UCD Leave of Absence Policy

Policy Owner:	**Approved:**
Fees and Data Management, UCD Registry	21 May 2019 by the Academic Council Executive Committee

1.   Purpose

The purpose of the *Leave of Absence Academic Policy* is to facilitate Governing Boards to support students who may require a leave of absence from their programme in order that they may return to complete their programme. **It is one of a range of programme supports available where a student requires a specified period of time off for a variety of personal, medical or academic reasons.** The responsibility for deciding the most appropriate course of action for a student in such cases lies with the Governing Board.

2.   Definitions

2.1 Leave of absence
A leave of absence is defined as an extended period of time away from the programme of study. This is requested by the student and approved by the relevant Governing Board.

The purpose of a leave of absence is to enable and facilitate a student to take an approved and specified period of time off before returning and completing the programme.

2.2 Retrospective leave of absence
Retrospective leave of absence is defined as an extended period of time away from the programme of study, where that period of time has passed.

Retrospective leave of absence is not normally permitted. However, it may be granted by a Governing Board where it is satisfied that:
  a. the student has extenuating circumstances,
  b. there is no other available solution for the student given their circumstances, and
  c. the student has not normally been engaged in any programme activity.[1]

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[1] A retrospective leave of absence application is not a replacement for an extenuating circumstances application: where there has been student programme activity an extenuating circumstances application would seem most appropriate. Retrospective leave of absence is an additional option that may be considered by the Programme Board where circumstances warrant it. In making an extenuating circumstances application, students on undergraduate and graduate taught programmes should refer to the *Policy on Extenuating Circumstances* and students on graduate research programmes should refer to the *Policy on Theses in Graduate Research Programmes*.

3.   Scope

The *Leave of Absence Academic Policy* relates to all undergraduate and graduate students who may require a leave of absence from their programme. The policy and procedures are effective across the University. Governing Boards are responsible for deciding on all applications. Retrospective applications will be approved by the relevant Governing Board only in the circumstances outlined in item 2.2 above. All applications from students on undergraduate programmes are submitted to their College/School Office and all applications from students on graduate programmes are submitted to their School Office.[2] Students registered to programmes that are run collaboratively with other institutions will normally apply to their home institution.

4.   Principles

4.1 Principles: General

4.1.1   The University is committed to fairness in its dealings with all students. In this, it recognises that it may not always be possible for a programme to offer a leave of absence. Where a programme cannot offer a leave of absence it should publicise this and communicate it clearly to students.

4.1.2   The purpose of a leave of absence is to provide students with time off in order that they can return to and successfully complete their programme. The University commits to providing information to students during their leave of absence on procedures for returning to the programme.

4.1.3   Students are responsible for making it known to their College/School Office that they might need a leave of absence as soon as is possible and normally in advance of any period of time off.

4.1.4   A leave of absence is one of a range of options available to Governing Boards in supporting the academic welfare of their students. It is normally applied for in advance of time.

4.1.5   During a leave of absence, the student's participation in the programme is suspended. Students may not take a leave of absence in order to remediate failed modules.

4.1.6   In the case of UCD staff members who are also students of the University, a leave of absence from their studies should not be assumed to imply that any absence from work has been sanctioned.

4.1.7   A retrospective leave of absence will only be granted by the Governing Board in cases where there are extenuating circumstances. Each Governing Board will submit an annual report documenting all retrospective leave of absence applications it approved during the previous academic session. This report will be submitted to Academic Council or its relevant committee.[3]

4.1.8   There are a number of possible implications of taking a leave of absence. The University is responsible for providing information regarding possible implications and students are advised to access the variety of support systems within UCD for advice before making a leave of absence application. Students on graduate research programmes are also advised to talk to their Principal Supervisor in the first instance should they identify a need for a leave of absence from their programme.
- An up-to-date list of support systems within UCD is available at www.ucd.ie/students/services/
- Possible implications of a leave of absence are outlined in the guide to this policy.[4]

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[2] Contact details for all College/ School Offices can be accessed via www.ucd.ie/collegesandschools/

[3] The relevant committee of Academic Council to receive these reports is the University Programmes Board (UPB), and reports are normally submitted for the second UPB meeting in an academic session.

[4] See www.ucd.ie/students/registration/takingaleaveofabsence/

4.2 Principles: Refusing a leave of absence

4.2.1   A student in the first trimester of the first stage of their programme is not normally eligible for a leave of absence.

4.2.2   A student is not eligible for a leave of absence for the trimester following acceptance of a transfer offer.

4.2.3   In certain circumstances, e.g. based on programme requirements and structure or research supervisory arrangements, it may not be possible to authorise the requested leave of absence period. In this instance, the Governing Board will recommend either an alternative leave of absence period or an alternative arrangement for the student.

4.2.4   A student is not eligible for a leave of absence where there is a pending disciplinary action.

4.2.5   Where a Governing Board refuses a leave of absence application, they have a responsibility to suggest an alternative solution for the student.

4.3 Principles: Returning from a leave of absence

4.3.1   A student is governed by the University's Rules, Regulations, codes and policies, and the Programme regulations and structure in place when they return from a leave of absence.

4.3.2   A student will be automatically registered to their programme at the start of the trimester they are due to return from their leave of absence.

4.3.3   Where a student requires additional time off, they must contact their College/School Office, and students on graduate research programmes should contact their Principal Supervisor, before the end of their approved period of leave of absence, in order to make a formal application for a further leave of absence.
 Where a student fails to return from a leave of absence and has not applied for a further leave of absence period their registration will be cancelled.

4.3.4   A student cannot return from a leave of absence where they are in bad financial standing with the University i.e. where they owe monies to UCD.

4.4 Principles: Duration

4.4.1   The academic coherence of a student's study is a key consideration in all leave of absence applications. This policy is not prescriptive regarding the total amount of leave of absence time that a student may be permitted to take over the lifetime of their programme. However, a period 1/3 of the total length of the programme is recommended as the maximum amount of leave of absence time.[5]

4.4.2   Individual programmes are responsible for publicising the feasibility of a leave of absence period(s) for their programme and should communicate this clearly to students where it is not possible to offer a leave of absence.

4.4.3   All Students may apply for a leave of absence for a period of one, two, or three trimesters within an academic year.

4.4.4   In extenuating circumstances, graduate research students may apply for a leave of absence period equivalent to one trimester if the period of time requested spans two trimesters.

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5 The possibility of withdrawing (and subsequently applying for re-admission) should be discussed where a student requires a longer period of time off.

NOTE: the difference between a leave of absence and a withdrawal is as follows. A student who has taken a leave of absence has the right to resume their studies at the end of the approved leave of absence period. Where a student who has withdrawn wishes, at a later date, to return to that programme, they must apply to be re-admitted.

5.   Roles and responsibilities

The roles and responsibilities of the key parties – the student, the School (incorporating the Programme Director and Principal Supervisor), the College/School Office, the Governing Board and UCD Registry – are defined as follows:

5.1 The Responsibilities of the Student
In order that the University may best support students making an application for a leave of absence from their programme of study, the student must:

5.1.1   Seek advice and support as soon as possible where they think they may need to take some time off from their programme of study.

5.1.2   Inform their Principal Supervisor as soon as possible (students on graduate research programmes only).

5.1.3   Inform their College/School Office as soon as is possible and normally in advance of any period of time off.

5.1.4   Make sure they understand the possible implications of taking a leave of absence.

5.1.5   Complete the official application form and submit it to their College/School Office, normally in advance of the requested period of leave of absence (see Figure 1 – Applying for a leave of absence).

5.1.6   Inform their sponsor/funding agency of their need for a leave of absence, where relevant.

5.1.7   Inform UCD Residences as soon as possible, where relevant.

At the end of their leave of absence period, a student must:

5.1.8   Check their UCD Connect email prior to their return to gain information on returning to their programme and to the University.

5.1.9   Inform their College/School Office as soon as possible and before the end of their leave of absence period of their intention to return to the programme or apply for further leave of absence (such applications follow the same process as outlined in Figure 1).

5.1.10 Be aware of the implications of their return.

5.1.11 Confirm their re-registration to the University at the end of the leave of absence period.

5.2 The Responsibilities of the School (incorporating the Programme Director and Principal Supervisor)
The School shall:

5.2.1   For graduate programmes, ensure that a School representative is present and prepared to discuss each case at the relevant Governing Board meeting to which the leave of absence application is submitted.

The Programme Director, in consultation with the relevant Module Co-ordinator(s), shall:

5.2.2   Inform a student of the implications of taking a leave of absence (a) for core modules and pre-requisites, and (b) on outstanding IA, IM, or IX grade(s) (e.g. where another solution cannot be arranged, a student may be required to complete these outstanding IA, IM, or IX grade(s) when they return from the leave of absence).

5.2.3   Explore how best to enable students to complete outstanding IA, IM, or IX

grade(s) before the start of a leave of absence period.

The Principal Supervisor shall:
5.2.4   Discuss the implications of a leave of absence for the programme of research.
5.2.5   Explore alternative solutions with the student.
5.2.6   Advise the student with regard to the timing of a leave of absence and suggest alternative timing where appropriate.

5.3 The Responsibilities of the College/School Office
The student's first point of contact shall:[6]
5.3.1   Ensure that the student is informed of the possible implications of a leave of absence.
5.3.2   Explore possible alternatives to a leave of absence with the student.
5.3.3   Provide information to a student on additional support systems within the University.
5.3.4   Advise students to discuss their application with a member of the academic staff of their programme e.g. Programme Director.
5.3.5   Take receipt of the completed official application form.
5.3.6   Submit the application for the consideration of the relevant Governing Board.[7]
5.3.7   Inform the student (and all relevant personnel within a School) of the outcome of their application (i.e. relevant Governing Board's decision) in writing/by email.[8]
5.3.8   Inform UCD Registry of the decision of the Board via existing delegated authority mechanisms.

5.4 The Responsibilities of the Governing Board
The Governing Board shall:
5.4.1   Decide the most appropriate course of action for a student who may request a leave of absence from the programme.
5.4.2   Recommend an alternative leave of absence period or an alternative arrangement for a student where the Board refuses a leave of absence request.
5.4.3   Consider retrospective applications where a/ the student has extenuating circumstances, b/ there is no other available solution for the student given their circumstances and c/ the student has not been engaged in any programme activity for the period of the leave of absence they are requesting.
5.4.4   In cases where a retrospective leave of absence application is approved and where required, instruct UCD Registry in writing (via existing delegate authority mechanisms) to remove a student's academic history relating to the approved retrospective leave of absence period from their student record.
5.4.5   Submit an annual report documenting all retrospective leave of absence applications it approved during the previous academic session to Academic Council or its relevant committee.
5.4.6   Decide on the feasibility of a leave of absence period(s) for their programme(s). Where it is not possible to offer a leave of absence, publicise this information and communicate it clearly to students.
5.4.7   Specify how students registered to programmes that are run collaboratively with other institutions can apply for leave of absence and ensure a clear

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6 Students should contact their College/School Office in the first instance

7 School Offices submit applications to the relevant Office for the consideration of the Board.

8 The School Office will be informed of the Board's decision.

means of communicating decisions between institutions.

5.5 The Responsibilities of UCD Registry

UCD Registry, on behalf of the University, shall:

5.5.1   Update and amend individual student records according to the delegated authority decisions received from the College/School Office.

5.5.2   Email students who are on a leave of absence before they are due to return to inform them of the re- registration process and the implications of not re-registering.[9]

5.5.3   Email students one week into the start of the academic session to remind them to confirm their re- registration and advise them of the implications of their registration being cancelled.

5.5.4   Email students to inform them that their registration will be cancelled where a/ they have not confirmed their re-registration as required and b/ have not contacted their College/School Office to apply for further leave of absence or to notify their withdrawal from their programme. Information on applying for re-admission (including registration cancellation implications) will also be provided.

5.5.5   Provide information on the implications of taking a leave of absence, in particular the fees (and grants) implications.[10]

5.5.6   Inform Governing Boards of the submission date in each academic session for receipt of the annual report documenting all retrospective leave of absence applications (as per item 4.1.7 above).

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[9] All emails will be sent to a student's UCD Connect account.

[10] Information on the fee implications of a leave of absence can be found on the Fees website at www.ucd.ie/students/fees/ and from the Student Desk (opening hours are outlined at (www.ucd.ie/students/studentdesk/contact/) Please note: Students in UCD Residences are advised to contact the residences for information on the residences' fees implications of a leave of absence. Contact details for the Residences can be accessed at www.ucd.ie/residences/contactus/ and the Residences refunds policy is available at www.ucd.ie/residences/policies/

6.   Related documents

6.1 Figure 1 - Applying for Leave of Absence
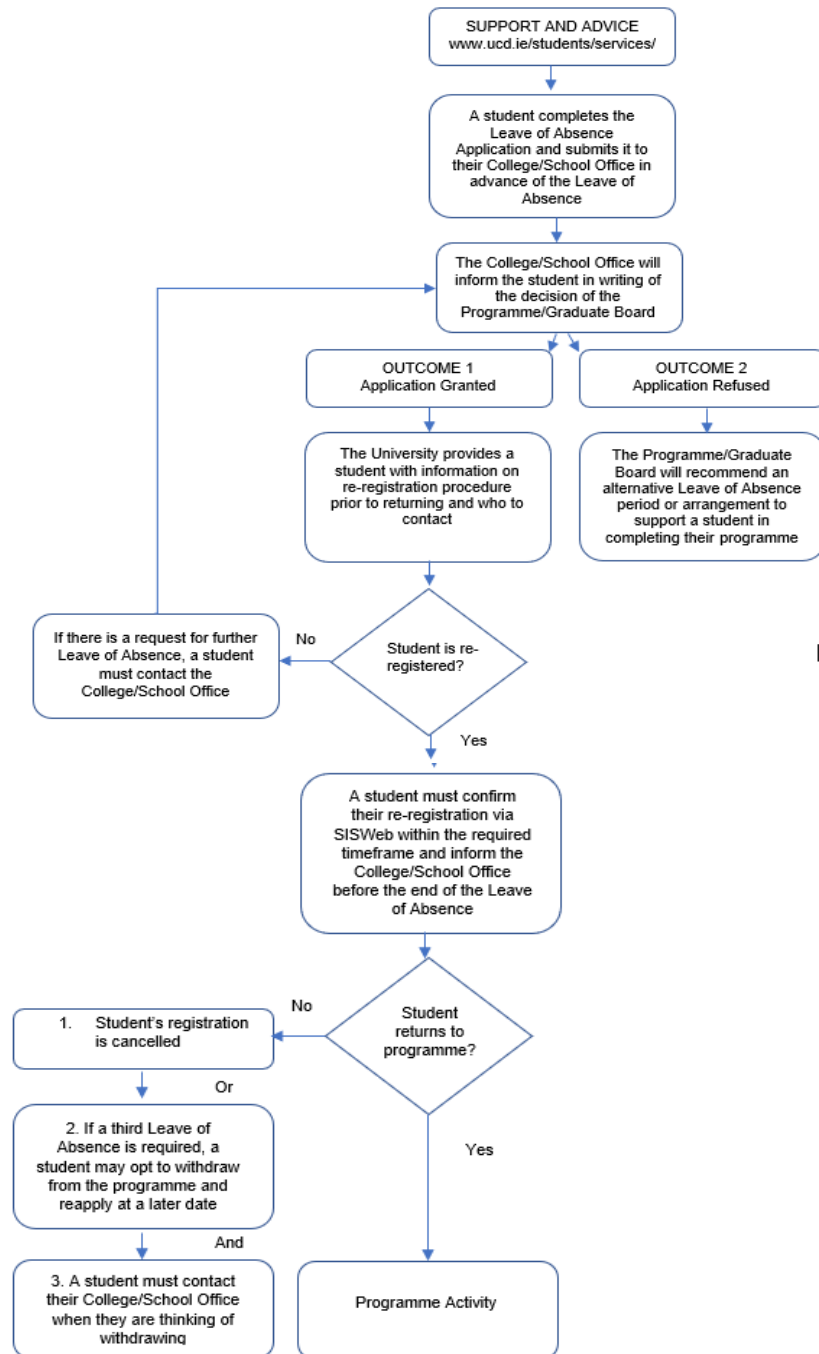
7.   Version history

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Version	Date	Summary of Changes	Changed
1.0	22.11.2010	First draft	Martina Boyle
1.1	03.12.2010	Amendments made following meeting of Policy Working Group	Elizabeth Miller, Martina Boyle
1.2	25.01.2011	Amendments made following meeting of Policy Working Group	Martina Boyle
1.3	03.02.2011	Amendments made following meeting of Policy Working Group	Martina Boyle
1.4	15.03.2011	Amendments made following meeting of Policy Working Group to review all consultation received and follow-on consultation with Deputy Registrar, Graduate Studies	Martina Boyle
1.5	23.03.2011	Minor amendments made following meeting of Policy Working Group	Martina Boyle
1.6	15.04.2011	Minor amendment made following feedback from UGPB. Working Group discussion re-considered retrospective leave of absence based on feedback from UUPB; no amendments made.	Martina Boyle
1.7	13.05.2011	Amendment made to the retrospective leave of absence definition.	Martina Boyle
1.8	05.06.2014	Amendment made to the submission date for annual PB report to UPB: changed to the second meeting in a session based on feedback from Programme Offices	Martina Boyle
1.9	11.03.2016	Inclusion of new item, 5.2.2, to reflect amendments to the *Transfer Protocol* as recommended at UPB 25.02.2016	Martina Boyle
1.10	10.06.2021	Editorial amendments to reflect changes in nomenclature. URLs updated.	Caroline McTeigue

Committee/Group	Date of Consultation	Version	Action Sought	Decision
UUPB, UGPB, Programme Boards, Graduate Boards, Heads of School, Academic Council Committee for Campus Life, Graduate School Managers, School Graduate Administrators, Programme Office Directors, Programme Managers, Undergraduate School Administrators, UCD Students' Union, Student Advisers, UCD Registry, and UCD Students (via UCD Students' Union)	04.02.2011	1.3	Review and provide feedback to the Working Group	Feedback provided to the Working Group

UUPB and UGPB	13/14.04.2011	1.5	Review and recommend to Academic Council	Recommended with UUPB requesting that the Working Group further discuss the definition of retrospective leave of absence.
Academic Council	28.04.2011	1.6	Review and approve for 2011/12 implementation	Approved pending final discussion regarding retrospective leave of absence definition.
UUPB and UGPB	09.10.2014	1.8	Review and recommend to Academic Council	Recommended
Academic Council	15.10.2014	1.8	Review and approve for	Approved
UPB	07.04.2016	1.9	Review and recommend to Academic Council	Recommended
Academic Council	05.05.2016	1.9	Review and approve for 2016/17	Approved

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