

Leave of Absence

Summary

If a student is prevented from undertaking work on their research for an extended period due to unforeseen domestic/personal circumstances, the University may approve a leave of absence (LOA):

- Students may apply for LOA's which would not normally exceed 12 months duration;
- The minimum period of LOA would be 2 weeks for masters students (which are not being treated as a taught course) and 1 month for doctoral students;
- Student Hub is to be informed when international students have an LOA approved;
- The University Scholarships Office is to be notified when a scholarship recipient has an LOA approved;
- Students would not normally be withdrawn or refunded fees for any period they were enrolled that they had taken leave from;
- Students would normally be provided an equivalent period of enrolment, at no cost, for any period they were enrolled during the LOA;
 - Enrolment of students returning from a leave of absence should not generate EFTS funding. These should be enrolled using RGA enrolment types.
 - A fee waiver journalled against the programme income account is to be processed in order that the student does not pay fees for that period
- Leave of absence requests will only be considered retrospectively under exceptional circumstances and only for a retrospective period of two months.

Purpose

This protocol recognises the nature of research as being an extended academic exercise which may sometimes have legitimate interruptions. This protocol outlines the requirements for the approval of a leave of absence and the measures the University will put in place to support a student on their return.

Scope

This protocol is to be applied to students enrolled in research papers.

This does not cover coursework components or coursework degrees where a leave of absence from a programme is granted under a different process. This protocol does not cover research components of less than 90 points which are treated as taught course, these should use the SCA portal.

Application

A leave of absence is normally only granted in extenuating circumstances where a student is prevented from undertaking work on their research for an extended period due to unforeseen domestic/personal circumstances (which could include illness or financial hardship resulting in a requirement to work). This would normally be for a period of no more than twelve months with a minimum period of 2 weeks for masters and bachelors with honours¹ students, and 1 month for doctoral students. The effect of such a leave of absence is to 'stop the clock' for the student so that they are not penalised in terms of the completion date.

A request for a leave of absence should be made in writing, by completing a Change Request/Variation of Record form, to the faculty postgraduate committee either by the supervisor or the student and should include a full explanation of the circumstances and evidence that during the period of absence, the student would be unable to study, research or progress in any manner in the research component.

¹ Research courses are treated as taught papers are not covered by the LOA protocol and will follow the SCA application process.

Students should be encouraged to discuss potential leave requests with their Faculty Associate Dean (Postgraduate).

Wherever possible students should request a leave of absence at the end of an enrolment period. However, it is recognised that this may not always be possible.

If circumstances are such that it cannot be anticipated when the candidature will be resumed, students should seek to withdraw from the programme after consultation with all their supervisors and re-apply when they are able to continue.

A student who has been granted a leave of absence will not normally have access to AUT resources during that period and should not continue to work on their research component.

Retrospective Leave of Absence Requests

Normally, a leave of absence application will not be considered retrospectively. However, exceptional circumstances may be considered, but may not be approved, and will be limited to the two months prior to the LOA application date. Retrospective LOA's would not normally include time taken in employment.

Expected Study Times

Doctoral Students

Apart from statutory holidays (including the three-week period over summer that the University is closed), doctoral students would normally be expected to take a maximum of three weeks leave from their study per year. This period will not 'stop the clock' on the period of candidature and students will be expected to complete within the normal timeframe. Additional time must be applied for as part of a leave of absence request using the Variation of Record form.

Master's and Honours Students

Master's and Honours students are expected to undertake their research during semesters. 120 point thesis students are normally expected to be in attendance over one calendar year, apart from the University's summer closedown period.

Applying for a Leave of Absence

A student will be required to complete a Variation of Record form, stating the period the leave is for and the reasons for requiring a leave of absence. This should be submitted through the supervisor to the relevant School/Faculty committee. Applications from Doctoral and Master of Philosophy students are forwarded by Faculties to the University Postgraduate Board for approval.

Recording of Results

When a LOA is granted for doctoral programmes no result is recorded.

Return from Leave of Absence

Where a student has been unable to start a leave of absence at the end of an enrolment period they will normally be enrolled in a paper with an equivalent period of time. This enrolment will be at no cost to them and an RGA enrolment type will be used, so that the University does not claim additional EFTS funding.

The fees for this "return from LOA" enrolment would normally be journalled against the income account of the paper or programme they are enrolled in.

International Students

It is recommended that international students discuss their leave of absence request with an International Student Advisor, via Student Hub in the first instance as there may be visa implications that need to be taken into consideration before submitting their request. Faculties (GRS for doctoral and MPhil students) will be expected to ensure that Student Hub is notified when an international student has a LOA request approved.

International Student Requirements

International doctoral students may have a leave of absence for up to 3 months in any 12-month period without losing their student visa. The allowed 3-month suspension period does not need to be taken over a single period or consecutively and can be staggered through the 12 months.

An LOA longer than 3 months will result in the university notifying Immigration NZ which may result in the termination of the current student visa and re-application of their student visa is required at the end of the suspension period. If an international student wishes to live in NZ during this period of suspension they must apply for an appropriate alternative visa before the student visa is terminated. Granting of visas is entirely up to Immigration NZ.

Scholarship Students

Faculties (GRS for doctoral and MPhil students) will be expected to ensure that the University Scholarships Office is notified when a scholarship recipient has an LOA request approved.

Outcome

A student is not penalised by taking an LOA during the course of their research:

- time on an approved LOA is not taken into account for completion timeframes;
- fees are not charged for any partial enrolment previously paid for by the student;
- The university does not claim additional EFTS on any partial enrolment previously claimed.

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