



University of
Strathclyde
Glasgow



Voluntary Leave of Absence Policy

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Purpose of Policy/Procedure

The purpose of this policy is to outline the process, responsibilities and approval requirements for voluntary leave of absence requests.

This policy replaces the Voluntary Suspension Guidelines.

Scope of Policy/Procedure

Voluntary leave of absence is an authorised temporary pause of studies requested by a student.

Any new registered student or continuing student (registered or valid to register) may apply for a voluntary leave of absence.

This policy should be read in conjunction with the following:

[General Academic Regulations](#)

[Personal Circumstances](#)



Definition of Leave of Absence

1. Voluntary leave of absence is an authorised temporary pause of studies requested by a student.

Eligibility Criteria

Who Can Apply

2. Any new registered student or continuing student (registered or valid to register) may apply (exceptions listed in 3 and 4).

Who Cannot Apply

3. Retrospective voluntary leave of absence applications are not permitted for students with a study visa; requests must have a future start date.
4. Undergraduate students whose academic performance for a semester is pending a decision by the Board of Examiners will not normally be eligible to request a voluntary leave of absence for that semester. For example; a student with pending results from the December formal assessment period cannot seek voluntary leave for the preceding semester. An application may be considered in exceptional circumstances.

Application Process

Undergraduate

5. Students can apply for a voluntary leave of absence for a single semester within eight weeks from the semester start date. Applications for a full session must be submitted within eight weeks of the session start date. An application may be considered after this period in exceptional circumstances. Retrospective voluntary leave of absence is not permitted for students with a study visa.
6. Undergraduate students who apply for a voluntary leave of absence for semester 2 are not normally permitted to return in semester 1 of the following session, as they have previously completed this. They must therefore apply for a leave of absence covering both semester 2 of the current session and semester 1 of the next session.

Postgraduate Taught

7. Students can apply for a voluntary leave of absence within the first eight weeks of the relevant academic year or semester/study period. An application may be considered after this period in exceptional circumstances. Retrospective voluntary leave of absence is not permitted for students with a study visa.

Postgraduate Research

8. Students can apply for a voluntary leave of absence within eight weeks of the proposed suspension start date. An application may be considered after this period in exceptional circumstances. Voluntary leave of absence must be taken in whole months; the leave of absence will begin on the first day of the chosen month. Retrospective voluntary leave of absence is not permitted for students with a study visa.

All Students

9. Where possible, applications for voluntary leave of absence should be submitted before the period of planned leave of absence begins.
10. When applying for voluntary leave of absence, the start date can normally only be backdated for a maximum period of eight weeks.
11. Students applying for a voluntary leave of absence must explain their reason for the request and provide supporting evidence. The application must include the last date of attendance/engagement and the anticipated date of return.
12. Acceptable reasons for voluntary leave of absence include:
 - To resolve medical, financial, social or personal circumstances affecting study
 - To allow engagement in national/international sporting or other competitive opportunities
 - To allow engagement in fixed-term employment or volunteering

[Personal Circumstances Information](#)

[Personal Circumstances Evidence Guide for Students](#)

13. Students can apply for voluntary leave of absence for a maximum period of twelve months. In exceptional circumstances they may be granted one further period of suspension, also lasting up to twelve months.
14. Requests for voluntary leave of absence should be submitted by the student. The online application form and further information can be found on the university website at: [Voluntary Leave of Absence](#)
15. Students on a voluntary leave of absence are required to complete online registration.

Approval

16. All voluntary leave of absence applications require approval by the Vice Dean (or nominee) of the relevant Faculty.

Implications of Leave of Absence

Academic

17. Students on a voluntary leave of absence are not normally permitted to attend credit bearing modules or undertake any form of assessment. Research students are not normally permitted to undertake any aspect of their research.

Financial

18. It is the student's responsibility to consider any financial implications prior to applying for a voluntary leave of absence. Information on financial implications can be found on the university website at: [Funding – Voluntary Leave of Absence](#)
19. Following approval of a voluntary leave of absence, the Finance Office will calculate any refund due. Where a refund is not returned to the original payer (e.g. funding body, employer, student), it will be retained and applied to tuition fees when the student resumes their studies.
20. If applicable, notification of the last date of attendance/engagement will be shared with the relevant funding body (e.g. SAAS, SLC).

21. Students on a voluntary leave of absence may not be eligible to receive a bursary or scholarship. Postgraduate research students who receive a stipend payment should liaise with the Finance Office to understand how the voluntary leave may affect their payments. Doctoral research students who are in receipt of a stipend may be eligible to the PGR Leave Support Fund for paid leave support for maternity, paternity, shared parental, medical or carers leave.

Study Visa

22. It is the student's responsibility to consider any visa implications prior to applying for a voluntary leave of absence. Information on visa implications can be found on the university website at: [International Students – Voluntary Leave of Absence](#)

Resuming Studies

23. Students are expected to resume their studies following the approved period of voluntary leave and will continue their studies from the point they stopped.
24. The programme duration will be amended accordingly to reflect the length of the approved leave period.
25. Where a period of voluntary leave is granted on medical grounds, a student may be required to provide a 'fit to resume' certificate before recommencing their studies.
26. Students who are unable to resume their studies after the approved period of voluntary leave will normally be withdrawn from their programme.



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