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| Title | Leave of Absence |
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Leave of Absence

Definitions (NB. These are working definitions that may be changed to ensure consistency with terminology employed in the Student System).

Leave of absence (also known as 'leave' or LOA): is a formally approved period of time, with a start and end date, when a student who has commenced a degree is permitted not to be enrolled in any subjects within that degree.

Unapproved Leave: the enrolment status of a student who, having not applied for leave before the last date for withdrawal without penalty (i.e. without a 'WD' grade being recorded), subsequently withdraws from all their subject enrolment.

Standard teaching period: a defined teaching period (may include semester 1, semester 2, Summer semester, or any trimester in programs taught in trimesters) in which students in a particular course are expected to be enrolled.

Fail date: The final date in a teaching period for students to withdraw from subjects without incurring a failed result.

Census date: The date whereby a student becomes financially liable for a subject they have enrolled in.

Policy: All continuing degrees and all coursework degrees in the Melbourne Model

Students may for a variety of reasons wish to take time off from their studies and may gain significant benefit from doing so. Leave of absence is subject to the approval of the relevant faculty or graduate school.

All students are eligible to apply for leave of absence for up to one year for personal, compassionate or other compelling reasons.

Leave for periods shorter than one year (usually measured in standard teaching period units, such as a semester) may be permitted, subject to the structure of the course and availability of relevant subjects.

Leave of absence from some postgraduate or honours degree courses may not be possible for various reasons concerning the availability of academic staff or resources (e.g. availability of supervisor for research project, specialist subjects unable to be guaranteed).

In circumstances where a course/stream/subject is being phased out, students would be required to plan their course to account for these constraints before an application for leave could be approved.

Students who need to be absent and will miss classes for a very short period of time (less than one standard teaching period) may not need to take leave but should refer to policies relating to attendance at classes, assessment requirements and special consideration, as appropriate.

Providing a student is enrolled in at least one subject in each standard teaching period in which they are required to enrol (e.g. undergraduate students are required to enrol or take leave for semesters 1 and 2) they are not considered to be on leave of absence.

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A student on leave of absence is not expected to be engaged in any activities related to their studies. A student who is on leave from their studies will normally retain restricted access to University facilities during the period of leave. Please refer to the policy on Student Access to University Facilities for further detail.

Leave will not be permitted to undertake studies towards another tertiary course. Exceptions may be possible for students enrolled in a diploma concurrent with their undergraduate degree, or for those who wish to undertake study abroad for credit towards their course.

There may be conditions placed on entry to some subjects following a period of leave (e.g. students may be required to successfully re-audition for entry to some advanced level practical subjects in the Bachelor of Music).

Applications

Students must inform the University of their intention take leave of absence by submitting an application.

Students will normally not be permitted to take leave of absence in the first teaching period of their enrolment in a course except on compassionate or other compelling grounds.

Students should apply for leave well in advance of the commencement of teaching in a semester. Nevertheless, the last date for submission of a timely application is the last date for deleting subjects without a 'WD' grade being recorded / before financial penalties apply (the census date).

Students who fail to re-enrol or take leave of absence may have their enrolment terminated on the grounds that they have abandoned their studies.

Late Applications

Applications after the census date would be only be considered on compassionate grounds. If leave is approved after the census date for the relevant subject(s), the student will remain financially liable for the subject(s).

If an application is received after the fail date (the end of teaching) of a current teaching period, leave will not be approved, except where there are truly exceptional circumstances that explain the student's inability to apply before this date.

In exceptional circumstances a student may be eligible for a remission of the fees (see policy on Subject Changes for further detail) after a late withdrawal from subjects and/or late leave of absence.

Unapproved Leave

A student who ultimately withdraws from all their subjects in a semester after a census date, but who has *not* been granted approved leave of absence, will be considered to be withdrawn without leave (noted as 'unapproved leave'). This status is a trigger for unsatisfactory progress review.

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Additional Leave

Students may be permitted to take up to one year of additional leave on serious medical, compassionate or other compelling grounds.

Students will not be permitted to take leave of absence for more than a total of two years. Students who have taken the maximum leave permitted, and who are still unable to return to their studies, will be required to discontinue their enrolment and re-apply for entry at such time as they are able to return.

Student Visas

The University may grant leave to student visa holders, however the reason for taking leave will affect the student's visa. The Educational Services of Overseas Students (ESOS) Act 2000 and the National Code 2007 stipulate the grounds on which students can take leave from their studies without cancellation of their student visa, and require the University to report students who have taken leave from their studies to the Department of Immigration and Citizenship. Students who take leave for reasons not allowed under this legislation will be deemed to have discontinued their studies and will have to apply for a new visa in order to re-enter the country as a student.

Procedure and Practice: All coursework degrees in the Melbourne Model

1. Application Process

- Students should apply for leave well in advance of the relevant teaching period.
- Students should apply for leave of absence online.
- Students should be aware of the deadlines for subject changes as this is also the deadline for timely leave applications, and ensure that their applications, including supporting documentation, comply with this deadline.
- When submitting their application, students will be informed if they are required to submit any additional documentation to support their application (e.g. required for international students and students who have already taken one year or more of leave).
- Where required, students should submit any supporting documentation to the relevant Student Centre, normally with their application, but no later than five working days after submission of their application for leave.

2. Response to Application

- Applications will be considered by the appropriate Student Centre within a specified period from receipt (including supporting documentation where required).
- Students will receive a written response to their application (e.g. by email), including requests for any further information or action required of them.
- A student who has applied for leave may be asked to discuss their application with a Student Advisor before a final decision is made.
- Where applications are not approved, students should be given an explanation of the reasons for this decision.
- Providing the application has been approved, leave of absence for the approved period will be automatically entered within the Student System.
- A student who had a leave of absence for a future semester approved prior to the determination of results in their current semester of enrolment should be advised

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that approval of their leave is subject to satisfactory performance, and that if they fail to make satisfactory performance they may have a case to answer and must be prepared to respond to it. This applies unless the leave was explicitly granted to enable a student to rehabilitate or take a recommended break from study, and this was approved in advance of consideration by the unsatisfactory progress committee.

- Where an international student has approval for a period of leave, student advisers should report the details and send copies of the supporting documentation to International Student Services.

3. Cancellation of Leave

- Once a student has been placed on leave of absence it may be possible to cancel the leave and enrol in subjects, depending on the timing of the request for cancellation of leave and the availability of appropriate subjects.
- Requests for cancellation of leave should be made in writing to the relevant Student Centre, together with a list of subjects in which the student would like to be enrolled for the coming teaching period.
- A student who requests cancellation of leave may be asked to discuss their request with a Student Advisor before a final decision is made.
- If a student is permitted to cancel their leave and re-enrol they will be provided with instructions about what they need to do to complete their enrolment.

4. Implications of Leave for Students

Students considering applying for leave should be made aware of the following implications that may affect them:

4.1 Deadlines for adding or deleting subjects: Students who are approved to take leave of absence and consequently withdraw from subjects beyond certain dates within each teaching period (see policy on Subject Changes for more details) may incur penalties such as liability for tuition fees, the award of WD grades, or academic failure.

4.2 Withdrawal from subjects without pre-negotiated Leave of Absence: Students who withdraw from all their subjects beyond the census dates within each teaching period will be recorded as taking 'unapproved' leave, and may have a case to answer before an unsatisfactory progress committee. Unapproved leave does not contribute to a student's nominal leave of absence entitlement.

4.3 Course structure or subject availability may dictate the length of leave: A student who applies for leave for one standard teaching period may be advised that they will not be able to enrol in coming teaching periods because the structure of their course is such that the subjects in which they are required to enrol will not be taught during those teaching periods.

4.4 Leave of absence will usually lengthen the duration of a course: Students who take leave of absence will normally be required to lengthen the duration of their course by the period during which they are on leave. Subject to the availability of relevant subjects, some of this time may be made up by undertaking subjects taught intensively during the Summer and/or Winter teaching periods.

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4.5 Increases in fees: Students may be liable for any increases in the fees for their course that occur while they are on leave. Where this is the case, students should be provided with advice about possible increases at the time their leave is approved.

4.6 Access to University Facilities: A student requiring access to a broader range of University facilities during their leave should put a request in writing to the dean or custodial dean for the relevant course. Access will only be permitted for academic reasons connected to the student's degree.

4.7 Leave of absence for international students: International students who are permitted to take leave of absence must depart Australia within 14 days from the start date of their leave. The only exceptions to this are students who are unable to travel for documented medical reasons. This requirement applies for all types of leave, including 'unapproved' leave.

4.8 Leave of absence and scholarships: Scholarship holders who take leave of absence from the course for which they are receiving a scholarship will normally be placed on leave from their scholarship.

4.9 Failure to return from Leave: It is the responsibility of each student who takes leave from their course to ensure that they re-enrol upon return from leave according to instructions sent to them by the University. Failure to comply with such instructions may result in termination of enrolment on the grounds that the student has abandoned their studies.

5. Discretion

- Applications should initially be assessed and processed by Student Advisers located in the relevant Student Centre.
- Matters that fall outside of established parameters should be referred to the Manager of the relevant Student Centre in the first instance. The Manager may endorse or override recommendations of a Student Adviser or may refer the matter to the dean or custodial dean of the relevant course for final determination.
- In extenuating circumstances the dean or custodial dean of the relevant degree may permit students who have taken leave access to a broader range of University facilities, such as borrowing rights at the Library.

6. Appeals

Students concerned about decisions made in respect to this policy should consult the Student Grievance Policy for information about how to lodge a grievance.