



UNIVERSITY COLLEGE DUBLIN

Leave of Absence Academic Policy

Version 1.7 – 13.05.2011

1. Context

Within its Academic Regulations¹, UCD recognises that a student may need to take a leave of absence from their programme. This policy document is intended to contribute to a supportive, high-quality and positive teaching, learning and research environment for students. It sets down UCD's commitment to support students who require a leave of absence in order that they may return to successfully complete their programme.

The University recognises that granting **leave of absence is one of a range of options available to Programme Boards**² to support students who need time off for personal, medical or academic reasons.

There are a variety of support systems within UCD where a student should seek further advice and assistance before making an application for a leave of absence. An up-to-date list of these support systems can be accessed at <http://www.ucd.ie/students/studentssupport.html>.

2. Definitions

2.1 Leave of absence

A leave of absence is defined as an extended period of time away from the programme of study. This is requested by the student and approved by the relevant Programme Board (including Graduate Boards).

The purpose of a leave of absence is to enable and facilitate a student to take an approved and specified period of time off before returning and completing the programme.

2.2 Retrospective leave of absence

Retrospective leave of absence is defined as an extended period of time away from the programme of study, where that period of time has passed.

Retrospective leave of absence is not normally permitted. However, it may be granted by a Programme Board where it is satisfied that

- a. the student has extenuating circumstances,
- b. there is no other available solution for the student given their circumstances, and
- c. the student has not normally been engaged in any programme activity.³

¹ General Regulation 2.5: Leave of Absence

² 'Programme Board(s)' is used throughout this policy document to refer to the relevant governing board of a programme.

³ A retrospective leave of absence application is not a replacement for an extenuating circumstances application: where there has been student programme activity an extenuating circumstances application would seem most appropriate. Retrospective leave of absence is an additional option that may be considered by the Programme Board where circumstances warrant it. In making an extenuating circumstances application, students on undergraduate and graduate taught programmes should refer to the *Policy on Extenuating Circumstances* (http://www.ucd.ie/registry/academicsecretariat/pol_ext_circum.pdf) and students on graduate research programmes should refer to the *Policy on Theses in Graduate Research Programmes* (http://www.ucd.ie/registry/academicsecretariat/pol_grad_research_theses.pdf).

3. Purpose

The purpose of the *Leave of Absence Academic Policy* is to facilitate Programme Boards to support students who may require a leave of absence from their programme in order that they may return to complete their programme. **It is one of a range of programme supports available where a student requires a specified period of time off for a variety of personal, medical or academic reasons.** The responsibility for deciding the most appropriate course of action for a student in such cases lies with the Programme Board.

4. Scope

The *Leave of Absence Academic Policy* relates to all undergraduate and graduate students who may require a leave of absence from their programme. The policy and procedures are effective across the University. Programme Boards are responsible for deciding on all applications. Retrospective applications will be approved by the relevant Programme Board only in the circumstances outlined in item 2.2 above. All applications from students on undergraduate programmes are submitted to their Programme Office and all applications from students on graduate programmes are submitted to their School Office.⁴ Students registered to programmes that are run collaboratively with other institutions will normally apply to their home institution.

5. Policy Principles

5.1 Principles: General

- 5.1.1 The University is committed to fairness in its dealings with all students. In this, it recognises that it may not always be possible for a programme to offer a leave of absence. Where a programme cannot offer a leave of absence it should publicise this and communicate it clearly to students.
- 5.1.2 The purpose of a leave of absence is to provide students with time off in order that they can return to and successfully complete their programme. The University commits to providing information to students during their leave of absence on procedures for returning to the programme.
- 5.1.3 **Students are responsible for making it known to their Programme/School Office that they might need a leave of absence as soon as is possible and normally in advance of any period of time off.**
- 5.1.4 A leave of absence is one of a range of options available to Programme Boards in supporting the academic welfare of their students. It is normally applied for in advance of time.
- 5.1.5 During a leave of absence, the student's participation in the programme is suspended. Students may not take a leave of absence in order to remediate failed modules.
- 5.1.6 In the case of UCD staff members who are also students of the University, a leave of absence from their studies should not be assumed to imply that any absence from work has been sanctioned.
- 5.1.7 A retrospective leave of absence will only be granted by the Programme Board in cases where there are extenuating circumstances. Each Programme Board will submit an annual report documenting all retrospective leave of absence applications it approved since the previous academic session. This report will be submitted to the relevant University Programme Board⁵ by the submission deadline for its final meeting in an academic session.
- 5.1.8 There are a number of possible implications of taking a leave of absence. The University is responsible for providing information regarding possible implications and students are advised to access the variety of support

⁴ Contact details for all Programme Offices and School Offices can be accessed via <http://www.ucd.ie/students/studentssupport.html>.

⁵ The relevant University Programmes Board for all programmes at NQAI levels 6, 7 and 8 is the University Undergraduate Programmes Board (UUPB) and the relevant University Programmes Board for all programmes at NQAI levels 9 and 10 is the University Graduate Programmes Board (UGPB).

systems within UCD for advice before making a leave of absence application. Students on graduate research programmes are also advised to talk to their Principal Supervisor in the first instance should they identify a need for a leave of absence from their programme.

- An up-to-date list of support systems within UCD is available at <http://www.ucd.ie/students/studentsupport.html>.
- Possible implications of a leave of absence are outlined in the guides to this policy.⁶

5.2 Principles: Refusing a leave of absence

- 5.2.1 A student in the first semester/term of the first stage of their programme is not normally eligible for a leave of absence.
- 5.2.2 In certain circumstances, e.g. based on programme requirements and structure or research supervisory arrangements, it may not be possible to authorise the requested leave of absence period. In this instance the Programme Board will recommend either an alternative leave of absence period or an alternative arrangement for the student.
- 5.2.3 A student is not eligible for a leave of absence where there is a pending disciplinary action.
- 5.2.4 Where a Programme Board refuses a leave of absence application, they have a responsibility to suggest an alternative solution for the student.

5.3 Principles: Returning from a leave of absence

- 5.3.1 A student is governed by the University's Rules, Regulations, codes and policies, and the Programme regulations and structure in place when they return from a leave of absence.
- 5.3.2 A student will be automatically registered to their programme at the start of the semester/term they are due to return from their leave of absence.
- 5.3.3 Where a student requires additional time off they must contact their Programme/School Office, and students on graduate research programmes should contact their Principal Supervisor, before the end of their approved period of leave of absence, in order to make a formal application for a further leave of absence.
- 5.3.4 Where a student fails to return from a leave of absence and has not applied for a further leave of absence period their registration will be cancelled.
- 5.3.5 A student cannot return from a leave of absence where they are in bad financial standing with the University i.e. where they owe monies to UCD.

5.4 Principles: Duration

- 5.4.1 The academic coherence of a student's study is a key consideration in all leave of absence applications. This policy is not prescriptive regarding the total amount of leave of absence time that a student may be permitted to take over the lifetime of their programme. However, a period 1/3 of the total length of the programme is recommended as the maximum amount of leave of absence time.⁷
- 5.4.2 Individual programmes are responsible for publicising the feasibility of a leave of absence period(s) for their programme and should communicate this clearly to students where it is not possible to offer a leave of absence.
 - Students on undergraduate programmes may apply for a leave of absence for a period of one or two semesters.

⁶ The undergraduate and graduate guides can be accessed at <http://www.ucd.ie/leaveofabsence>.

⁷ The possibility of withdrawing (and subsequently applying for re-admission) should be discussed where a student requires a longer period of time off.

NOTE: the difference between a leave of absence and a withdrawal is as follows. A student who has taken a leave of absence has the right to resume their studies at the end of the approved leave of absence period. Where a student who has withdrawn wishes, at a later date, to return to that programme, they must apply to be re-admitted.

- Students on graduate taught programmes may apply for a leave of absence for a period of one, two or three terms.
- Students on graduate research programmes may apply for a leave of absence for a period of one, two or three terms. In extenuating circumstances, they may apply for a leave of absence period equivalent to one term if the period of time requested spans two terms.

6. Roles and Responsibilities

The roles and responsibilities of the key parties – the student, the School (incorporating the Programme Co-ordinator and Principal Supervisor), the Programme Office, the School Office and the Graduate School Office, the Programme/Graduate Board and UCD Registry – are defined as follows:

6.1 The Responsibilities of the Student

In order that the University may best support students making an application for a leave of absence from their programme of study the student must:

- 6.1.1 Seek advice and support as soon as possible where they think they may need to take some time off from their programme of study;
- 6.1.2 Inform their Principal Supervisor as soon as possible (students on graduate research programmes only);
- 6.1.3 Inform their Programme Office/School Office as soon as is possible and normally in advance of any period of time off;
- 6.1.4 Make sure they understand the possible implications of taking a leave of absence;
- 6.1.5 Complete the official application form and submit it to their Programme Office/School Office, normally in advance of the requested period of leave of absence (see Figure 1 – *Applying for a leave of absence*);
- 6.1.6 Inform their sponsor/funding agency of their need for a leave of absence, where relevant;
- 6.1.7 Inform UCD Residences as soon as possible, where relevant.

At the end of their leave of absence period, a student must:

- 6.1.8 Check their UCD Connect email prior to their return to gain information on returning to their programme and to the University;
- 6.1.9 Inform their Programme Office/School Office as soon as possible and before the end of their leave of absence period of their intention to return to the programme or apply for further leave of absence (such applications follow the same process as outlined in Figure 1);
- 6.1.10 Be aware of the implications of their return;
- 6.1.11 Confirm their re-registration to the University at the end of the leave of absence period.

6.2 The Responsibilities of the School (incorporating the Programme Co-ordinator and Principal Supervisor)

The School shall:

- 6.2.1 For graduate programmes, ensure that a School representative is present and prepared to discuss each case at the relevant Programme Board meeting to which the leave of absence application is submitted.

The Programme Co-ordinator, in consultation with the relevant Module Co-ordinator(s), shall:

- 6.2.2 Inform a student of the implications of taking a leave of absence (a) for core modules and pre-requisites, and (b) on outstanding I/IX grade(s) (e.g. where another solution cannot be arranged, a student may be required to complete these outstanding I/IX grade(s) when they return from the leave of absence);
- 6.2.3 Explore how best to enable students to complete outstanding I/IX grade(s) before the start of a leave of absence period.

The Principal Supervisor shall:

- 6.2.4 Discuss the implications of a leave of absence for the programme of research;
- 6.2.5 Explore alternative solutions with the student;
- 6.2.6 Advise the student with regard to the timing of a leave of absence and suggest alternative timing where appropriate.

6.3 The Responsibilities of the Programme/School/Graduate School Office

The student's first point of contact⁸ shall:

- 6.3.1 Ensure that the student is informed of the possible implications of a leave of absence;
- 6.3.2 Explore possible alternatives to a leave of absence with the student;
- 6.3.3 Provide information to a student on additional support systems within the University;
- 6.3.4 Advise students to discuss their application with a member of the academic staff of their programme e.g. Programme Co-ordinator;
- 6.3.5 Take receipt of the completed official application form;
- 6.3.6 Submit the application for the consideration of the relevant Programme Board;⁹
- 6.3.7 Inform the student (and all relevant personnel within a School) of the outcome of their application (i.e. relevant Programme Board's decision) in writing/by email;¹⁰
- 6.3.8 Inform UCD Registry of the decision of the Board via existing delegated authority mechanisms.

6.4 The Responsibilities of the Programme/Graduate Board

The Programme/Graduate Board shall:

- 6.4.1 Decide the most appropriate course of action for a student who may request a leave of absence from the programme;
- 6.4.2 Recommend an alternative leave of absence period or an alternative arrangement for a student where the Board refuses a leave of absence request;
- 6.4.3 Consider retrospective applications where a/ the student has extenuating circumstances, b/ there is no other available solution for the student given their circumstances and c/ the student has not been engaged in any programme activity for the period of the leave of absence they are requesting;
- 6.4.4 In cases where a retrospective leave of absence application is approved and where required, instruct UCD Registry in writing (via existing delegate authority mechanisms) to remove a student's academic history relating to the approved retrospective leave of absence period from their student record;
- 6.4.5 Submit an annual report documenting all retrospective leave of absence applications it approved since the previous academic session to the relevant University Programme Board by the submission deadline for its final meeting in an academic session;
- 6.4.6 Decide on the feasibility of a leave of absence period(s) for their programme(s). Where it is not possible to offer a leave of absence, publicise this information and communicate it clearly to students.
- 6.4.7 Specify how students registered to programmes that are run collaboratively with other institutions can apply for leave of absence and ensure a clear means of communicating decisions between institutions.

⁸ Students on undergraduate programmes should contact their Programme Office and students on graduate programmes should contact their School/Programme Office in the first instance.

⁹ School Offices submit applications to the relevant Graduate School/Programme Office for the consideration of the Graduate Board.

¹⁰ The Graduate School/Programme Office informs the relevant School Office of the Board's decision.

6.5 The Responsibilities of UCD Registry

UCD Registry, on behalf of the University, shall:

- 6.5.1 Update and amend individual student records according to the delegated authority decisions received from the Programme Office/Graduate School Office;
- 6.5.2 Email students¹¹ who are on a leave of absence before they are due to return to inform them of the re-registration process and the implications of not re-registering;
- 6.5.3 Email students one week into the start of the academic session to remind them to confirm their re-registration and advise them of the implications of their registration being cancelled;
- 6.5.4 Email students to inform them that their registration has been cancelled where a/ they have not confirmed their re-registration as required and b/ have not contacted their Programme Office/School Office to apply for further leave of absence or to notify their withdrawal from their programme. Information on applying for re-admission (including registration cancellation implications) will also be provided;
- 6.5.5 Provide information on the implications of taking a leave of absence, in particular the fees (and grants) implications.¹²
- 6.5.6 Inform Programme Boards of the University Programme Boards' submission date in each academic session for receipt of the annual report documenting all retrospective leave of absence applications (as per item 5.1.7 above).

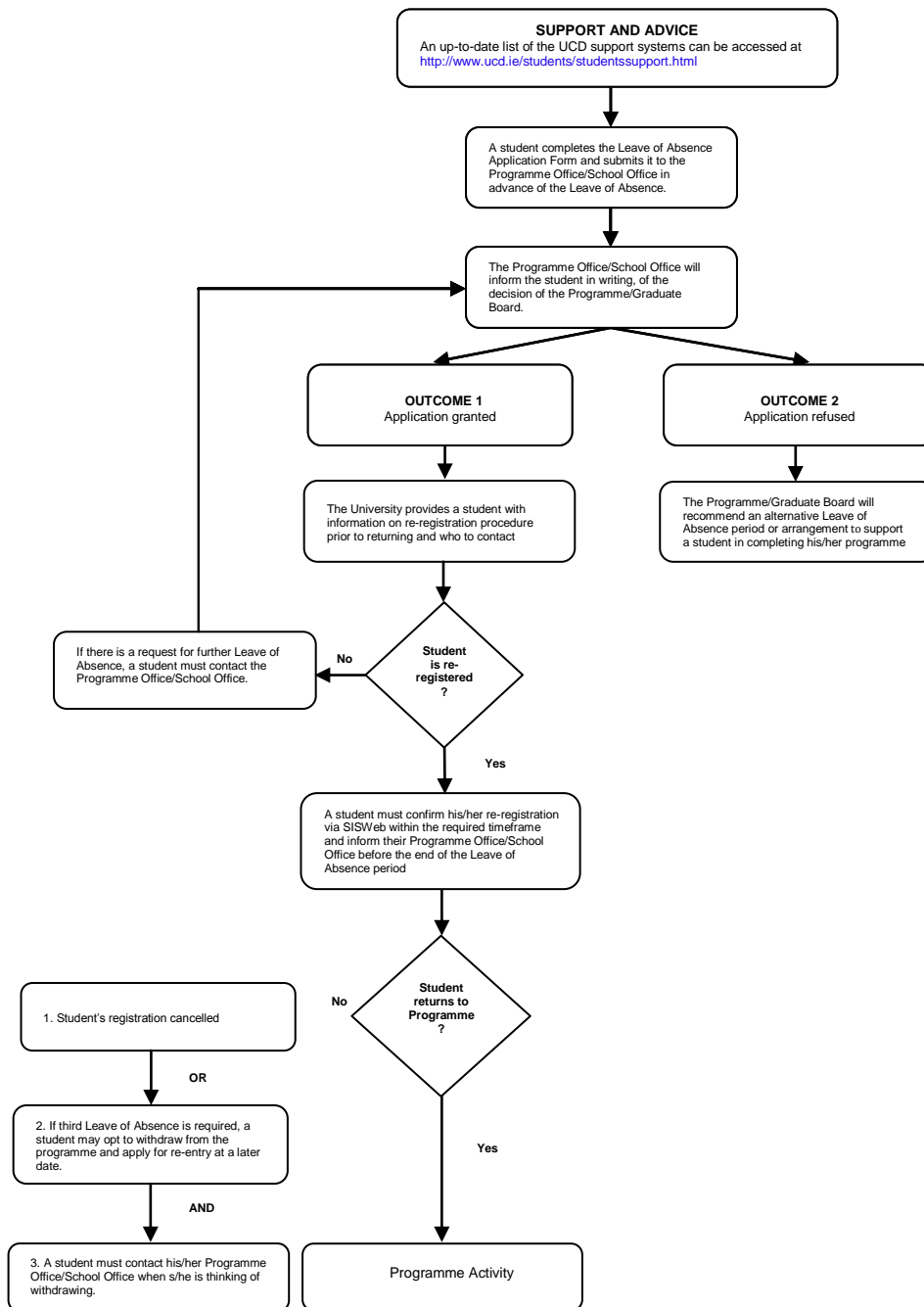
7. Process

Figure 1 lists the steps to be followed in a/ making an application for a leave of absence and b/ at the end of the leave of absence period.

¹¹ All emails will be sent to a student's UCD Connect account.

¹² Information on the Fees implications of a leave of absence can be found on the Fees and Grants website at <http://www.ucd.ie/registry/adminservices/fees/faq.html> and from the Student Desk (opening hours are outlined at <http://www.ucd.ie/registry/adminservices/studentdesk/index.html?show=home%27>). Please note: students in UCD Residences are advised to contact the residences for information on the residences' fees implications of a leave of absence. Contact details for the Residences can be accessed at <http://www.ucd.ie/residences/contactus/> and the Residences refunds policy is available at <http://www.ucd.ie/residences/studentpages/refunds/>.

Figure 1 - Applying for Leave of Absence



Tracking Information

Personnel

Role	Name	e-mail	tel
Academic Sponsor and Chair	Dr. Eilis Hennessy	eilis.hennessy@ucd.ie	8362
Graduate School Director, College of EMPS	Prof. Pdraig Dunne	padraig.dunne@ucd.ie	2224
Vice-Principal for Teaching & Learning, College of A&CS	Mr. Feargal Murphy	feargal.murphy@ucd.ie	8221
Graduate School Manager, College of Life Sciences	Ms Deirbhle Carroll	deirbhle.carroll@ucd.ie	2633
Programme Office Director, Architecture & Engineering Programme Offices	Ms Sue Philpott	sue.philpott@ucd.ie	1864
Director of Academic Secretariat, UCD Registry	Dr. Sinéad Critchley	sinead.critchley@ucd.ie	1344
Director of Administrative Services, UCD Registry	Mr. Michael Sinnott	michael.sinnott@ucd.ie	1634
Policy Officer	Ms Martina Boyle	martina.boyle@ucd.ie	1535
Policy Assistant	Mrs. Elizabeth Miller	elizabeth.miller@ucd.ie	1430

Version History

Version	Date	Summary of Changes	Changed by
1.0	22.11.2010	First draft	Martina Boyle
1.1	03.12.2010	Amendments made following meeting of Policy Working Group	Elizabeth Miller, Martina Boyle
1.2	25.01.2011	Amendments made following meeting of Policy Working Group	Martina Boyle
1.3	03.02.2011	Amendments made following meeting of Policy Working Group	Martina Boyle
1.4	15.03.2011	Amendments made following meeting of Policy Working Group to review all consultation received and follow-on consultation with Deputy Registrar, Graduate Studies	Martina Boyle
1.5	23.03.2011	Minor amendments made following meeting of Policy Working Group	Martina Boyle
1.6	15.04.2011	Minor amendment made following feedback from UGPB. Working Group discussion re-considered retrospective leave of absence based on feedback from UUPB; no amendments made.	Martina Boyle
1.7	13.05.2011	Amendment made to the retrospective leave of absence definition.	Martina Boyle

Consultation and Approvals Plan

Committee/Group	Date of Consultation	Version	Action Sought	Decision
UUPB, UGPB, Programme Boards, Graduate Boards, Heads of School, Academic Council Committee for Campus Life, Graduate School Managers, School Graduate Administrators, Programme Office Directors, Programme Managers, Undergraduate School Administrators, UCD Students' Union, Student Advisers, UCD Registry, and UCD Students (via UCD Students' Union)	04.02.2011	1.3	Review and provide feedback to the Working Group	Feedback provided to the Working Group
UUPB and UGPB	13/14.04.2011	1.5	Review and recommend to Academic Council	Recommended with UUPB requesting that the Working Group further discuss the definition of retrospective leave of absence.
Academic Council	28.04.2011	1.6	Review and approve for 2011/12 implementation	Approved pending final discussion regarding retrospective leave of absence definition.