

# Leave of Absence Policy & Procedure

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## Introduction

1.1 There may be times where a student needs to take a break from their studies. This policy sets out the regulations and process for applying for a leave of absence.

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## Definitions

2.1 A leave of absence means that you take time out of your studies, and therefore stop participating in learning and teaching activities, stop attending scheduled meetings, and are not required to submit your assignments.

2.2 Students may request a leave of absence for several reasons, such as:

- Health reasons
- Maternity or paternity
- Personal or domestic problems
- Bereavement
- Financial difficulties

2.3 Students should provide evidence to support their request for a leave of absence, e.g. a doctor's note, death certificate etc.

2.4 In certain circumstances it may not be possible to submit independent evidence, such as in the case of a death overseas or the death of a friend/colleague by suspected suicide. In these instances, students should provide a statement which focuses on the impact the event has had on their ability to continue with their studies.

2.5 We recognise that a leave of absence can disrupt a student's professional and educational goals, so we will always aim for students to complete their programme within the timeline they signed up for at enrolment. We therefore strongly recommend that before applying for a leave of absence, students explore whether a short-term extension or assessment deferral through the Exceptional Circumstances Policy would be appropriate.

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## Eligibility

- 3.1 A leave of absence is permitted for College students on postgraduate degree programmes, the Graduate Foundation in Law, and standalone modules.
- 3.2 Students must typically be in good financial standing with no overdue fees to take a leave of absence.
- 3.3 A leave of absence can last between 1 to 12 months and must be taken consecutively without breaks. If an additional leave of absence is required, a new application must be submitted with updated/new evidence.
- 3.4 Students taking a leave of absence must comply with the maximum length of study period of four years as outlined in the Quality Assurance and Assessment Regulations.
- 3.5 Students studying a module with the College as part of a programme with a partner higher education provider should contact their home institution for leave of absence guidance.
- 3.6 Leave of absence requests must be accompanied by supporting evidence (appendix 1). You will be considered to be continuing with your studies until the point that an application is approved.
- 3.7 Students on the LLM in Legal Practice should be aware that failing a Solicitor's Qualifying Exam would not in itself be accepted as a reason for taking a leave of absence. This does not prevent an LLM student for taking a leave of absence for other reasons.

## Implications of taking a Leave of Absence

- 4.1 Taking a leave of absence will impact on the duration of your programme and may have financial implications. Short term extensions to assessment deadlines are available through the Exceptional Circumstances Policy, and students are strongly encouraged to explore with their Personal Tutor or Student Services whether an exceptional circumstances claim would be more appropriate than a break in study.
- 4.2 It is the responsibility of the student to ensure that they understand any financial implications from taking a leave of absence. You will not be entitled to a refund of any fees paid towards your programme, as set out in the Refund and Compensation policy. Where a part-payment schedule has been agreed with the College, this will be paused for the duration of a leave of absence. On

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resumption of studies, you will be liable for the remaining payments as normal.

4.3 LLM students who are approved for a Leave of Absence should be aware that, if they are funding their study through a Postgraduate Loan, Student Finance will be notified of your pause in study at the point of approval. Any further postgraduate loan payments will be postponed until study is resumed, after the Leave of Absence has ended and the College have sent notification of resumption. We strongly recommend that students who are postgraduate-loan funded contact Student Finance in advance of making your application, to fully understand the financial implications.

4.4 If you have experienced exceptional circumstances that have led to you taking a leave of absence you should contact Student Finance to discuss the compelling personal reasons process.

4.5 If you are a student on an employer-funded enrolment, it is your responsibility to ensure that your employer is aware of your request to take a leave of absence and to obtain any necessary employer consent.

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## Access to College materials

5.1 During a leave of absence, you will retain access to Canvas using your existing log-in details, but will not have access to any live courses until you resume study. If you are a student who has completed SLK or SLS, you will retain access to these course areas for approximately 10 months after the course end-date, under the continued access mechanism.

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## Timeline

6.1 We encourage students to begin discussions about a leave of absence as soon as possible, and to engage with your studies until the absence is approved. If you disengage with your studies prior to approval of a leave of absence, or do not respond to attempts from the College to make contact, you may be deemed to have abandoned your studies and may be withdrawn from your programme. It is unlikely that the College will be able to support requests for a leave of absence where the student has been withdrawn for non-engagement, except where there is evidence

which demonstrates an inability to engage or respond to communications at the time the student was withdrawn.

6.2 If a Leave of Absence is granted, you will be transferred to your new intake, re-starting your studies at the relevant point that you left. This means that if you are granted a leave of absence in week 5 of a module, you will return in week 5 of the next available version of this module in line with your agreed return date. This may be backdated to earlier in the module where evidence indicates that the student was unable to engage and unable to submit a leave of absence request.

6.3 If a leave of absence is granted in the final month of module delivery, then the return date will be the 1st of the month prior to the month in which the assessments take place on the module. This is to ensure that returning students have adequate time to prepare for assessments. Students are not permitted to request a leave of absence in the two weeks prior to an assessment taking place or in the assessment period itself and should instead speak to their Personal Tutor or Student Services to discuss options for Exceptional Circumstances.

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## Changes to modules

7.1 The College regularly reviews its programmes and modules to ensure they are up to date. This means that it is possible that modules may be altered, introduced, or suspended during a leave of absence.

7.2 Where a module is no longer available or has been changed through periodic review, your Programme Leader will discuss whether it is possible to continue on the changed module, or whether a replacement module should be offered. Where a replacement module is offered, this may require adjustments to the return date specified by the College to ensure you have access to all learning and teaching materials. Students will not be penalised if a leave of absence extends beyond 12 months because a module has changed.

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## Return to studies

8.1 Prior to returning to your studies at the agreed return date, you will be invited to meet with your Module/Programme Leader to check-in and to ensure you are ready to return and engage fully with your studies.

8.2 Where a leave of absence has been granted for health reasons, the College may request that you submit a note from a doctor to confirm that you are fit to return to your studies.

## The application process

9.1 Leave of absence requests will follow the process outlined below:

1. Student submits Leave of Absence Form with evidence to [studentsupport@collegalpractice.com](mailto:studentsupport@collegalpractice.com)
2. Where the request requires discussion, student is invited to meet with the Student Services Manager to discuss request, including options of ECs where appropriate, and to agree an expected return date.
3. Student Services approve and process the LOA and confirm with the student.
4. No later than one month prior to the expected return date, Programme Leader/Module Leader will meet with the student to check-in and identify any additional support needs as appropriate.
5. Student returns to studies.

## Appendix 1: Examples of types of evidence required

Category of Exceptional Circumstance	Type of evidence
Health reasons	Doctor's note Medical Certificate Other independent evidence
Maternity or paternity	Birth certificate Doctor's note
Personal or domestic problems	Evidence as available and appropriate
Bereavement	Death certificate Copy of order of service Public announcement Statement from the student where independent evidence is not available
Financial difficulties	Evidence as available and appropriate
Miscellaneous, not covered above	Evidence as available and appropriate

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