

Leave of Absence and Parental Leave

Leave of Absence

Leaves of absence are granted when it is temporarily impossible for students to continue to work toward a degree. Leave of absence requests are required for students in thesis-based programs. Requests for the current semester must be received by the Office of Graduate Studies (OGS) prior to the add/drop date. Leave forms submitted after this date may be considered in extenuating circumstances, but students may only be withdrawn from credits, not dropped. Leave of absence requests for prior semesters will not be considered.

For students in coursework-based Master's or Certificate programs, a formal Leave of Absence request may not be required, depending on the circumstances. Refer to the Office of Graduate Studies website for additional information regarding periods of non-registration without a Leave of Absence in coursework-based programs.

Any request for a leave of absence must have the prior approval of the student's faculty advisor and department/program, the Office of International Students and Scholars (international students only), and Financial Aid. To request a leave of absence, students must submit the Leave of Absence form to the Graduate office, along with the following information:

1. the reasons why the student must interrupt their studies and,
2. a plan (including a timeline and deadlines) for resuming and completing the work toward the degree in a timely fashion.

Students on leave remain in active standing even though they are not registered for any course or research credits. While on leave, however, students will not have access to Mines resources. This includes, but is not limited to, office space, computational facilities, library, faculty and other Mines students. Students who will be using campus resources in any manner will not be allowed to take a Leave of Absence and will be required to register for at least one credit.

Students are limited to two (not necessarily consecutive) regular semesters of approved leave while in a graduate degree program at Mines. Beyond these two semesters, students needing to suspend their degree programs further are required to formally withdraw from the degree program by submitting the Withdrawal from Graduate School paperwork.

Students on a Leave of Absence must submit the Return from Leave paperwork prior to the start of the subsequent semester if they wish to continue in the degree program. Students on leave who do not submit the Return from Leave paperwork will have the degree program terminated and will need to reapply for admission.

Students who withdraw from graduate school or have their degree program terminated as above will need to reapply, and be readmitted, into the degree program before continuing in the degree program. As with all degree program applications, applications from candidates in these situations are reviewed by the program and considered for readmission at the sole discretion of the program.

Students in thesis-based programs who fail to register and who are not on approved leaves of absence will have their degree programs

terminated. Students who wish to return to graduate school after an unauthorized period of absence must apply for readmission.

Parental Leave

Graduate students in thesis-based degree programs, who have full-time student status and receive TA/RA support at 0.5 FTE level, may be eligible to request up to eight weeks of parental leave. The Parental Leave Policy is designed to assist students who are primary child-care providers immediately following the birth or adoption of a child. The policy is designed to make it possible for students to maintain full-time status in research-based degree programs while taking a leave from that program to care for their new child, and facilitate planning for continuance of their degree program.

Nothing in the Parental Leave policy can, or is intended to, replace communication and cooperation between the student and their advisor, and the good-faith efforts of both to accommodate the birth or adoption of a child within the confines and expectations of participating in a research-active graduate degree program. It is the intent of this Policy to reinforce the importance of this cooperation, and to provide a framework of support and guidance.

Eligibility

In order to be eligible for Parental Leave, a graduate student must:

- be the primary childcare provider.
- have been a full-time graduate student in their degree program during at least the two prior consecutive semesters.
- be enrolled in a thesis-based degree program (i.e., doctoral or thesis-based master's).
- be in good academic standing as defined in the Unsatisfactory Academic Performance section of this catalog.
- notify advisor of intent to apply for Parental Leave at least four months prior to the anticipated due date or adoption date.
- complete, and have approved, the Request for Parental Leave Form that includes an academic program plan for program continuance at least two months prior to the expected leave date.

Exceptions and Limitations

This policy has been explicitly constructed with the following limitations:

- Part-time and non-thesis students are not eligible for Parental Leave. These students may, however, apply for a Leave of Absence through the regular procedure defined above.
- If both parents are Mines graduate students who would otherwise qualify for leave under this policy, each is entitled to a Parental Leave period immediately following the birth or adoption of a child during which either one is the primary care provider, but the leaves may not be taken simultaneously.
- Leaves extending beyond eight weeks are not covered by this Policy. The regular Leave of Absence policy defined in the Graduate Catalog applies to these cases.

Benefits

Under this policy students will receive the following benefits and protections:

- Continuance of assistantship support during the semester in which the leave is taken – only if the student is funded through a TA or RA Contract, as described below.

- Maintenance of full-time status in degree program while on Parental Leave.
- Documentation of an academic plan that specifies both how a student will continue work toward their degree prior to the leave period and how a student will reintegrate into a degree program after returning from leave.

Planning and Approval

It is the student's responsibility to initiate discussions with their advisor(s) at least four months prior to the anticipated birth or adoption. This notice provides the lead time necessary to rearrange teaching duties (for those students supported by teaching assistantships), to adjust laboratory and research responsibilities and schedules, to identify and develop plans for addressing any new health and safety issues, and to develop an academic program plan that promotes seamless reintegration back into a degree program.

While faculty will make every reasonable effort to meet the needs of students requesting Parental Leave, students must recognize that faculty are ultimately responsible for ensuring the rigor of academic degree programs and may have a direct requirement to meet specific milestones defined in externally funded research contracts. Within this context, faculty may need to reassess and reassign specific work assignments, modify laboratory schedules, etc. Without good communication, such efforts may lead to significant misunderstandings between faculty and students. As such, there must be good-faith and open communication by each party to meet the needs and expectations of each during this potentially stressful period.

The results of these discussions are to be formalized into an academic program plan that is agreed to by both the student and the advisor(s). This plan, to be accepted, must also receive approval by the appropriate department head or program director and the graduate dean. Approval of the dean should be sought by submitting to the Office of Graduate Studies a formal Parental Leave request, with all necessary signatures and the academic program plan developed by the advisor(s) and student, approved by the department head or program director.

These materials should be delivered to the Office of Graduate Studies no less than two months prior to the anticipated date of leave.

If a student and faculty member cannot reach agreement on a program plan, they should consult with the appropriate department head or program director to help mediate and resolve the outstanding issues. As appropriate, the department head or program director may request that the graduate dean and the Office of Institutional Equity provide additional assistance in finalizing the program plan.

Graduate Students with Appointments as Graduate Research and Teaching Assistants

A graduate student who is eligible for Parental Leave and has a continuing appointment as a research or teaching assistant is eligible for continued stipend and tuition support during the semester(s) in which the leave is taken. For consideration of this support, however, the timing of a leave with continued stipend and tuition support must be consistent with the academic unit's prior funding commitment to the student. No financial support will be provided during leave in a semester in which the student would have otherwise not been funded.

Tuition and Fee Reimbursement: If the assistantship, either teaching or research, would have normally paid a student's tuition and mandatory fees, it will continue to do so for the semester(s) in which the Leave is

taken. Costs for tuition will be shared proportionally between the normal source of funding for the research or teaching assistantship and the Office of Graduate Studies.

Stipend Support: Stipends associated with the assistantship will be provided at their full rate for that portion of the semester(s) during which the student is not on Parental Leave.

No stipend support need be provided during the time period over which the Parental Leave is taken. The student may, however, choose to have the stipend he or she would receive during the semester(s) in which the leave is taken delivered in equal increments over the entire semester(s).

While on leave, students may elect to continue to work in some modified capacity, and faculty, departments and programs may elect to provide additional stipend support in recognition of these efforts. Students, however, are under no obligation to do so, and if they choose to not work during their leave period, this will not be held against them when they return from leave. Upon return, students on research assistantships are expected to continue their normal research activities as defined in their academic program plans. Students on teaching assistantships will be directed by the department or program as to specific activities in which they will engage upon return from parental leave.

Registration

Students on parental leave should register at the full-time level for research credit hours under the direction of their thesis advisor. The advisor will evaluate student progress toward degree for the semester in which parental leave is taken only on those activities undertaken by the student while he or she is not on leave.