

University Policy on Student Leave of Absence (Medical, Personal, Military)	Version: Effective Spring 2017
Access: Public Related Policy: Students Called to Active Military Duty Policy ADA Accommodations Policy	Position responsible for effecting compliance: Dean of Students Positions supporting compliance: Disability Services, Financial Aid, Residence Life, Student Accounts, Records/Registrar, Veteran Affairs, Academic Affairs

Policy

At times, a student may need to temporarily leave the university on the basis of medical needs, personal concerns, or military service. In such cases, the student does not withdraw from the University, nor do they need to re-apply to return. This is called “Leave.”

Niagara University believes that arranging and returning from Leave should be a clear and supportive process, and to that end, has implemented the below-listed procedures and guidance.

Leave shall typically not exceed 1 year (2 academic semesters).

Medical Leave

Medical leave for physical or mental health-related reasons should start with contacting the Dean of Students.

Personal Leave

Personal leave for bereavement, extreme financial exigency (such as job loss), or other personal reasons should start with contacting the Dean of Students.

Military Leave

Military Leave for active deployment should follow the policy for “Students Called to Active Military Service,” and may consult with the Director of Veterans Services at any point during the process. *NOTE: Students who are withdrawing to join the military will not be granted Military Leave; they must follow the usual process for withdrawal.*

Procedure

Person	Action
Student needing leave	Meets with Dean of Students or Designee to request a medical, personal, or military leave.
Dean of Students (or Designee)	Posts, publishes, provides and processes appropriate forms, policy, and guidance so students can easily initiate and work with the process.
Director of Disability Services	<p>Receives and reviews forms to verify accommodation of Medical Leave; confirms verification to Dean of Students.</p> <p><i>For HIPAA compliance, documentation for Medical Leave shall typically only be reviewed and assessed by Disability Services.</i></p>
Dean of Students' Designee	<p>Receives and reviews information to verify accommodation of Personal Leave; confirms verification with Dean of Students.</p> <p>NOTE: If reasons are not sufficient to justify a Personal Leave, a student may also consider a Withdrawal.</p>
Director of Veteran's Services	Assists with Military Leave (see Students Called to Active Military Duty Policy) .
Academic Affairs (or appropriate academic office/advisor)	Collaborates with Student and Dean of Students (or designee) to develop appropriate academic arrangements for leave.

Person	Action
	Upon notification, effects necessary academic adjustments.
Director of Student Accounts; Director of Financial Aid	Collaborates with Student and Dean of Students to develop appropriate financial arrangements for leave, per relevant policies and federal financial aid regulations.
Director of Residence Life (if student is in Student Housing)	Collaborates with Student to transition the student from on-campus housing, per relevant policies; keeps Dean of Students (or designee) informed.
Dean of Students (or Designee)	After all support actions are complete, generates "Leave Letter" setting out basis of leave, academic, financial, housing, and other considerations, and (most critically) terms for return.
Student	Reviews and signs letter. This acceptance of the leave terms finalizes the leave. Prior to return, contacts Dean of Students as set out in letter.
Registrar	Receives copy of letter and officially effects leave as directed. Upon return, receives verification by Dean of Students (or designee) that terms of return are met.

Students must sometimes interrupt their studies for a variety of reasons (financial, academic, medical, military or personal). A student may leave Niagara University by either **withdrawing** from the university (this means leaving the university with no intention of returning) or by taking a **leave of absence** (this means leaving the university temporarily, with the firm and stated intention of returning).

Niagara University believes that arranging and returning from a leave should be a clear and supportive process, and to that end, has implemented the following rules and procedures. A student taking a leave of absence does not withdraw from the University and they need not re-apply to return. Therefore, a leave of absence maintains continuing student status. This allows a student to maintain catalog rights and eligibility to enroll for the term immediately after the expiration of the leave without re-applying to the university. Keep in mind that Merit-based awards are generally valid for eight semesters of study. A leave of absence will not count towards the eight semesters. Need-based aid is based on your FAFSA. For details, please contact Financial Aid.

Length of Leave: A leave of absence will typically not exceed 2 consecutive semesters (excluding summer). However, in special circumstances, a student may request an extension to his/her voluntary leave of absence. This request can be approved or denied by the primary academic Dean or designee. Extensions will be granted for no more than two additional consecutive semesters and a new leave of absence request form must be completed.

Separation from the University: A student on a voluntary leave of absence will not attend classes, must vacate university owned housing and may be entitled to whatever refunds of tuition, fees, and room and board charges as would be appropriate for the effective date of the leave of absence. Those on a leave of absence are considered inactive students, and are not permitted to utilize campus resources including, but not limited to, classrooms, labs, recreational spaces, athletic facilities, campus housing, dining halls, and the Student Health Center. Students on leave are also not permitted to maintain employment as students at Niagara University while their leave is in effect. Finally, as the student is on leave, he or she will have access to email, MyNU, and webadvisor during the period of leave. Access to these sites will only be restricted when a student withdraws from the institution.

Students taking a leave of absence should return their mailbox key to the Post Office and fill out a Change of Address form so that mail can be forwarded to their new address or home. Students must inform the Post Office their wish to close their mailbox, if they are not returning to campus.

If students purchased their textbooks at the College Bookstore, they should contact the Bookstore for specifics and clarification on options for return as soon as possible.

Students who purchased a parking decal should notify the Campus Safety Office in writing so that the appropriate prorated refund can be issued.

In circumstances where a student has a pending academic action or conduct action, a voluntary leave of absence may be approved but if the results of the academic or conduct action result in suspension of the student, those results will take precedence over the leave of absence status and will be indicated as such on the student's record.

Steps required to enact a leave: Students choosing to take a leave of absence may wish to first contact their department advisor to discuss their plans while on leave to work out any conditions that may be necessary for a smooth return to Niagara University. In addition, the student requesting a leave must meet with the Dean of Students and complete a Leave of Absence Form. Forms are available on the MyNU web site. **Notifying instructors or no longer attending classes does not complete the process for obtaining a leave.**

Students are required to fill out all information on the leave of absence form, including all comment sections relating to reasons for their leave of absence. After completion of the form, students must take it to their home department and dean's office for appropriate signatures. The process of taking a leave will not be complete until all necessary signatures are on the leave form.

Please note that students requesting a leave for active deployment in the military should start the leave process by contacting the Director of Veteran Services. There are somewhat different processes and procedures for a military leave because of mobilization. However, students who choose to join the military will not be granted a leave, instead they must follow the usual process for withdrawal.

International students who are here on a F1 or J1 visa must consult the Office of International Affairs for information on possible visa implications prior to going on leave.

This policy does not have any effect on the exemption of students from student loan repayments. Before taking a leave of absence, a student should contact his or her lender regarding repayment obligations that may arise as a result of their leave. A student should also consult the University's Financial Aid Office to discuss any impact the leave may have on financial aid.

The University reserves the right to notify a parent or guardian if deemed appropriate under the circumstances and applicable laws, including making arrangements for the family member to pick up the student from the University's premises.

The University will maintain the confidentiality of information regarding leaves in accordance with federal, state, and local law, and to the greatest extent consistent with the goal of processing such leaves.

All records concerning leaves of absence are confidential and the official copy of such records shall be retained by the Dean or the Dean's designee of the academic program, department, or school. Access to these records is limited by appropriate federal, state, and local law. Such records will be destroyed seven (7) years after the student's graduation.

B. Types of Voluntary Leaves:

There are two types of Medical or Personal Leave: Planned, or Immediate. A ***planned leave of absence*** is requested for the succeeding term prior to the start of that term. The student agrees to complete any courses currently in session, understanding the leave will begin the following term and any courses enrolled for the requested term will be dropped.

An ***immediate leave of absence*** is for students who request to leave after a term begins. An immediate leave during the academic semester will take effect as of the date signed by the student on the Leave Letter. After the leave of absence form is received by the University's Registrar's Office, it will be reviewed by Student Accounts and Financial Aid for the appropriate tuition refunds and grade implications. The recording of student courses and grades for taking a leave in a semester follows the deadlines for semester:

On or before the university deadline to drop classes with W (withdrawal) grades: all courses or grades are removed.

After the university deadline to drop classes but before the last day of classes: W (withdrawal) grades will be assigned to all classes. (W grades apply to all undergraduate students, and graduate students.)

Please note that if the request for leave occurs in the later stages of a semester and the student cannot complete the semester, options for issuing Incompletes for the courses in progress may be considered. Students on leave may complete course work for which an 'Incomplete' grade was awarded in a prior term (unless doing so places an undue burden on the part of an instructor, department, staff, or other university resource) and are expected to comply with our policy for resolving incompletes; a leave of absence does not stop the clock on the time limit for resolving incompletes.

After the last day of classes: Permanent grades assigned by the instructor will be recorded.

C. Returning to the University:

The student must keep the Dean of Students and the Dean (or designee) of his or her College apprised of his or her mailing address and must meet all regular university deadlines for registration, housing reservations, financial aid applications, and similar matters. Please note that financial aid/scholarship awards and university housing reservations do not automatically carry over. Students on leave are responsible for all arrangements with offices (Financial Aid, Student Accounts, Residence Life) serving them in these matters.

A student may only attend another college while on leave through arrangement with the Dean of Students. If permission to be on leave while attending another school is granted, official transcripts must be sent to the Office of the Registrar for the purpose of evaluating academic standing and credits according to regular transfer policy.