



LEAVE OF ABSENCE

A student's acceptance of an offer of admission to the Graduate School of Biomedical Sciences (GSBS) implies full commitment to graduate and professional study. Such a commitment, in keeping with the Institute's policy to promote and support completion of studies, involves fulfillment of degree work in line with the curriculum described in the Graduate Catalog. Continuous enrollment between admission and the completion of degree work is thus considered the norm and is the Graduate School standard.

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 or to be approved for a leave of absence by the start of an academic quarter will result in the discontinuation of the student's program. In such circumstances, a student in good standing may request a leave of absence for up to one year, or four quarters, or be placed on an involuntary leave of absence. During the period of an approved leave, the student will not be registered.

Leave of Absence Policies

1. Voluntary Leave of Absence

Graduate students who cannot meet the requirement for continuous registration during the academic year must obtain an approved leave of absence, in advance, for the quarter term(s) they will not be registered. The leave of absence must be reviewed for approval by the chair of the Graduate Program Executive Committee and, if the student is in the United States on a foreign student visa, by the International Office. The granting of a leave of absence is at the discretion of GSBS and subject to review for approval.

GSBS may condition its approval of a petition for leave of absence on the student's meeting such requirements as GSBS 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 chosen by GSBS).

New graduate students may not take a leave of absence during their first quarter. However, new students may request a deferment from the program subject to review for approval by GSBS.

Students who are requesting a leave for their own medical reason must follow the procedure detailed in GSBS's Disability Accommodation Policy and Procedure. This means the student must first complete the Request for Personal Leave of Absence Form, have his or her health care provider complete the Documentation of Disability Form and submit both forms to the Graduate Office. The student must then follow all other steps under the School's Disability Accommodation Policy and Procedure. Students who wish to request a leave for reasons other than personal medical issues must complete and submit the Request for Personal Leave of Absence Form to the Graduate Office.

1.1 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 following consultation with the Thesis Mentor and Graduate Program Executive Committee (GPEC). 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).

1.2 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.

Failure to return as scheduled or to secure an extension of a prior leave will result in cancellation of registration privileges. Official GSBS 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 appear on the student's transcript and show the symbol 'W' (withdrawal).

Students who fail to be either enrolled or approved for a leave of absence by the start of a term are discontinued by GSBS. They are required to apply for reinstatement through the normal admissions process before they can return to the same degree program. The decision to approve or deny reinstatement is made by the Graduate Program Executive Committee (GPEC). GPEC is not obliged to approve reinstatements of students. Reinstatement decisions are made at the discretion GPEC and may be based on the applicant's academic status when last enrolled, activities while away from campus, the length of the absence, the perceived potential for successful completion of the program, and the ability of the mentor to support the student both academically and financially, as well as any other factors or considerations regarded as relevant by GPEC.

Reinstatement information following a leave of absence is available from the Graduate Office. Reinstatement applications must be submitted two weeks prior to the first day of the term for which re-enrollment is requested if the student is registering for courses.

1.2.1 International Students and Visa Status

Nonimmigrant students in F-1 status and their dependents must maintain an appropriate visa status at all times. For a student in F-1 status, all absences from their academic program must be authorized in advance by the Graduate Office and International Office. If a student remains outside the U.S. for 5 or more months, their current F-1 status will end and they will need to be issued a new I-20 for re-entry to the U.S. to resume their academic program. For further information please contact the International Office.

1.2.2 Health Insurance

Under the Affordable Care Act (ACA) provisions student benefits will continue for the first 16 weeks of an approved leave of absence. After 16 weeks of approved an approved leave of absence, student benefits will terminate and students may be eligible to continue benefit coverage under the provisions of COBRA. Students should coordinate all health insurance with the Benefits Department by contacting benefits@sbpdiscovery.org for more information.

1.2.3 Library Privileges

Contact the SBP Librarian, for access and borrowing privileges while on leave.

1.3 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 submit a written request to return (accompanied by any applicable medical documentation) to the Graduate Office by the date outlined below, depending on the quarter in which the student is requesting reenrollment. Returning graduate students should stay in communication with their mentor about their plans for reenrollment. Reinstatement after an approved leave will be subject

only to confirmation of continued professional suitability by the Graduate School, a request from the student for reinstatement, and completion of requirements, if any, stipulated by the mentor and/or GSBS as conditions for reinstatement.

Return Request Submission Deadlines:

- August 15th for return in the Fall term
- December 1st for return in the following Winter term
- February 15th for return in the Spring term
- June 1st for return in the following Summer term

The Graduate Office will discontinue the academic program for students who do not return by 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 reenroll after a leave of absence must apply for reinstatement in order to return.

Financial support cannot be guaranteed to a student returning from an approved leave. Normally, however, the Graduate Office works to identify and assure a comparable level of financial support to students returning from leave. Students on leave are urged to keep in touch with the Graduate Office and their mentor about their plans.

Students who wish not to return and choose to terminate study in GSBS should submit a Voluntary Complete Withdrawal Form to the Graduate Office. This form authorizes the Graduate Office to close the student's degree program. It must be received by the Graduate Office prior to the start of the quarter in which leave of absence is approved through. Students should clear all outstanding bills with the Graduate Office before returning to campus.

2. Involuntary Leave of Absence

An involuntary leave of absence can be imposed for any circumstance including those 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 GSBS community; or
- violates the attendance policy and/or is unable to participate meaningfully in educational activities; or
- requires a level of care from the GSBS community that exceeds the resources and staffing that the GSBS or the Institute 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 GSBS concerns and will be provided an opportunity to respond to concerns in writing, in person or via telephone before a review committee convened by the Dean. Students placed on involuntary leave of absence can appeal an unfavorable decision to the Dean. GSBS can condition a student's return to registered student status on such requirements as it 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 designed by GSBS).

2.1 Association with the Institute while on Leave

Unless expressly permitted by the Dean in writing, students on leave under this policy are not permitted to be present on campus and are not permitted to engage in any Institute-related activities, including on-campus employment.

2.2 Return from an Involuntary Leave of Absence to GSBS and the Institute

- Except in extraordinary circumstances, a student will not be permitted to return to GSBS or the Institute until the leave period specified in the Dean's letter has elapsed and the conditions for

return have been satisfied.

- A student must make a written request to the Dean to return. Except in extraordinary circumstances, the student will not be allowed to return until one full quarter has elapsed, or until the leave period in the Dean's letter has elapsed, and the conditions are met. The Dean may specify the amount of time required for the written notice in consultation with GPEC. But general timelines are:
 - August 15th for return in the Fall term
 - December 1st for return in the following Winter term
 - February 15th for return in the Spring term
 - May 1st for return in the following Summer term
- The Dean may require further evaluation of the student to determine readiness to return. The Dean may ask, confer or seek information from others to assist in making the determination.
- If the Dean is not satisfied that the student is ready to return, the Dean will notify the student in writing of the decision, including the reason for the decision.
 - A student not permitted to return may appeal the decision to GPEC via the Graduate Office.

2.3 Appeals Process

A student placed on an involuntary leave of absence has ten days from the receipt of the letter from the Dean to file an appeal of the decision with GPEC via the Graduate Office. The appeal may relate to the leave decision itself and/or the conditions imposed to remain or to return. GPEC will review based on the following questions:

- Were the proper facts and criteria brought to bear on the decision? Were improper or extraneous facts or criteria brought to bear that substantially affected the decision to the detriment of the student?
- Were there any procedural irregularities that substantially affected the outcome of the matter to the detriment of the student?
- Given the proper facts, criteria and procedures, was the decision reasonable?

GPEC may:

- Uphold the Dean's decision without any modifications;
- Modify the Dean's decision;
- Overturn the Dean's decision; or
- Return the decision to the Dean for further review.

2.4 Transcripts

Transcripts will not distinguish between a voluntary and involuntary leave of absence. Any courses in which the student was enrolled will appear on the student's transcript and show the symbol "W" (withdrawal). Students who receive all 'W's as the result of an involuntary leave of absence may be subject to academic probation upon return, although the Dean may take the leave into consideration.

2.5 Confidentiality

GSBS recognizes the sensitive and confidential nature of considering an involuntary leave of absence. GSBS's use and disclosure of such information will be guided by laws governing the privacy of student information, such as FERPA, and the limited exceptions for disclosure provided by law.

3. Withdrawal

A student who considers withdrawing from the Graduate School during the academic year should first discuss it with his or her mentor and/or the Dean of GSBS.

If the student decides to withdraw, he or she should communicate that decision in writing to both their mentor and the Graduate School Office. The student then completes the Voluntary Complete Withdrawal Form and returns it to the Graduate Studies Office for signature. All financial obligations to the Institute must be cleared.

A student withdrawing during the year who has been paid a stipend for any period of time beyond the date of withdrawal must refund the overpayment to the Institute.

4. Termination

4.1 Mentors ending research-mentor relationship with a student

Mentors may terminate a student from the group, for example, based on a student's inability to learn how to produce reliable results within a reasonable period of time and while using reasonable resources. Faculty members are strongly encouraged to consult the Dean and/or Graduate Office when they observe early signs of concerns about a student's performance or progress. Difficulties that cause the mentor to consider terminating a student should be documented by the mentor in written feedback and discussed in person in a timely way, as discussed below. This is done formally each quarter in the Student Learning Assessment. The Dean and/or Graduate Office can assist mentors and students at other times when they may have concerns.

Faculty concerns will generally be expressed in two forms, warning letters or probation letters.

- **Warning letter:** If a mentor is dissatisfied with one of his/her student's progress or efforts in research, he/she is strongly encouraged to provide both in person and in writing a warning to the student about the areas of concern and the criteria for continuing as a member of the group in good standing to assist in addressing the concerns promptly. Students may also receive a warning letter from GSBS for low grades or delays in working on program requirements. Normally, such a notice would specify a plan for monitoring the student's progress toward the desired performance or progress. If the concerns are serious enough that the student may be terminated from the group or the GSBS program, the warning letter should provide, when possible, 3 months written notice of when financial support would be terminated if the concerns are not adequately addressed. GSBS should receive a copy of any warning letters, ideally before they are sent.
- **Probation letter:** If a mentor has serious concerns and may wish to terminate a student from his/her group, he/she should consult with the Dean and/or Graduate Office about the details of proceeding to put the student on probation in the group. In addition, failure to complete the GSBS program requirements on the expected schedule can lead to probation. The minimum recommended probation is two academic quarters, during which time the student's stipend will continue, and will be typically maintained by the mentor. Probation letters must include a written notice of when financial support would be terminated if the concerns are not addressed. The Dean of GSBS must approve these letters. Students on temporary visas are advised to consult with the International Office at the start of any probation to discuss visa implications in the event of potential termination that semester.

Note that Annual Review feedback may serve the purpose of a probation or warning letter.

4.2 Eligibility to Change Mentor

If a student is in good standing, he/she remains eligible to change mentors. No more than one change of mentor per student is allowed. Changing mentor and research project during graduate studies significantly delays the training process, and is overall detrimental to the student's education. If a student is on probation in a research lab or for lack of timely progress on program requirements and a new advisor is willing to consider the student for his/her group, the student may only be accepted in the group on a probationary basis. The student remains at risk for termination at the end of the quarter following the one in which he/she changed groups if the mentor's expectations are not satisfied.

If terminated from his/her mentor's lab, but otherwise in good standing, a student may request a 1-2 month grace period to find another mentor before termination from the GSBS program. Financial support cannot be promised during this period and the student may be placed on an involuntary leave of absence at the discretion of GSBS. After this grace period, a student without a mentor cannot remain in the Ph.D. program and will be terminated.

4.3 Termination by GSBS

If a student is not making adequate and timely progress through the program requirements or on dissertation research and no exceptional circumstances have been documented, or when a student on leave of absence has not requested reinstatement, GSBS may terminate a student's degree candidacy upon recommendation of the mentor and Executive Committee. Degree candidacy terminates automatically after a second failure of the qualifying examination.

A student will not normally be terminated from the GSBS program without the warning of three months (one quarter) of probation, nor will financial support normally be terminated without three months warning, typically in a probation letter from either the advisor or GSBS. Limited exceptions with less notice may occur. For example, serious misconduct covered under GSBS or Institute policies, such as scientific misconduct, violations of academic integrity, misuse of computing resources, and workplace threats or violence, all include dismissal as a potential sanction. In addition, extended, unapproved absences may lead to termination by the department without three months warning or probation.

5. Appeals

A student may appeal academic decisions (e.g., grade, probation, termination) by a mentor, GPEC, or thesis committee in writing to the Dean via the Graduate Office. For more information, see the Student Grievance Policy procedures for graduate students.

Leave of Absence Reference Guidelines

Requesting a Leave of Absence

Process Steps		Responsibility
1.	Informs GSBS and mentor of circumstances leading to a leave of absence. Discusses alternatives.	Student
2.	Completes the <u>Request for Personal Leave of Absence Form</u> and gathers necessary signatures.	Student
3.	Reviews and either approves or denies the request.	GSBS
4.	For international students, reviews leave of absence form.	International Office
6.	If the leave is approved, adjusts the student's status	Graduate Office, HR
7.	Makes any necessary arrangements for insurance, etc.	Student

Returning from a Voluntary Leave of Absence within the Leave Period

Process Steps		Responsibility
1.	Informs GSBS and adviser of intended date for return from leave.	Student
2.	Completes and sign <u>Returning Graduate Student Request Form</u> and mails or delivers to the Graduate Office along with any required supporting documentation.	Student
3.	Reviews the return request. If approved, reinstates the student's status and informs student of return date. If unapproved, informs student of outcome.	Graduate Office, HR
4.	Makes any necessary arrangements for, insurance, etc.	Student

Involuntary Leave of Absence

Process Steps		Responsibility
1.	Notifies the Graduate Office or Dean about any concerns that might lead to an involuntary leave of absence.	Mentor, Other
2.	Determines whether or not to proceed with an involuntary leave of absence.	GPEC
3.	Meets with the student and notifies the student that an involuntary leave is being enforced. Informs student that he/she can prepare a written statement of appeal.	Dean or Associate Dean of Student Affairs
4.	If the student wishes to appeal a decision to be placed on involuntary leave of absence, files an appeal to the Graduate Program Executive Committee via the Graduate Office within ten days. Involuntary Leave of Absence will remain in effect while appeal is pursued.	Student
6.	Convenes an advisory board.	Dean
7.	Reviews appropriate materials and formulates recommendation.	Advisory Board
8.	Receives recommendation from the advisory board. Prepares initial determination and meets with student to inform of outcome. If a leave is imposed, the written decision must address: a) a time-frame when the student could be eligible to return; and b) the conditions the student will need to satisfy to be eligible for return.	Dean
9.	Provides requirements to return to academic program or resigns	Student