

# LEAVES OF ABSENCE

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

- Medical Leave of Absence (p. 2): For students who must temporarily interrupt progress toward degree due to a physical or mental health condition.
- Family Leave of Absence (p. 2): For students who must temporarily interrupt progress toward degree to care for a child or other family member, or to extend absence following a parental accommodation. This is separate from and may be taken in addition to a parental accommodation (<https://catalogs.northwestern.edu/tgs/academic-policies-procedures/parental-accommodation/>).
- Parental Accommodation Leave (<https://catalogs.northwestern.edu/tgs/academic-policies-procedures/parental-accommodation/>): 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 toward degree for a non-medical/non-family care reason.

## Leave of Absence General Policies

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 that apply to all leaves of absence are:

- General and family leaves of absence are granted for no less than one quarter and no more than one year. Medical leaves are generally granted for a minimum of two quarters and may continue as long as necessary.
- 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 Leaves of absence with an "Effective Date" after the end of the sixth week will result in withdrawn courses, with grades of "W", being posted on the transcript along with the withdrawal date.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/>). General and family leaves 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.
- During a leave of absence, students are not permitted to enroll at the University and will not be considered active students.
- Students on a leave of absence are not to fulfill any 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 would not constitute a leave of absence and would require enrollment.
- International students who apply for a leave of absence must consult with the Office of International Student and Scholar Services (<https://www.northwestern.edu/international/>). International students taking a leave of absence for medical reasons (and with documentation from a healthcare provider) will need to receive approval from the Office of International Student and Scholar Services (<https://www.northwestern.edu/international/>) and may be eligible to remain in the country for a period of time while on leave. International students taking a leave for non-medical reasons may have their status terminated and may need to depart the U.S.
- 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/>) for additional information.
- Approved family, general, and medical leaves of absence automatically extend future TGS milestone deadlines by the length of the leave. Parental accommodations 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 TGS degree requirements. International students on a visa must consult with the Office of International Student and Scholar Services (<https://www.northwestern.edu/international/>) with questions about extensions of visa status.
- 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 of time following the start of the leave of absence, following the NUIT NetID Expiration schedule (<https://www.it.northwestern.edu/netid/expiration.html>).
  - 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 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 are not eligible for the health insurance subsidy.
  - 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. In certain exceptional cases, students may petition (<https://www.tgs.northwestern.edu/documents/academic-policies-procedures/generalpetition.pdf>) to extend the leave period with approval from the student's program (Director of Graduate Studies or DGS designate) and The Graduate School. Students who fail to petition to return or petition for an extension by the originally-approved leave of absence end date will be withdrawn (discontinued) from The Graduate School and need to apply for readmission (<https://catalogs.northwestern.edu/tgs/academic-policies-procedures/readmission/>) in order to return.

## Medical Leave of Absence

A student who must temporarily interrupt their progress toward degree due to a physical or mental health need must request a medical leave of absence through the Dean of Students Office (<https://www.northwestern.edu/studentaffairs/dos/programs-services/medical-leave-of-absence/>). The process for a student to request a medical leave of absence 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.

## Family Leave of Absence

A student who must temporarily interrupt progress toward degree to care for a child or other family member, or to extend absence following a parental accommodation may petition for a family leave of absence. Family leaves of absence must be approved by the student's program of study and The Graduate School. International students on a visa must first consult with the Office of International Student and Scholar Services (<https://www.northwestern.edu/international/>). The process to petition for a family 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.
- The student must petition for reinstatement by contacting TGS student services via email at least 6 weeks before the start of the quarter in which they plan to return.

## Parental Accommodation Leave

A student who experiences the birth or adoption of a child for whom they have parental responsibilities may petition for a Parental Accommodation. Additional information and the process for requesting a parental accommodation is outlined in the Parental Accommodation section (<https://catalogs.northwestern.edu/tgs/academic-policies-procedures/parental-accommodation/>).

## General Leave of Absence

A student who wishes to temporarily interrupt their progress toward degree for a non-medical/non-family care reason may petition for a general leave of absence. General leaves of absence must be approved by the student's program of study and The Graduate School. International students on a visa must also have their leave approved by the Office of International Student and Scholar Services (<https://www.northwestern.edu/international/>). 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.
- The student must petition for reinstatement by contacting TGS student services via email at least 6 weeks before the start of the quarter in which they plan to return.