

Leave of Absence (Graduate School) – 509.12

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University of Arkansas at Little Rock
Policy Name: Leave of Absence
Policy Number: 509.12
Effective Date: January 1, 2012

Policy Statement

In recognition of the effects that life circumstances (e.g., childbirth, military service, illness, care for infirmed family members, etc.) may have on the time and energy that graduate students have to devote to their educational programs, UA Little Rock allows students in such circumstances to apply for a leave of absence of up to two semesters (not including summer) during which time they do not intend to make academic progress toward the completion of their degree. During this time, the student will not be using UA Little Rock resources in pursuit of his/her degree. The time taken on an approved leave of absence is not included in the time limitations for degree completion. Stated differently, approved leaves stop the student's *time-to-degree clock*.

Duration of Leave

Application for a leave of absence may be made on a one- or two-semester basis. A leave of absence ordinarily will not be granted for more than one academic year. Leaves requested for a longer period are approved only in exceptional circumstances. An approved leave for one semester will be extended to a second contiguous semester as needed, if so requested by the applicant prior to the expiration of the approved one-semester leave of absence.

Process to Request a Leave of Absence

A leave of absence for legitimate reasons normally must be requested and approved prior to the beginning of the academic term for which it is being requested. Graduate School Form ____ must be completed and should provide a detailed explanation of the circumstances leading to the request and a justification of the time requested (one or two semesters). The request must be approved by the student's faculty advisor and

graduate program director prior to submission to the Graduate School. The faculty advisor, graduate program director, and/or Graduate School may request relevant documentation (e.g., doctor's statement military documentation, etc.).

Issues for Student Consideration Prior to Requesting a Leave of Absence

Registration Requirements. Students on approved leaves of absence are not registered at UA Little Rock, and therefore, do not have all the rights and privileges of registered students. Students must be registered during a semester in which they fulfill a university or departmental degree requirement, such as taking a comprehensive examination or submitting a dissertation/thesis. In addition, students must also be registered in order to be eligible for any form of university financial aid (e.g., a teacher or research assistantship) and to be certified as full-time students.

Impact on Funding. When contemplating a leave of absence, graduate students are advised to consult with the sources of their funding to determine if and to what degree a leave might involve a long-term financial loss. Because academic programs and financial aid packages may be constructed and sequenced over a period of years, individual interruptions to the normal sequence of academic progress and scheduled employment may result in a loss of future funding and a longer time to completion of degree. In some programs, a leave of absence may mean that students may have to join a new project upon return, with the likelihood that their research may take longer to complete. Whenever a leave of absence is being considered, a student should meet with his/her advisor to develop a plan for resumption of study and gain a clear understanding of future funding opportunities. Some outside funding agencies frown upon interruptions to a degree program. Some only allow leaves for medical reasons or military service. Others require prior approval of the funding agency.

Students with outstanding educational loans need to consider the effect on their loan status when taking a leave of absence. For some student loans, a grace period for repaying the loan begins once the student stops registering. If the leave period is longer than the grace period, then the student may have to begin repaying the loan while on a leave of absence. Prior to taking a leave, students should arrange to meet with a student financial aid officer and/or contact their lenders.

International students and non-immigrant F-1 and J-1 students and their dependents must maintain legal immigration status at all times. Students with F-1 or J-1 visas must be enrolled full-time every semester at UA Little Rock while they remain in the U.S. The only possible exception that might allow a student to remain in the U.S. while on approved leave of absence might be a serious illness or medical condition. Students are advised to consult with the staff of the Office of International Services for more information when considering a leave of absence.

Student Accounts. Students are advised to check with the Office of Student Accounts prior to taking an approved leave of absence in order to determine the status of their student accounts and the impacts of a leave of absence on these accounts.

Source:

Revised:

Approved by: Graduate Council

Custodian: Office of the Vice Provost for Research and Dean of the Graduate School