

80.20.011 LEAVE OF ABSENCE POLICY

Leave of Absence Policy**PURPOSE**

All students in the St. Jude Children's Research Hospital Graduate School of Biomedical Sciences ("Graduate School") that maintain Satisfactory Academic Progress, per the Satisfactory Academic Progress Policy may request a leave of absence from the graduate school for any of several reasons. This policy describes the different categories of leave and procedures associated with each.

SCOPE

The policy applies to all St. Jude Children's Research Hospital Graduate School of Biomedical Sciences students that maintain Satisfactory Academic Progress. Any reference to paid leave and funding for medical insurance only applies to those students who receive stipends or fellowships and medical insurance from the Graduate School.

STAKEHOLDERS AFFECTED BY THIS POLICY

Stakeholders affected by this policy include all Graduate School students, as well as staff and faculty involved in the leave of absence process.

POLICY

1.1 A leave of absence (LOA) is an approved temporary interruption of studies.

1.2 Requests for LOA will be reviewed and approved on a case-by-case basis by the Graduate School.

1.3 The length of time for LOA, in any combination, cannot exceed 1 year (52 weeks) total for the entire duration of the student's enrollment in the Graduate School without prior approval by the Dean of the Graduate School.

1.4 While on approved leave, the student's enrollment status is "Leave of absence (LOA)"; however, the student is considered actively enrolled to their program. Tuition will be assessed accordingly.

1.5 Funding for medical insurance will be continued without interruption as long as the student remains eligible for the medical plan according to the Plan document.

1.6 The stipend or fellowship will be paid under the terms defined per LOA category.

1.7 If the student is funded by an F30 or an F31 NIH grant, they must also follow NIH policy on (<https://grants.nih.gov/grants/guide/notice-files/NOT-OD-18-154.html>). If a student is funded by any other grant, they must also follow the relevant leave of absence policies for that grant.

1.8 The Graduate School reserves the right to approve or deny all LOA requests in accordance with applicable state, federal and other regulatory agencies.

1.9 The categories of LOA and their specific details are as follows:

1.10 Medical Leave

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1.10.1 A student may request up to 26 weeks (one semester) of continuous leave for a medical LOA if the student suffers from a medical condition or issue. Students will be approved for a leave of absence extending beyond 26 weeks if such absence is medically necessary. During this period, the student will receive up to 2 weeks paid leave. The Accommodations Policy may be followed as needed.

1.11 Parental Leave

1.11.1 A student may request up to 8 weeks of continuous paid leave for a parental LOA under one of the following four categories:

- A student who is a birth parent.
- A student who is a non-birth parent with significant responsibility for the care of the newborn child(ren); this includes a non-birth parent caring for a child born by surrogacy.
- A student who adopts or fosters a child under the age of 18 (or a child under the age of 23 if the child is mentally or physically disabled).
- A student who has a child under the age of 18 (or a child under the age of 23 if the child is mentally or physically disabled) placed with them pursuant to a court order.

1.11.2 Approved paid parental leave may be taken at any time during the twelve (12) month period following the birth or adoption of the child or placement of a child pursuant to a court order.

1.11.3 Students who need or wish to take a longer period of leave may request a medical leave or personal leave depending on the reason.

1.12 Personal Leave

1.12.1 A student may request up to 26 weeks (one semester) of continuous leave for a personal LOA for a reason not otherwise covered, for example, to attend to an illness in the family. During this period, the student will receive up to 2 weeks paid leave.

1.13 Bereavement Leave

1.13.1 Notify the Senior Associate Dean of Student and Faculty Affairs as soon as possible.

1.13.2 Bereavement leave is available within six (6) months of the date of death.

1.13.3 Three (3) days are available in the event of the death of an "immediate" family member, such as spouse, mother, father, sister, brother, step-parent, legal guardian, grandparent, grandchild, child (including legally adopted child, stepchild), mother-in-law, father-in-law.

1.13.4 One (1) bereavement day is available in the event of the death of an "other" family member, such as brother-in-law, sister-in-law, daughter-in-law, son-in-law.

1.14 Extended Leave

1.14.1 In exceptional circumstances, a student may request an extended LOA if additional time is required after exhausting the terms of one of the above listed approved LOAs. The length of time, in any combination, cannot

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exceed 1 year (52 weeks) total for the entire duration of the student's enrollment in the Graduate School, except to the extent required by law.

1.15 Military Leave

1.15.1 For leave of absence for military service, students should reference the Military Leave of Absence Policy for more information and instructions on how to request a military leave of absence.

PROCEDURE

2.1 LOA requests must first be discussed with the dissertation/thesis advisor and the Associate Dean of the Program prior to submission of the formal request to the Senior Associate Dean of Student and Faculty Affairs.

2.2 All LOAs must formally be requested using the Graduate School "Leave of Absence Request Form" and supporting documentation provided to the Senior Associate Dean of Student and Faculty Affairs at least thirty (30) days prior to the beginning of the anticipated leave. Students who cannot foresee the need for leave 30 days in advance must give as much notice as possible. Students in emergency situations or in a state of diminished capacity will be placed on a leave and applicable paperwork collected retroactively.

2.3 The St. Jude Human Resources department may be contacted by the Senior Associate Dean of Student and Faculty Affairs for support in the leave process as needed.

2.4 Students are required to respond to requests for documentation and other information in a timely manner. Failure to respond to repeated requests for information will be seen as a failure to engage in the process and may cause the request for a leave to be denied. This includes requests during the leave, including intent to return or intent to apply for additional applicable leaves.

2.5 LOA will not be considered to have been granted until approved in writing by the Senior Associate Dean of Student and Faculty Affairs and signed off by the Dean.

2.6 Upon approval of the LOA, the Senior Associate Dean of Student and Faculty Affairs will confirm the leave with the student, the student's advisor, and the Associate Dean of the enrolled program and will also notify the Registrar and St. Jude HR Benefits of the time period for which the leave has been granted. The documents will be maintained by the Registrar and records specifically related to medical LOA will be maintained by the St. Jude ADA Coordinator.

2.7 In emergency situations or cases where students have been in a state of diminished capacity, temporary approval may be granted at the discretion of the Dean while paperwork is being collected; temporary approval will only cover the time period granted for submitting paperwork and the Graduate School's completion of the formal approval/disapproval process.

2.8 Students on LOA will receive limited access to their St. Jude accounts and systems, and must request support from the Graduate School staff, as needed.

2.9 Students should contact the Associate Dean(s) of their program and the Registrar 14 days prior to their planned return to the Graduate School to request reinstatement. If the LOA request was approved with stipulations for reinstatement, the student must submit in writing the request for reinstatement outlining how they have met each of the stipulations.

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2.10 It is the student's responsibility to work directly with their dissertation/thesis advisor and Associate Dean of the program to determine the arrangements for course completion and continuation of research activities following the leave period.

2.11 If a student does not return at the end of the approved leave or fails to make the appropriate arrangements for course completion or continuation of research activities following the leave, the student will be withdrawn from the program and must reapply through the entering application process. Exceptions to this policy require the approval of the Dean. Withdrawal from active student status will impact eligibility of medical and other health insurances and stipend funding.

2.12 If the LOA severely impacts the mandatory curriculum of the relevant program as determined by the Associate Dean, the student will be required to join the next cohort.

2.13 Additional Leave of Absence Considerations

2.13.1 Time taken on an approved LOA will not be included in the time-to-degree calculation for degree completion and does not require the student to make degree progress during the leave period.

2.13.2 A LOA does not affect the student's obligation to comply with other Graduate School policies or the sanctions to which the student may be subject for violation of any such policies. Pending or related student conduct or academic proceedings may continue even when a student is on a LOA.

2.13.3 All information provided to the Graduate School relating to a LOA will be handled confidentially and disclosed only in accordance with Graduate School policies and in compliance with state and federal laws.

Refunds of tuition and fees while a student is on an approved LOA will be handled in accordance with the Refunds Policy.

DEFINITIONS

N/A

REFERENCE DOCUMENTS

- Refunds Policy
- Military Service Leave of Absence Policy
- Accommodation Policy
- Satisfactory Academic Progress Policy
- Withdrawal Policy

FORMS AND OTHER DOCUMENTS

N/A

POLICY DETAILS

Policy Type	Policy Revision
Policy Number	80.20.011

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Policy Category	Academic Policy
Policy Sponsor	Steven Varga
Approval Authority	Curriculum Committee
Policy Effective Date	July 1, 2023
Policy Owner (Contact Info)	Steven Varga (steven.varga@stjude.org)
Policy Alternate	Stacey Schultz-Cherry
Last Review Date	December 11, 2025
Next Scheduled Review Date	By June 1, 2026

REVISION HISTORY

V1.0 – May 23, 2023

V2.0 – August 2, 2024

V3.0 – December 11, 2025

APPROVALS

Curriculum Committee – Approved on May 23, 2023

Curriculum Committee – Approved on August 2, 2024

Curriculum Committee – Approved on December 11, 2025