

WITHDRAWALS AND LEAVES OF ABSENCE

Leaves of Absence

Under compelling circumstances beyond the student's control, a graduate student may request that the department petition the Graduate School with the rationale for granting a leave of absence. If granted by the Graduate School, a leave of absence will cover one or more upcoming semesters rather than any prior semester(s). A leave of absence *does not* lengthen the time limit with the exception of approved military leave of absence. When a student returns from a leave of absence, the Graduate School must be notified and will work with the department and student to determine the number of semesters remaining on the time limit and the degree requirements that remain.

Continuous Doctoral Enrollment Leave

A Leave of Absence is a temporary cessation of study from UA's requirement for 699 continuous doctoral enrollment. Students do not need to request a leave of absence for Summer, as only Fall and Spring 699 continuous doctoral enrollment is required.

No formal Leave of Absence permission is required for students in the coursework phase of their degree programs. It is recommended that students confer with their advisor and/or departmental Graduate Program Director before choosing to interrupt their graduate studies. It is also recommended that students confer with any other relevant offices (e.g., Financial Aid, Health Insurance, Graduate Assistantship, Capstone International) regarding the impact of any leave on their financial, academic, work-related, immigration, and/or personal circumstances.

Exceptions to the continuous doctoral research enrollment requirement are exceedingly rare and will be considered only for approved medical reasons, a documented disability, family caregiving, military duty, or other unusual and compelling circumstances, as outlined below. A Leave of Absence cannot be requested for reasons of financial exigency.

Students requesting a Leave of Absence from the continuous doctoral enrollment requirement should understand that:

- Since currency in the field is essential at the doctoral level, a doctoral Leave of Absence does not extend the total number of years allowed for completion of a doctoral degree.
- Students on a doctoral Leave of Absence do not have access to university resources that are limited to enrolled students, such as library resources, laboratories, or other physical or electronic types of access.
- Students on a doctoral Leave of Absence may not seek research guidance from UA faculty during the Leave of Absence. This includes the submission of manuscript drafts and substantive conversations about the doctoral research.
- Students on a doctoral Leave of Absence, should not continue to gather data, write drafts, or otherwise try to move the dissertation project toward completion, since any such work might have to be redone upon reinitiating the official advising relationship.
- Resumption of funding (e.g., a graduate assistantship) is not guaranteed once a student returns from a Leave of Absence.

Process for Requesting Different Types of Leave of Absence

A. Medical Leave of Absence

If students experience a medical emergency that requires them to suspend their doctoral research during a semester in which they are currently enrolled, they should file an application for a Medical

Withdrawal. If the medical issue is not resolved by the start of the subsequent Fall/Spring semester, the student may request a Medical Leave of Absence. Medical Leave requests will be reviewed on a case-by-case basis by the Graduate School.

B. Documented Disability Leave of Absence

If students have a documented disability that requires them to suspend their doctoral research, they should contact the Office of Disability Services (ODS) to request evaluation for a Leave of Absence. Students must submit relevant documents related to their disability as requested by ODS. ODS will review the student request and make a recommendation to approve or deny. If ODS makes a recommendation to approve the request, ODS will notify the dissertation chair.

The Leave of Absence form must be initiated by the student's dissertation chair, with ODS approval attached, and signed by the departmental Graduate Program Director or department chair. Leave requests will be reviewed on a case-by-case basis by the Graduate School.

C. Family Caregiving Leave of Absence

Family caregiving is defined as either becoming a parent, or care of an immediate family member (spouse, domestic partner, child, or parent) with a serious health condition. The Leave of Absence form found in myBama must be initiated by the student's dissertation chair and signed by the departmental Graduate Program Director or department chair. Leave requests will be reviewed on a case-by-case basis by the Graduate School.

D. Military Leave of Absence

A student may request a leave of absence to fulfill a U.S. military obligation. The Leave of Absence form found in myBama must be initiated by the student's dissertation chair, with military documentation attached, and signed by the departmental Graduate Program Director or department chair. The Graduate School follows federal policy for doctoral students seeking leave of absence for military duty. Students seeking military leave of absence should review the Higher Education Opportunity Act of 2008 (Section 484C of the HEA) and implementing regulations in 34 CFR Section 668.18. After submission of the Leave of Absence form, students seeking military leave of absence should make an appointment with the Graduate Registrar to discuss their leave of absence and plan for return to graduate studies.

Submission Deadline

A Request for Leave of Absence form must be submitted before the end of the semester to which it applies. A Leave of Absence will not be granted retroactively after the end of a semester. Students are strongly advised to submit their Request for Leave of Absence in advance since approval is not guaranteed. Students who submit a Leave of Absence form for a semester in which they are currently enrolled are subject to the tuition refund policy outlined on the Student Account Services website. If the deadline to withdraw has passed and the leave of absence is approved, a grade of "W" shall be issued.

Requesting Additional Leave of Absence

A request for Leave of Absence for Medical, Disability, or Family Caregiving reasons is approved for one semester. To request an additional semester of leave, a student must follow all steps outlined above. Military Leave of Absence is granted for the full service period indicated on provided military documents.

Returning from a Leave of Absence

When a student returns from a Leave of Absence, the student will notify their dissertation advisor and Graduate Program Director. In turn, the Graduate Program Director will notify the Graduate School Registrar so matriculation can be reactivated.

A student returning from a Leave of Absence must enroll for the Fall or Spring semester immediately following the leave. Following an approved Leave of Absence, a student who does not request a new leave or register for the subsequent Fall or Spring term by the Add Course deadline will be considered to have withdrawn and will be considered inactive at the end of the term that follows the leave. If a student fails to register for three years, the student will need to reapply to the program, and previous coursework may be out of date.

Retroactive Enrollment and Tuition Charges

Students should be aware that, due to the Continuous Dissertation Enrollment requirement outlined in the Graduate Catalog, students who fail to enroll in (Fall/Spring) dissertation hours each semester, and who do not have an approved Leave of Absence as outlined above, will be required to retroactively enroll in the required dissertation hours, and pay any resulting tuition charge, before they can present their dissertation for defense and/or receive their degrees. Leaves of Absence cannot be requested retroactively.

Reactivation/Readmission

Students in 'Inactive' status from failure to register for one or multiple semesters, may be eligible for reactivation but must first contact the Graduate School. However, If a student fails to register for three consecutive years, the student must reapply for admission. If readmission is granted, previous credit earned may be out of date and therefore not applicable toward a degree. Please see the "Time Limits" section for each degree under Degree Requirements in this catalog.

Withdrawal from a Course

A graduate student who desires to withdraw from a course may do so, with the approval of the student's advisor or department head, during the period allowed for dropping a class. It is the student's responsibility to review the UA Academic Calendar for the specific date by which one may drop a course.

No notation of courses attempted will be made on the permanent record of a student who withdraws from the university by the last day to add classes in a particular semester. After that, the withdrawal from a course will be noted on the student's permanent record. It is the student's responsibility to consult the Academic Calendar for the specific date by which one may withdraw without receiving a grade notation. From the end of that period until the end of the tenth week of a regular semester or the equivalent in a five-week summer session or three-week Interim session, a student may withdraw from a course, and a grade of "W" will be assigned. Graduate students are not permitted to drop a course after the tenth week.

In extraordinary circumstances beyond the student's control, a student may petition the department chair to drop a course after the tenth week of class. If the department chair agrees that there are extraordinary circumstances and supports the petition, it is forwarded to the college dean. If the college dean supports the petition, it is sent to the Graduate School for approval. After the tenth week, the student's academic status at the time of the withdrawal will be noted on the record ("W" for courses passing, "F" for courses failing).

Withdrawal from a course may affect several elements linked to registration and class loads, including (but not limited to) graduate fellowships, assistantships, tuition awards, financial aid, withholding taxes, etc. Before dropping a course, the student should contact all aspects of enrollment that may be affected.

Withdrawal from All Courses (Withdrawal from the Semester)

A graduate student may withdraw from all courses in the semester, either for non-medical or medical reasons, as long as this is done prior to the last day of classes. The first thing a student considering withdrawal should do is to consult with his or her academic advisor.

It is the student's responsibility to initiate a withdrawal through myBama and provide the information necessary to complete the withdrawal process. Academic Bankruptcy (described in the Undergraduate Catalog) is not available to graduate students.

Please visit this page for more information about the financial effects of withdrawing, including information on how federal financial aid, loans, and scholarships may be affected.