



Graduate Student Leave of Absence Policy

Responsible Official: **Dean of Graduate School**

Responsible Office: **Graduate School**

Policy Purpose

This policy specifies when a graduate student may qualify for a Leave of Absence in their degree program.

Policy Statement

A graduate student may experience circumstances that make taking a Leave of Absence (LOA) from their program necessary.

I. Eligibility.

An ETSU graduate student who is in good academic standing may qualify to interrupt their graduate program temporarily for circumstances described in this policy.

Doctoral students who have achieved candidacy or master's students in the thesis stage who have a continuous enrollment requirement must have an approved LOA to be exempt from the continuous enrollment requirement.

Pre-candidacy master's and doctoral, educational specialist, and certificate students are not required to request a LOA if stopping out; however, it is recommended that they do so as the process provides a vehicle for more easily resuming their studies.

II. Circumstances.

There are four conditions under which a graduate student can petition for a LOA: personal exigency, personal illness, family care, and military service.

- A. Personal exigency includes non-medical reasons or professional obligations that necessitate a student temporarily halt graduate study. Documentation may be requested.

- B. Personal illness is when a student has a serious illness. The student will be required to submit appropriate documentation.
- C. Family care includes (a) providing serious illness or end-of-life care for a spouse/partner, child/step-child, parent/step-parent/foster parent, parents-in-law, grandparent/step-grandparent, grandchild/step-grandchild, or any family member who resides in the same home, or (b) pregnancy, maternity, or paternity care, including adoption. The student will be required to submit appropriate documentation.
- D. Military service includes when a student is called for active duty military service. The student will be required to submit appropriate documentation.

III. Request and Approval.

A student requests a LOA by completing the [request form](#) found on the Graduate School website and attaching the required supporting documentation (as applicable). The student must specify in the request the exact length of the LOA requested. The student must document a rationale for the time requested. A student can request a LOA more than once.

Except in emergency situations, a student should submit a request before the start of the semester, but must submit it no later than the Census Date of the semester in which the leave is needed. A LOA cannot be approved retroactively for a previous semester(s). A LOA will not be approved to avoid paying tuition, to avoid the policy on continuous enrollment, or to avoid the full-time requirement for international students.

If the LOA request is due to an emergency situation, the Dean of the Graduate School may request additional documentation.

All LOA requests are granted on a case-by-case basis. The final decision is that of the Dean of the Graduate School or designee. The student may file one reconsideration request if the student is providing additional supporting documentation or information.

IV. Students Pursuing Two Degrees.

A student who is pursuing two degrees must submit a LOA request to both programs.

V. Length of LOA.

A LOA may be granted for up to three semesters (including summer) per request.

VI. Effect on Matriculation Limits.

Since currency in the discipline is essential at the graduate level, a LOA for personal exigency, personal illness, or family care will not extend the Matriculation Limits to complete the degree. If a

student is granted a LOA for military service, the student will receive a matriculation/time extension equal to the LOA request up to a maximum of three (3) semesters total.

VII. Returning to Graduate School after an Approved LOA.

A student who obtained an approved LOA in accordance with this policy will be eligible to resume graduate study if the student:

- A. submits a Readmission Update Form found on the Graduate School website;
- B. does not have criminal convictions that would prohibit admission;
- C. returns to the same graduate program(s) from which the LOA was approved; and
- C. is readmitted and enrolled for the term and year identified in the approved LOA.

A student may return from a LOA earlier than the date indicated on the approved LOA.

Depending on the length of time the student is away from ETSU, new program degree requirements may be in effect. With an approved LOA, the student may opt to complete the degree under the previous degree requirements or change to the new catalog and the new requirements. Changing to a new catalog requires the approval of the graduate advisor and completion of the required documents.

The student is responsible for filing new financial aid applications (if applicable) by the applicable deadlines and should consult with the Office of Financial Aid.

VIII. Access to University Resources during Approved LOA.

Because a LOA is intended for reasons of personal or other exigency, as opposed to degree progress, there is no support—whether faculty or university resources (library, office space, funding, etc.)—provided to the student during a LOA.

Students with an approved LOA can complete outstanding work in course(s) for which they have been issued grade(s) of Incomplete (I) by the appropriate deadline for the term in which the course was taken. They cannot, however, fulfill any other degree requirements during the time on leave.

IX. Canceling Registration.

The student is responsible for canceling their registration or dropping classes by the deadline published on the Academic Calendar; failing to do so will result in billing and assigned grades for the term(s). An approved LOA does not automatically cancel any registrations; the student must contact the Office of the Registrar to complete this process.

X. International Students.

International students holding visas are responsible for contacting the Office of International

Student Services to discuss the impact of a leave on their immigration status prior to submitting a LOA request. The student is responsible for following all visa requirements.

XI. Impact on Graduate Assistantship, Tuition Scholarships, and Other University Scholarships.

A student who receives an approved LOA cannot hold a Graduate Assistantship (GA) or Tuition Scholarship (TS) during the LOA period. The program or unit is under no obligation to hold the GA or TS scholarship for a student on a personal exigency, personal illness, or family care LOA. GA or TS positions must be held for students on a LOA for military service, pursuant to the Uniformed Services Employment and Reemployment Rights Act; however, that GA or TS position does not have to be for the same project or with the same unit.

Before requesting a LOA, the student should consult with their GS or TS supervisor about the need for a LOA and implications on the GA or TS position and on any remaining tuition charges for which the student will be responsible (if applicable). Students whose GA positions are funded through sponsored activity must also abide by the guidelines of their respective funding agencies.

Students cannot hold university scholarships while on LOA. Students are responsible for consulting with the ETSU Financial Aid Office on the impact of a LOA on their scholarship after the LOA.

XII. Impact on Federal Financial Assistance.

For students receiving federal financial assistance, the U.S. Department of Education regulations require the university to report enrollment status as withdrawn when students take a leave of absence for one semester or more. This results in the beginning of the Federal Stafford Loan grace period and/or the starting of repayment of the Supplemental Loan for Students. The student is responsible for discussing the possible impact of a LOA on federal loans with the Office of Financial Aid.

Authority: Section 484C of the Higher Education Opportunity Act of 2008; Uniformed Services Employment and Reemployment Rights Act; U.S. Department of Education

Previous Policy: N/A

Defined Terms

A Defined Term has a specific meaning within the context of this policy.

Census Date: The Census Date is indicated on the ETSU Academic Calendar.

Matriculation Limits: Matriculation Limits are defined in the Graduate School Policy on Degree and Certificate Requirements.

Policy History

Effective Date: 12/15/2021

Revision Date:

Procedure

I. Actions Prior to Requesting a LOA.

Before requesting a LOA, a student should consult with the following individuals/departments depending on their individual circumstances:

- A. their graduate advisor and graduate program coordinator on the circumstances surrounding a needed Leave of Absence;
- B. International Student Services on visa impact (if an international student);
- C. Graduate Assistantship or Tuition Scholarship supervisor; and
- D. The Office of Financial Aid and Scholarships.

II. Requesting a Leave of Absence.

To request a Leave of Absence, a student:

- A. Fills out the Leave of Absence Request Form; and
- B. Submits the form and applicable supporting documentation to the graduate advisor and the graduate program coordinator.

III. Review of LOA Requests.

- A. The graduate advisor and graduate coordinator review the request and submit recommendations to the Dean of the Graduate School.
- B. The Dean of the Graduate School reviews the request and recommendations and approves or denies the request.
- C. The student, graduate coordinator, graduate advisor, GA/TS supervisor (if applicable), and International Student Services (if applicable) receive notification of the decision.
- D. The student should retain a copy of the LOA request and notification for their records.

Procedure History

Effective Date: 12/15/2021

Revision Date:

Related Form(s)

[Leave of Absence Request Form](#)
[Readmission Update Form](#)

Scope and Applicability

Primary: Academic

Secondary: Students