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# Graduate Student Leave of Absence

## Enrollment Policy

Graduate students are required to maintain an active status through continuous enrollment from the time of first enrollment until graduation. Therefore, graduate students must register for a minimum of 1 graduate credit hour each semester (excluding summer) until graduation [doctoral students that have begun to register for dissertation hours (course 600) must register for a minimum of 3 hours during all semesters, including summer] OR the student can submit a Leave of Absence (LOA) form requesting a pre-approved break in enrollment (up to two years).

*The minimum enrollment for international students may be different, and international students must check with the Center for International Education (CIE) to determine the minimum enrollment required to maintain satisfactory enrollment requirements attached to their specific visa.*

## Leave of Absence (LOA) Policy

A Leave of Absence (LOA) is a temporary cessation of study and may be granted for up to two (2) years for medical reasons and other emergencies. A Leave of Absence (LOA) allows graduate students in good academic standing to postpone their studies for a definite period of time, normally not to exceed two (2) years in the event of unavoidable circumstances (e.g., active military duty, etc.). Supporting documentation must be submitted with the LOA form. A letter of support from the Director of Graduate Studies/ Department Head may be included. All LOAs are reviewed and granted on a case by case basis. Financial hardship is not an approved LOA.

A graduate student who wishes to request a LOA will submit to the Graduate School a completed Leave of Absence form which requires the endorsement of the student's Department Head and Director of Graduate Studies. The LOA form is first approved at the department and then submitted to the Graduate School for approval. **An official Leave of Absence begins only after the student receives a copy of the request with the Graduate Dean's signature confirming final approval of the Leave of Absence.**

Application for a Leave of Absence must be received by the Graduate School before the last day of classes for the semester for which the LOA is requested. **A leave of absence will not be granted retroactively after the end of the semester.**

An approved Leave of Absence stands in lieu of registering for the minimum of 1 credit hour (or 3 hours for PhD students registering for course 600) for each semester for which the leave of absence is granted. During a leave of absence, students may not use UTK facilities, resources, or services designed or intended only for enrolled students; receive a graduate assistantship, fellowship, or financial aid from the University, or take any UTK courses.

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An approved leave of absence does extend the allotted time limit toward degree completion. The term(s) and/or year(s) of an approved Leave of Absence (LOA) will not be counted toward time to degree and milestone deadlines such as Admission to Candidacy.

Students receiving funding of any kind should be aware of certain consequences of a Leave of Absence. Of course, a student on leave may not hold a Graduate Assistantship. 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 a semester or more. This results in the beginning of the Federal Stafford Loan grace period and/or the starting of repayment of the Federal Supplemental Loan for Students. Additionally, upon returning to the University of Tennessee, Knoxville, new loan applications must be submitted and an in-school deferment form must be filed.

## Instructions

- » Confer with your Department Head and/or Director of Graduate Studies and relevant offices (e.g. Financial Aid, CIE, Graduate Assistant employment) regarding the impact of a LOA on your financial, academic, work-related, and personal circumstances; and
- » Confer with your Department Head and/or Director of Graduate Studies about what, if any, conditions may be placed on your reinstatement after the LOA
- » If after the above review and consultation, you choose to request a LOA,
  1. Complete the Leave of Absence form (include supporting documentation)
  2. Obtain signatures of your Department Head and the Director of Graduate Studies
  3. Submit signed form to the Graduate School for approval.

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## Important Notes

- » **When to submit the request:** You should submit the LOA form to the Graduate School as soon as possible but, the form must be received before the last day of classes for the semester for which the LOA is requested. **A leave of absence will not be granted retroactively after the end of a semester.**
- » **Verify college approval:** Submitting the LOA form to your college does not guarantee that the request will be approved. You should confirm that your college approved your LOA and verify the approved LOA start and return dates.
- » **Cancelling registrations:** An approved LOA does NOT automatically cancel any registrations. If you are enrolled for the term(s) included in the approved LOA, you must cancel your registration(s) and withdraw from UTK. **Failure to withdraw from MyUTK will result in billing and assigned grades for the term(s).**
- » **Financial support** (from the University): If you receive financial aid from the University, you should talk with the office giving your support (department, graduate assistantship, Financial Aid, Graduate School Fellowship Office) to learn about any effect a leave of absence might have.
- » **Financial support** (from private funding sources): If you receive funding from a source outside the University, you should talk with that agency to learn about any effect a leave of absence might have.
- » **International student:** You must contact CIE to determine what, if any, impact the LOA will have regarding your legal status.
- » **Dual program student:** If you are a dual program student, you must request a LOA from each program and will need to request reinstatement from each program/department.
- » **Reinstatement after LOA:** If you obtain an approved LOA, you are eligible for reinstatement provided you:
  1. Apply for reinstatement via the Reinstatement Form;
  2. Apply for reinstatement to the same major and degree you requested the LOA from,
  3. Request for reinstatement for the term/year indicated on the approved LOA form.
- » **Notification:** An email indicating the decision will be sent to the student and those that signed. The official LOA begins only after the approval of the Dean of the Graduate School.

# Graduate Student Leave of Absence (LOA) Request

**Name:** \_\_\_\_\_ **Student ID #:** \_\_\_\_\_  
*Last First Middle*

**Current Cell Phone:** \_\_\_\_\_ **Email:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Major:** \_\_\_\_\_ **Degree:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Campus (Choose One):**  Knoxville (on-campus)  Distance Education (online only)  Nashville  UTSI

**Proposed Term and Year for LOA to Begin:** \_\_\_\_\_ **Currently Enrolled?** Yes  No

*If currently enrolled and LOA is approved, you must go to MyUTK and withdraw from your classes and UTK.*

**Reason for Leave of Absence:**

**Proposed Term and Year of Return from LOA:** \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_  
*Student Signature* *Date*

\_\_\_\_\_  
*Department Head Printed Name* *Department Head Signature* *Date*

\_\_\_\_\_  
*Director of Graduate Studies Printed Name* *Director of Graduate Studies Signature* *Date*

**To be completed by the Graduate School**

\_\_\_\_\_  
*Dean of the Graduate School Signature*  Approved  Denied \_\_\_\_\_  
*Date*