

ACADEMIC LEAVE OF ABSENCE

Graduate Studies

Purpose

Doctoral students in candidacy are required to maintain active status through continuous registration from the time they advance to candidacy until they graduate. In the event that a student is unable to continue active participation, the student must complete an Academic Leave of Absence to temporarily suspend his or her graduate studies and the pursuit of a degree.

Policy

An Academic Leave of Absence may be granted to students for illness or injury, to provide care or assistance for family and dependents, to meet military service obligations, or for other personal reasons.

A leave can be used to suspend study for **one semester up to a full academic year** during which the student is not expected to make progress toward their degree.

- The one-year time limit can be **extended** for military service or in other cases subject to approval by Graduate Studies.
- A leave can be granted for **current and/or future** semesters only, not for prior semesters.

Students granted a leave are **not required to register for any credit hours** for the period covered by the leave.

- With no enrollment, no tuition and fee costs are accrued during the leave.
- The time limit for reaching candidacy or for completing the Ph.D. is extended only by the number of semesters the student is on leave.
- For Ph.D. students in candidacy, an approved leave satisfies the continuous enrollment requirement (<https://catalog.unl.edu/graduate-professional/graduate/degrees/doctoral/#candidacy>).

Students **returning** from an approved leave do not need to be readmitted.

Eligibility

- Be a doctoral student in good standing (3.0 or above), with at least one semester of prior graduate enrollment at UNL.
- Be admitted into candidacy by Graduate Studies.
- Get approval from their graduate program.
- Have no course enrollments for the duration of the leave. If already enrolled during the leave, students must officially withdraw from those courses.
- If international, get approval from the International Student and Scholars Office (ISSO). SEVIS updates may be needed and immigration regulations may restrict eligibility; ISSO can help to identify other possible courses of action.

Implications

Students should expect to make **no academic progress** during a leave. A student on leave cannot:

- Take qualifying examinations for advancement to candidacy or final examinations for the degree (although language competency examinations are allowed)
- File a thesis or dissertation
- Make extensive use of faculty/staff time or resources (except for planning a return from leave)
- Receive academic credit for work done during the leave at another institution (unless approved in advance by the faculty advisor and Graduate Studies)

It is the responsibility of any student with **federal financial aid or loans** to consult the Office of Scholarships and Financial Aid and/or their loan agency before applying for a leave, to determine how a leave could affect aid, eligibility to defer loan repayment, and loan status.

A student on leave is not registered for classes and **does not receive the benefits, services, and eligibility** associated with registered-student status, including:

- Graduate assistantships or other student work titles and their benefits (e.g., tuition remission, student insurance, @unl.edu email address)
- UNL Libraries (unless applying for a “community member” library card)
- University Health Center and student health insurance
- UNL Campus Recreation Centers
- UNL fellowship support and research grants
- UNL graduate awards
- Most forms of University financial support
- Access to laboratories, equipment, and other controlled-access campus facilities

Students considering a leave are strongly encouraged to explore alternatives, discuss the impact on their plan of study with the graduate chair and their faculty advisor, and develop a strategy for completing the degree program.

In many cases students are better served by **alternatives that maintain enrollment and eligibility for student services**, for example:

- Modifying program expectations
- Reducing coursework, research, teaching or other educational responsibilities
- Working at a slower pace
- Delaying milestone deadlines
- Taking incompletes in the current semester with a plan to address them at a later time

Procedures

Requesting a Leave

1. Students consult their faculty advisor and their department's graduate chair to determine whether a leave is the most appropriate course of action.
2. The student submits a completed Academic Leave of Absence form (http://www.unl.edu/gradstudies/current/Academic_Leave_Request_Form.pdf) to Graduate Studies with the required signatures.

3. Upon approval by Graduate Studies, an email notification with a copy of the signed form is sent to the student, graduate chair, and faculty advisor.

Extending a Leave

To extend an approved leave, students must notify the graduate program chair and their advisor at least four weeks prior to the end of the semester in which the leave terminates. An extension requires approval of the department and (if international) ISSO.

Returning from Leave

Students on academic leave must notify Graduate Studies of their intent to return: in writing, to graduate@unl.edu, at least four weeks prior to the end of the leave. The Master's or Doctoral Specialist will notify the graduate chair and the faculty advisor of the student's intent to return.