

# Leave of Absence (Intermission) Policy

## Section 1 - Background and Purpose

(1) This Policy provides for coursework students to take a temporary Leave of Absence from their course with the permission of the University.

## Section 2 - Scope

(2) Applies to:

- a. all campuses;
- b. all undergraduate and postgraduate coursework programs;
- c. all undergraduate and postgraduate coursework students;
- d. all staff involved in the processing of applications for intermission.

(3) Enquiries involving possible suspension of research and higher degree studies should be made directly to the Research Students Unit.

## Section 3 - Policy Statement

(4) A Leave of Absence is a formal agreement between the University and an individual student for a specific course, for a defined period of time. All undergraduate and postgraduate coursework students may apply for Leave of Absence from the course in which they are enrolled.

(5) Each application will be considered on its merits according to the Procedures and the requirements of individual courses. It may not be possible to approve Leave of Absence for courses which have external registration requirements.

(6) International students may intermit (take Leave of Absence) only:

- a. on the grounds of compassionate or compelling circumstances, as explained in the Leave of Absence (Intermission) Procedures; or
- b. where Leave of Absence is required as an academic progress intervention.

(7) The course offerings of the University are under continual review. Students applying for Leave of Absence should take into consideration that a course from which they take leave may be revised or discontinued, or may cease to be accredited, during their period of absence. In these circumstances, every attempt will be made to provide the original program. However, where this is not possible, the University reserves the right to offer the student a place in an equivalent or near-equivalent course instead of the place in the specific course from which leave was taken.

# Section 4 - Procedures

## Preamble

(8) Leave of Absence may be granted in all undergraduate and postgraduate coursework programs subject to the conditions set out in these Procedures.

## General

(9) Students who believe they may need to apply for Leave of Absence should first discuss their circumstances with the coordinator of their course or with staff in the relevant College Office or regional Office.

(10) International students who decide to apply for a Leave of Absence must also consult with La Trobe International to discuss whether they are entitled to it under the [National Code 2018](#) and to consider the possible impact on their student visa. The University must report any period of Leave of Absence (Intermission) to DHA.

(11) Students must request a Leave of Absence even if they plan to be away from the University for only one Compulsory Teaching Period. Failure to apply for Leave of Absence for the Compulsory Teaching Period will result in the student's enrolment status changing to 'AWOL' (absent without leave) after the applicable Census Date. Students with an AWOL status must apply for readmission to their course.

(12) Students who do not intend to enrol during a Non-Compulsory Teaching Period are not required to seek Leave of Absence for the Non-Compulsory Teaching Period.

## Part A - Applying for Intermission

(13) All applications for Leave of Absence must be lodged via the process, and on the form, prescribed by the University from time to time. The application must include:

- a. the student's name and ID number;
- b. the course from which Leave of Absence is being sought;
- c. the period of time for which the leave is sought;
- d. the reason for which the leave is being sought.

(14) Domestic students normally are not required to submit supporting documentation. International students, however, are required by La Trobe International to provide documentary evidence of the reason for their application. Copies of this documentary evidence may be retained on the student's central file.

(15) All students should keep a copy of their application.

(16) All applications will be receipted. Students will be notified of the outcome of their application, normally within ten (10) working days from the date of the decision. Where the application is not approved, the student will be so advised; where it is approved, the approval notification will state clearly the course from which Leave of Absence has been granted and the period for which it has been awarded.

## Part B - Retrospective Applications

(17) Leave of Absence will not be approved retrospectively other than in exceptional circumstances (i.e. where a student was completely incapacitated for the period when they were away from the University).

## Part C - Attending Classes while Intermission Pending

(18) Students who have applied for Leave of Absence should continue to attend classes while awaiting the decision on their application.

## Part D - Approval of Leave of Absence

(19) The authority to approve Leave of Absence rests with colleges. In the case of international students, La Trobe International also must approve the application for Leave of Absence.

## Part E - Duration of Leave of Absence

(20) The University will not normally approve a Leave of Absence that begins and ends during the same Teaching Period.

(21) A first application for Leave of Absence normally may be granted for up to a year's duration. Students may apply to extend the Leave of Absence if compassionate or compelling circumstances continue to impede their ability to pursue their course.

(22) Requests for multiple Leaves of Absence over several Compulsory Teaching Periods or years will be considered on an individual basis.

(23) Normally a Leave of Absence will not be granted if it will result in the student exceeding the maximum length of time allowed for completion of their course (i.e. twice the normal full-time duration of the course plus one year).

(24) Honours students may apply for Leave of Absence but normally must complete within two years of initially enrolling in the Honours program.

## Part F - Intermission and Academic Progress Monitoring and Intervention

(25) Course coordinators and academic progress officers should consider Leave of Absence one of the primary academic progress intervention tools. Depending on circumstances, allowing or requiring a student to take Leave of Absence may be a more appropriate and helpful course of action than excluding the student, especially in cases where academic rehabilitation is required.

(26) Where a college is contemplating Leave of Absence as an academic progress intervention for an international student, the college must liaise with La Trobe International to enable LTI to comply with the requirements of the [National Code 2018](#).

## Part G - Results Associated with Leave of Absence

(27) If a student's application for Leave of Absence is approved on or before the Census Date for the subject(s) being undertaken (i.e. before one-third of the Teaching Period has elapsed), the subject enrolment(s) will be discontinued without penalty.

(28) After one-third of the Teaching Period has elapsed, results will be given as follows:

- a. WD (discontinued studies with financial penalty, not to count as fail), for subjects discontinued up to and including two-thirds of the way through the Teaching Period; or
- b. KN (discontinued studies with financial penalty, to count as fail), for subjects discontinued after two-thirds of the subject has been taught.

## Part H - Grounds for Leave of Absence

(29) For international students, the only acceptable grounds for Leave of Absence are compassionate and compelling circumstances which are generally beyond the control of the student and which have an impact upon the student's course progress or wellbeing. These could include, but are not limited to, the following:

- a. serious illness or injury, where a medical certificate states that the student was, is or will be unable to attend classes;
- b. death of close family members such as parents or grandparents;
- c. major political upheaval or natural disaster in the home country requiring emergency travel when this has impacted on the student's studies;
- d. a traumatic experience which could include:
  - i. involvement in, or witnessing of, a serious accident;
  - ii. witnessing or being the victim of a serious crime; when this has impacted on the student;
- e. inability of the University to offer a prerequisite unit; or
- f. delay in an international student's ability to begin studying on the course commencement date due to a delay in receiving a student visa.

(30) As these are only examples of what may be considered compassionate or compelling circumstances, international students intending to apply for Leave of Absence should consult La Trobe International. They normally will be required to provide documentary evidence to support their application, and copies of the documents will be kept in the applicant's file.

(31) For domestic students, Leave of Absence may be granted not only for reasons listed above for international students, but also for other reasons such as:

- a. financial difficulties;
- b. employment commitments;
- c. change of living arrangements;
- d. loss of interest in the course of enrolment;
- e. academic difficulties;
- f. enrolment at another institution;
- g. travel commitments.

## Part I - Leave of Absence and Financial Liabilities

(32) Fee, HECS-HELP or FEE-HELP liability is dependant upon the date on which the student receives approval from the college to take Leave of Absence:

- a. students approved for Leave of Absence will not be liable to pay for subjects that have Census dates after the leave of absence approval date;
- b. students who retain an active enrolment for any length of time after the relevant census date will remain liable to pay for the subjects they have enrolled in, even if they are no longer attending classes.

(33) All outstanding monies owed to the University, including student loans, become due and payable from the date of approval of the application for Leave of Absence.

(34) Students may be eligible for a remission of debt or refund of fees if certain criteria are met. Refer to the Remission of Debt and Re-crediting of Student Learning Entitlement Policy and to the Application for Refund form.

## Part J - Status and Entitlements While on Leave of Absence

(35) Students are not deemed to be students of the University while they are on Leave of Absence. They are required to return their La Trobe University identification card at the time they apply for Leave of Absence. The card is returned if the application is not approved.

(36) The University does not receive funding for students on Leave of Absence. Thus students on Leave of Absence do not have access to all facilities or services of the University that are available only to enrolled students. However, they will retain access to:

- a. StudentOnLine, which they require to keep their contact details up to date and to re-enrol; and
- b. their student email account, through which the University will maintain contact with them.

## Part K - Re-enrolment of Students on Leave of Absence

(37) The University will contact students on Leave of Absence with re-enrolment details when it is nearing the time for them to re-enrol in their course. In most cases, the students will be able to re-enrol using StudentOnLine in the same manner as any other re-enrolling student.

(38) Students on Leave of Absence who fail to re-enrol by the due date set by their college of enrolment may forfeit their place in the next academic period and their course attempt will lapse. Information about re-enrolment requirements is available from the Enrolment website.

## Part L - Unsuccessful Outcomes

(39) As Leave of Absence is a privilege, not a right, there is no appeal against an unsuccessful outcome. The University Ombudsman is able to provide advice and assistance in resolving complaints about process.

## Section 5 - Definitions

(40) For the purpose of this Policy and Procedure:

- a. census date: the day on which a student becomes liable for fees for a subject, corresponding to the date one-third through the Teaching Period. If a student withdraws from a subject after its Census Date, the student must still pay for the subject. The Census Date for each subject is shown on the student's Statement of Account;
- b. compulsory Teaching Period: Semester One and/or Semester Two;
- c. DHA: Department of Home Affairs;
- d. intermission: see Leave of Absence;
- e. Leave of Absence: a temporary and voluntary suspension of studies in a specific course requested by a student and approved by the University for a fixed period of time;
- f. National Code: National Code of Practice for Registration Authorities and Providers of Education and Training to Overseas Students 2018;
- g. non-compulsory Teaching Period: any Teaching Period other than Semester One or Semester Two (e.g. Summer Semester, Winter Semester);
- h. Teaching Period: the time between the commencement of teaching and the conclusion of teaching in any given subject.

## Section 6 - Stakeholders

Responsibility for implementation -

Responsibility for monitoring implementation and compliance - Education Committee.

## Status and Details

<b>Status</b>	Current
<b>Effective Date</b>	15th November 2016
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