

## 509.11 Graduation Requirements

### Time Limits

Master's students are required to complete their degrees within seven consecutive calendar years from their date of first enrollment; doctoral students are required to complete their degrees within ten consecutive calendar years. Individual graduate programs may set stricter timeline requirements.

Students who need time off from their degrees due to military service, health problems, family care issues, or other approved reasons can stop their time-to-degree clock by requesting a leave of absence. A leave of absence will not ordinarily be granted for more than one academic year. The leave of absence must be approved by the student's graduate coordinator and the Graduate School (see Policy 509.12, Leave of Absence).

If students exceed the 7-year time limit for a master's degree or the 10-year time limit for a doctoral degree, they must petition the Graduate School for a time extension with the approval of their program coordinator. The petition must include an explanation of the need for an extension, a new degree plan for the student, and a projected timeline for completion, and it must be signed by both the student and the program coordinator. **Students may petition for a time extension only once during their pursuit of each distinct graduate degree.**

If there has been a lapse in enrollment of more than 2 years, students must reapply for admission to their degree program. If approved for readmission, these students will be admitted under the catalog requirements of the year they reapply. This may mean that they will be required to complete additional **and/or** different courses than those required when they were first admitted. **If during the enrollment lapse, a student has exceeded the degree time limit or will need a time extension to graduate, a time extension petition (described above) must be filed with the Graduate School as part of the readmission process.**

If the student has been separated from the program for more than two years without an approved leave of absence, and if some (or all) of the student's coursework is now more than 7 years old (for a master's student) or 10 years old (for a doctoral student), the program coordinator must develop a new degree plan for the student that will include no less than 6 hours of academic credit to be earned after readmission. Coordinators may require more than 6 hours of additional credit at their discretion so that the student's degree reflects current offerings in the program and current developments in the degree area.

## 509.12 Leave of Absence

In recognition of the effects that life circumstances (e.g. childbirth, military service, illness, care for 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 **one calendar year**, during which time they do not intend to make academic progress toward the completion of their degree. During this time, students will not be using UA Little Rock resources in pursuit of their degree. The time taken on an approved leave of absence will not be counted against the student's 7-year time limit to complete a master's degree or 10-year time limit to complete a doctoral degree (see Policy 509.11, Graduation Requirements).

### *Duration of Leave*

**Students may apply to take a leave of absence for up to one year from the date of the application's approval. Students on leave must re-enroll the next semester they are eligible to do so after their leave expires, excluding summers. For example, a student who is granted a leave of absence in Spring 2019 will be considered on leave through the end of Spring 2020. That student must re-enroll in Fall 2020, since summer does not count.**

A leave of absence will not ordinarily be granted for more than one academic year. Leaves requested for a longer period are approved only in exceptional circumstances. **Students who takes a leave of absence for longer than 2 years will need to be readmitted to their programs when they return, which means they may be subject to the requirements of a new catalog.**

### *Process to Request a Leave of Absence*

**Students must submit a Leave of Absence form to the Graduate School** providing a detailed explanation of the circumstances leading to the request and a justification of the time requested.

### *[Remainder of policy to stand as written]*

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.