSes) and advisers are expected to discuss a timeline for meeting requirements well in advance of the start of the leave period.

Students must begin the leave period within the first 90 days of the birth or adoption, or prior to the birth/adoption if medically necessary. The period of leave applies to calendar weeks. If a parental leave overlaps with an academic break, the break period will still count toward the continuous 12-week period of leave.

Students using a parental leave for all or most of a quarter will not enroll for that quarter and will be placed in "leave" status. Students who are enrolled in classes as of the start date of a parental leave must work with their instructors to determine whether incomplete grades are possible and to arrange a timeline for completion of coursework upon return from the leave period. If a student anticipates taking parental leave for a partial quarter, it is recommended that the student not enroll in coursework for that quarter. Students should consult TGS Student Services to determine whether registration in a quarter surrounding a parental leave is appropriate and if so, the exact registration status.

The process to petition for a Parental Leave of Absence is as follows:

- Student must submit the "Petition for Absence" form via TGS Forms in GSTS (<https://gsts.northwestern.edu>) and select the parental leave option at least 60 days prior to the leave start date (or as soon as possible in unforeseen circumstances).
- At the end of the 12-week period, students will resume their studies. If additional time away is needed, students must petition for the appropriate leave of absence.

## General Leave of Absence

A student who wishes to temporarily interrupt their progress toward degree and who is not eligible for a medical or parental leave may petition to withdraw for a general leave of absence. General leaves of absence must be approved by the student's program of study and The Graduate School. The process to petition for a general leave of absence is as follows:

- Student must submit the "Petition for Absence" form via TGS Forms in GSTS (<https://gsts.northwestern.edu>). The program's Director of Graduate Studies (DGS) or DGS designate will review the form, after which The Graduate School will review. The Graduate School will notify the student (and the program) of the approval status.
- A general leave of absence may be requested in the current quarter before the course withdrawal deadline for that quarter (as published in the University's academic calendar (<https://www.registrar.northwestern.edu/calendars/academic-calendars/>)), but not after the due date has been reached for the final assessment for any one course in which a student is enrolled.

General leaves are approved for a minimum of one quarter and a maximum of four continuous quarters. Funded PhD and MFA students may not receive funding (stipend/tuition) during the leave period. In most cases, regular funding will resume after the approved leave period ends. Students must petition for reinstatement by submitting an Application for Graduate Student Re-Entry ([https://app.frevvo.com/frevvo/web/tn/registrar.northwestern.edu/u/8691eaaa-b24c-46aa-8a7f-639acc8e0122/app/\\_4\\_3XYW-8Eeqenl1kJwfx5Q/flowtype/\\_aNBb4m-PEe-FQ7nO-1JQiq/?\\_method=post&embed=true](https://app.frevvo.com/frevvo/web/tn/registrar.northwestern.edu/u/8691eaaa-b24c-46aa-8a7f-639acc8e0122/app/_4_3XYW-8Eeqenl1kJwfx5Q/flowtype/_aNBb4m-PEe-FQ7nO-1JQiq/?_method=post&embed=true)) in the quarter immediately prior to the quarter for which they plan to return.

Students on an approved leave may extend their general leave of absence as long as the total leave time does not exceed four consecutive quarters. To request an extension, students must email TGS Student Services prior to the original leave end date. The request will be reviewed by the student's program of study and The Graduate School (TGS). In certain exceptional cases (e.g., military service, visa processing delays), TGS may grant leave extensions beyond the one-year maximum. Students who wish to extend a leave beyond one year must submit a General Petition (<https://www.tgs.northwestern.edu/documents/academic-policies-procedures/generalpetition.pdf>) signed by their adviser and their program's director of graduate studies.

Students who fail to petition for reinstatement from general leave at the end of their approved leave period, or who do not request or are not approved for an extension by the originally-approved leave of absence end date, will be discontinued from The Graduate School and need to apply for re-entry (<https://catalogs.northwestern.edu/tgs/academic-policies-procedures/readmission/>) in order to return.