Policy

Western Michigan University supports a graduate leave of absence policy to assist graduate students who are temporarily unable to continue their programs. Reasons for requiring a leave usually include bereavement, illness, personal challenges, family care giving, financial difficulties and call to active military duty. The student initiates a leave of absence by first consulting with their supervising faculty member or graduate program director to determine whether this is the best decision or if there are other options, such as reducing coursework or other academic responsibilities, taking incomplete grades, or slowing progress towards the degree.

The leave of absence may extend consecutively for up to two semesters and two sessions. Extensions of a leave of absence may be possible with a new application.

A student granted a leave of absence will have their time-to-completion of degree extended by the amount of time granted in the leave of absence. The continuous enrollment policy will also be held in abeyance during this time. Note the access to some university resources, such as Microsoft 365, will be suspended during the leave period. If the student does not enroll for more than one year, they will be considered inactive and must apply for readmission to the graduate program.

It is the student's responsibility to ensure that the proposed leave is compatible with the regulations of any granting agency from which funding would normally be received during the leave period and that such agencies are informed of the proposed leave. Students on student loan programs should clarify the consequences that such a leave may have on their repayment status. International students are advised to consult with International Student and Scholar Services regarding their immigration status during a proposed leave.

Preparing the Application for Leave of Absence

In consultation with the supervising faculty member, an Application for Leave of Absence form is to be completed by the student, and signed by the student, the advisor or supervising faculty member and the department chairperson/director before being forward to the Graduate College at grad-info@wmich.edu. The Graduate College dean will sign and submit it to the Registrar's Office. Whenever possible, application should be made in advance of the anticipated leave or as soon as possible after commencement of the leave. A student may not apply for a leave of absence retroactively for a previous term.

Graduate Appointees Requesting a Leave of Absence

A graduate student holding an assistantship, associateship, or fellowship who is granted a leave of absence will have his or her salary and stipend (where applicable) suspended during the period of the leave. During the absence, a student replacement may serve on a temporary basis. Whenever possible, the remainder of the appointment will be held for the student upon his or her return to the next term. However, in situations where research activity has progressed substantially
during the absence, the original appointee may no longer be able to resume the appointment. In a situation where the student is returning in the next academic year, efforts will be made for that student to resume his or her appointment, if possible.

In the event that a student appointee and chairperson/director disagree on the leave or its arrangements, students may follow the dispute resolution process available under the Graduate Catalog policy on Adjudication of Situations Involving Graduate Students Rights and Responsibilities.

**Reinstatement After a Leave of Absence**

If you obtain an approved leave in accordance with the Graduate Student Leave of Absence policy, you are eligible for reinstatement provided you return to the same graduate degree program and enroll for the term/year identified in the approved Leave of Absence agreement. It is important that you let your graduate program know that you are returning.

Please note: An approved Leave of Absence holds your spot in your degree program for the time specified in the agreement. We cannot guarantee reinstatement into the same graduate degree program if you return later than the term/year identified in the approved Leave of Absence agreement.

Students who have not enrolled at WMU for more than 12 consecutive months prior to the semester of return will need to reapply to the university by submitting an admission application at wmich.edu/grad/apply. If an approved Leave of Absence is on file, then the student is eligible for an admission application fee waiver from the Graduate College.