

# Stanford

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## 5.3.1 Leaves of Absence: Policy

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### Summary

In circumstances where continuous enrollment is not possible, students may request a suspension of their enrollment by means of a leave of absence. Failure to be either enrolled by the study list deadline or to be approved for a leave of absence by the start of a term will result in the discontinuation of the student's program.

### Rationale

Stanford requires graduate students to maintain continuous enrollment for all terms of the academic year (excluding Summer quarters) from admission through conferral of the degree. However, the university also recognizes that circumstances may arise where this may not be possible. In such circumstances, a student may request a leave of absence for up to one year, or four quarters, or be placed on a mandatory leave of absence. During the period of an approved leave, the student will not be registered. Students who fail to be either enrolled by the final study list deadline or approved for a leave of absence by the start of a term are discontinued by the Office of the Registrar.

### Policy

Leaves of Absence for graduate students are divided into the following three categories for policy purposes:

- Voluntary Leaves of Absence, other than Pregnancy or Parental Leaves
- Voluntary Pregnancy and Parental Leaves of Absence
- Mandatory Leaves of Absence.

#### Authority:

- Committee on Graduate Studies (policy)
- [Office of the Registrar](#) <sup>[1]</sup> via Stanford Services & Support (implementation)
- [Dean of Students](#) <sup>[2]</sup> (mandatory leave)

#### Applicability:

To all matriculated graduate students and the programs in which they are enrolled.

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# 1. Voluntary Leaves of Absence other than Pregnancy or Parental Leaves

Graduate students who do not meet the requirement for continuous registration during the academic year must obtain an approved leave of absence, in advance, for the term(s) they will not be registered. The leave of absence must be reviewed for approval by the chair or director of graduate studies of the student's major degree program and, if the student is in the United States on a foreign student visa, by the Bechtel International Center. Except in the case of pregnancy or parental leaves, the granting of a leave of absence is at the discretion of the degree program and subject to review for approval by the Office of the Registrar.

The university may condition its approval of a petition for leave of absence on the student's meeting such requirements as the university deems appropriate in the individual case for the student to be eligible to return (such as, in the case of a leave for medical reasons, proof of treatment or an interview with a provider at Vaden or CAPS).

New graduate students may not take a leave of absence during their first quarter. However, new Stanford students may request a deferment from the degree program. Coterminal students who wish to take a leave of absence are subject to the Leave of Absence policies for both undergraduate and graduate students, as described here and in the [undergraduate Leaves of Absence and Reinstatement](#) [3] section of the Stanford Bulletin. A coterminal student whose undergraduate degree has not been conferred must obtain permission from the master's degree program and the office of Undergraduate Academic Advising, and may not take a leave of absence unless approved for both the graduate and undergraduate leave.

For students with multiple degree programs or majors, note that leaves of absence are only granted for all programs and majors. Students in multiple degree programs may not therefore request a leave from one, but not the other.

## Lengths of Leaves

Leaves of absence are granted for a maximum of one calendar year, or four quarters. Leaves requested for a longer period are approved only in exceptional circumstances (for example, mandatory military service). An extension of leave, for a maximum of one year or four quarters, is approved only in unusual circumstances. Extension requests must be made before the expiration of the original leave of absence. Leaves of absence for graduate students may not exceed a cumulative total of two years (eight quarters including Summer quarters).

## Status While on Leave

Students on an approved leave of absence retain their admitted student status; however, they are not registered and therefore do not have the rights and privileges of registered students. Students on leave may complete course work for which an 'Incomplete' grade was reported in a prior term and are expected to comply with the one-year maximum time limit for resolving incompletes; the leave of absence does not extend the one-year maximum time limit for completion. Students with extenuating circumstances, that may warrant an exception to academic policy, should discuss the need for an extension to the time limit with their advisor and the course instructor. Students may request an extension of the deadline for resolving an incomplete by submitting the [Petition to Change Course Enrollment \(Graduate Students\)](#) [4].

Leaves do not delay candidacy or master's program expiration dates. Failure to return as scheduled or to secure an extension of a prior leave will result in cancellation of registration privileges and a substantial reinstatement fee (in the event the student successfully seeks reinstatement after this time). Official degree program or university

requirements (e.g., qualification examinations) cannot be fulfilled during the leave period.

When a student is granted a leave of absence after the beginning of the term, courses in which the student was enrolled after the final study list deadline appear on the student's transcript and show the symbol 'W' (withdrew).

## **International Students and Visa Status**

Nonimmigrant students and their dependents must maintain an appropriate visa status at all times. An absence from the U.S. of 5 or more months will result in termination of F-1 or J-1 status. If a student remains outside the U.S. for 5 or more months, a new I-20 or DS-2019 is necessary for re-entry. For further information contact the Bechtel International Center.

## **Financial Aid and Loans**

Students receiving any financial support (assistantships or fellowships) should notify their degree program of any anticipated leave of absence as soon as possible. Graduate assistantship appointments and most fellowship programs require the student to be registered and enrolled in order to receive support. Such support is therefore not available to students while on a leave of absence.

Students should notify the Financial Aid Office of their intent to seek a leave if they are receiving any type of aid. Students with loans must notify all lenders of their intent to leave the university and request exit information before leaving campus (Stafford and private loans through the Financial Aid Office; Perkins and Institutional loans through Student Financial Services). Students are cautioned to consider carefully the effect of leaves on their loan status; lenders may count the leave period as part of the total grace period. Stanford will provide enrollment status to the National Student Loan Clearing House. Students who receive loan disbursements directly may be required to repay portions of their loans.

## **University Housing**

University housing is generally not available to students on leave. Students with questions about room-and-board refunds should contact the [R&DE Student Housing Assignments](#) [5] or the central office of the university dining services (for board refunds). Pregnant students on leave of absence while expecting the birth of a child may petition to remain in campus housing while on a Pregnancy Leave. Approval requires good academic standing, degree program recommendation, and no outstanding financial obligations to Stanford. Address questions to Housing Assignment Services.

## **Health Insurance**

A student who is granted a Leave of Absence in Autumn for which the effective date of the leave is prior to the first day of class will not be charged tuition or any associated fees for the quarter. Upon reversal of the tuition, the student's eligibility for enrollment in Cardinal Care, the student health insurance plan, will be cancelled retroactive to September 1. (The student's eligibility for enrollment in Cardinal Care will resume when they returns and tuition is reinstated.)

A student who is granted a Leave of Absence in Autumn for which the effective date of the leave is on or after the first day of class but before the term withdrawal deadline will be charged (prorated) tuition and associated fees for the quarter. If enrolled in Cardinal Care, the student will remain enrolled through the end of the plan year (August 31) and applicable fees will apply.

A student who is enrolled in Cardinal Care as of Autumn quarter, and who is granted a Leave of Absence for a subsequent quarter (i.e., Winter, Spring, or Summer) will remain enrolled in and covered by Cardinal Care through the end of the plan year (August 31) and applicable fees (charged Winter and Spring quarters only) will apply.

A student whose initial quarter of entry is Winter or Spring, and who is subsequently granted a Leave of Absence, will be subject to the same guiding principles as a student who enters in Autumn, i.e., if the effective date of the leave is prior to the first day of class, tuition and any associated fees for the quarter will be reversed. Upon reversal of the tuition, the student's eligibility for enrollment in Cardinal Care will be cancelled retroactive to the start of the applicable coverage period (December 1 for Winter entry students and April 1 for Spring entry students). If the effective date of the leave is on or after the first day of class but before the respective term withdrawal deadline, the student will be charged (prorated) tuition and associated fees for the quarter. If enrolled in Cardinal Care, the student will remain enrolled through the end of the plan year (August 31) and applicable fees will apply.

For more information, please contact Vaden's Insurance and Referral Office.

## **Library Privileges**

Contact the Privileges Division, Green Library, for access and borrowing privileges while on leave.

## **Deadlines and Tuition Refunds**

Students who take a leave from the university voluntarily on or before the first day of classes will receive a full tuition refund. Such students are not included in university records as registered for the term.

An active student in good standing who voluntarily takes a leave after the first day of instruction, but before the end of the first 60 percent of the term (term withdrawal deadline), will receive a pro rata refund. There is no refund after the first 60 percent of the term (term withdrawal deadline). Courses in which the student was enrolled after the final study list deadline will appear on the student's record and will show the grade of 'W' (withdrew).

The [Leave of Absence form](#) [6] includes quarterly deadlines for receiving a partial tuition refund. A leave of absence submitted after the deadline is granted only for approved health and emergency reasons.

## **Returning from an Approved Leave of Absence within the Leave Period**

Graduate students returning to campus within the time period indicated on an approved leave of absence must complete the [Early Return from Leave of Absence](#) [7] form, and submit it to the Office of the Registrar in advance of the first day in the quarter in which they will reenroll. In this circumstance, no reinstatement process or fee is required. Returning graduate students should stay in communication with their degree program and their advisor about their plans for reenrollment.

The Office of the Registrar will discontinue the academic program for students who do not return within the time period indicated on an approved leave of absence, or for whom other arrangements to continue the leave are not approved. Students whose program is discontinued for failure to enroll after a leave of absence must apply for reinstatement in order to return (see [GAP 5.4 Program Discontinuation and Reinstatement](#) [8]).

Students should clear all outstanding bills with Student Financial Services before returning to campus. Graduate students may apply for loans four weeks before the first day of classes in the quarter in which they plan to return. See the [Financial Aid Office](#) [9] web site for detailed application requirements.

Graduate degree programs and candidacy must be valid in the term of reenrollment. A leave of absence, other than for Pregnancy or Parental Leaves (see below), does not extend the candidacy period.

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## 2. Pregnancy and Parental Leaves of Absence

Except as specified below, all provisions of the policy for Voluntary Leaves of Absence, defined above, will apply in the case of Pregnancy and Parental Leaves of Absence. Students considering a Leave of Absence because of pregnancy or the pending arrival of a child should carefully review section 1 on voluntary leaves of absence.

Any pregnant graduate student may request a Pregnancy Leave of Absence in order to suspend their student enrollment around the time of the birth. Alternatively, a student may choose to remain enrolled and to request a Childbirth Accommodation (see [GAP 5.9 Pregnancy, Childbirth, Adoption, and Lactation](#) <sup>[10]</sup>).

Non-birth parents may request a Parental Leave of Absence. The term "non-birth parent" as used in this policy include:

- spouses/partners of individuals (who do not have to be Stanford students) anticipating or recently experiencing the birth of a child
- parents who adopt a child
- parents by means of surrogacy.

Any matriculated pregnant student requesting a Pregnancy Leave of Absence will automatically be approved for a leave period of four quarters (12 months). Students may choose to return to enrolled status before the Pregnancy leave period expires by filing the Returning Graduate Student Request to Register Form.

Non-birth parents who request a Parental Leave of Absence will automatically be approved for a leave period of one academic quarter.

### **Extension of Candidacy**

Any student on a Pregnancy Leave of Absence in a degree program requiring candidacy, who has not yet been admitted to candidacy, will have the period of time in which to achieve candidacy automatically extended by 12 months (four quarters). If the student has been admitted to candidacy, the candidacy period will be automatically extended by 12 months (four quarters). The 12-month extension of pre-candidacy or candidacy will be applicable whether the student takes a full year of leave or returns in less than one year.

Any student on a Parental Leave of Absence in a degree program requiring candidacy, who has not yet been admitted to candidacy, will have the period of time in which to achieve candidacy automatically extended by three months (one quarter). If the student has been admitted to candidacy, the candidacy period will be automatically extended by three months (one quarter).

### **Cumulative Leave Totals**

In the case where a Pregnancy or Parental Leave of Absence would extend the student's cumulative total beyond 8 quarters, that extension will be permitted so that the student may return to his or her program. The student will then be considered to have reached his or her maximum cumulative leave.

### **University Housing**

A student may petition to remain in housing (one to two quarters for pregnancy leaves; one quarter for parental leaves for non-birth parents) without enrolling if they are on pregnancy or parental leave and enroll for the quarter following their leave.

Questions about university housing should be directed to that office.

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## 3. Involuntary Leaves of Absence

An involuntary leave of absence can be imposed in circumstances in which a student:

- presents a substantial risk of harm to self or others or is failing to carry out substantial self-care obligations; or
- significantly disrupts the educational or other activities of the university community; or
- is unable to participate meaningfully in educational activities; or
- requires a level of care from the university community that exceeds the resources and staffing that the university can reasonably be expected to provide for the student's well-being.

Students whose circumstances warrant a review under the Involuntary Leave of Absence Policy, will be apprised, in writing, of university concerns and will be provided an opportunity to respond to concerns in writing or in person or via telephone before a review committee convened by the Dean of Student Life. Students placed on mandatory leave of absence can appeal an unfavorable decision to the Vice Provost for Student Affairs. The university can condition a student's return to registered student status on such requirements as the university deems appropriate in the individual case (such as, in the case of a leave for medical reasons, proof of treatment of an interview with a provider at Vaden or CAPS or its designee). The Dean of Students office publishes the full [Involuntary Leave of Absence](#) [2] policy.

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### Related Content:

#### Related Policies

- [GAP 3.1 Registration, Enrollment, and Academic Progress](#) [11]
- [GAP 4.2 Coterminal Degrees](#) [12]
- [GAP 5.1 Changes and Additions of Degree Programs](#) [13]
- [GAP 5.4 Program Discontinuation and Reinstatements](#) [8]
- [GAP 5.9 Pregnancy, Childbirth, Adoption, and Lactation](#) [10]
- [GAP 6.1 Graduate Tuition Categories](#) [14]

#### Related Bulletin Sections

- [Leaves of Absence \(Graduate\)](#) [15]

#### Related Information and Forms

- [Leave of Absence request form](#) [6]
- [Student policy on Involuntary Leaves of Absence](#) [2]
- [Early Return from Leave of Absence form](#) [7]
- [Request for Childbirth and Parental Accomodation](#) [16]

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**Source URL:** <https://gap.stanford.edu/handbooks/gap-handbook/chapter-5/subchapter-3/page-5-3-1>

### Links

[1] [https://stanford.service-now.com/services?id=services\\_portal\\_home](https://stanford.service-now.com/services?id=services_portal_home)

[2] <https://deanofstudents.stanford.edu/deans-leave-absence>

[3] <https://bulletin.stanford.edu/academic-policies/undergraduate-degrees-and-programs#leaves-reinstatement1>

[4] <https://registrar.stanford.edu/enrollment-change-petition-gr>

[5] <https://rde.stanford.edu/contact-us>

- [6] <https://registrar.stanford.edu/leave-absence>
- [7] <https://registrar.stanford.edu/early-return-leave-absence>
- [8] <https://gap.stanford.edu/handbooks/gap-handbook/chapter-5/subchapter-4/page-5-4-1>
- [9] <http://financialaid.stanford.edu/>
- [10] <https://gap.stanford.edu/handbooks/gap-handbook/chapter-5/subchapter-9/page-5-9-1>
- [11] <https://gap.stanford.edu/handbooks/gap-handbook/chapter-3/subchapter-1/page-3-1-1>
- [12] <https://gap.stanford.edu/handbooks/gap-handbook/chapter-4/subchapter-2/page-4-2-1>
- [13] <https://gap.stanford.edu/handbooks/gap-handbook/chapter-5/subchapter-1/page-5-1-1>
- [14] <https://gap.stanford.edu/handbooks/gap-handbook/chapter-6/subchapter-1/page-6-1-1>
- [15] <https://bulletin.stanford.edu/academic-policies/graduate-degrees#leave-reinstatement>
- [16] <https://vpgeapps.stanford.edu/app/ChildbirthAccommodation/main.asp>