

A7 Leave of Absence Policy

A7.1 A Leave of Absence means that you pause your studies, and therefore stop participating in learning and teaching activities, including assessment, for an agreed period.

A7.2 There are many reasons you may need a leave of absence, including:

- Health reasons;
- Maternity or Paternity;
- Personal or domestic problems;
- Bereavement;
- Financial difficulties.

A7.3 If you think you need to take a leave of absence, you should begin discussions with the College as soon as possible and continue to engage with your studies. If you disengage with your studies prior to a leave of absence being approved, we may conclude that you have abandoned your studies under the Academic Engagement and Attendance Policy (A9).

A7.4 It is unlikely that we will approve backdated requests for a leave of absence if you have been withdrawn for non-engagement, except where there is independent evidence which demonstrates an inability to engage or respond to communications at the time that you were withdrawn.

A7.5 A leave of absence can disrupt your professional and educational goals, so we will always aim to support you to complete your programme within the usual timeline. We will therefore strongly recommend that before applying for a leave of absence, you explore whether a short-term extension or assessment deferral through the Exceptional Circumstances Policy (A6) could help you complete the module.

A7.6 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 approval.

A7.7 Students should note that failing or deferring the Solicitor's Qualifying Exam is not a valid reason for requesting a leave of absence. However, you may still request a leave of absence for other reasons.

Apprentices

A7.8 Apprentices needing a leave of absence (known as a 'break in learning') should first discuss this with their employer, who will agree the break in learning with the College.

Financial implications

A7.9 Taking a leave of absence will impact the duration of your studies and may have financial implications. It is your responsibility to ensure that you understand these financial implications.

A7.10 If you take a leave of absence, you will not receive a refund on any fees paid towards your module or programme, as set out in the Refund and Compensation Policy. Where a part-payment schedule has been agreed, this will be paused for the duration of the leave of absence with the exception of any overdue payments.

A7.11 LLM students who are in receipt of a Postgraduate Loan should contact Student finance to understand the implications of a leave of absence. We are required to notify funding bodies that a student has gone on a leave of absence, therefore payments and eligibility for further funding may be affected.

Access to course materials

A7.12 During a leave of absence, you will retain access to Canvas using your existing log-in but will not have access to any live modules, except for Solicitors Legal Knowledge and Solicitors Legal Skills where time-limited continued access is guaranteed under the Terms and Conditions.

Re-starting your programme

A7.13 A leave of absence is not an opportunity to re-start your programme. A student who wishes to re-start their programme must withdraw and reapply to a later intake.

A7.14 Any marks achieved on your previous programme, including fail marks for non-submission, will be carried forward to your new programme.

A7.15 You will be subject to the maximum registration period of four years on a College programme, counted from the start date of your first programme.

Taking more than one leave of absence

A7.16 Students are entitled to request extensions to a leave of absence, or to return from a leave of absence and later request a new absence.

A7.17 The College reserves the right to consider these requests through the Fitness to Study Policy (A8) where the Student Services Team or the Module Leader are concerned that the overall health of the student places them at risk of non-completion.

Leave of Absence Procedure

A7.18 To apply for a leave of absence, you must submit a completed Leave of Absence Application form and accompanying evidence through the Service Portal.

A7.19 The Student Services Team will consider leave of absence requests against the following eligibility criteria:

- Requests are not permitted in the two weeks prior to an assessment taking place, or after an assessment, unless there is evidence that you could not apply earlier;
- Students must be in good financial standing with no overdue fees;
- Requests must be supported by evidence, e.g. a doctor's note;

- A leave of absence can last between one and 12 months and must be taken without breaks;
- A request to extend a leave of absence must be submitted as a new request with updated evidence;
- A leave of absence will not be approved where this would breach the maximum period of registration (A2.45).

A7.20 Requests received within two weeks of an assessment will instead be considered through the Exceptional Circumstances Policy (A6).

A7.21 We recognise that it is not always possible to submit evidence, such as in the case of a bereavement overseas or by suspected suicide. In these cases, you should provide a statement which focuses on the impact the event has had on your ability to continue with your studies.

A7.22 Where the application requires discussion prior to deciding on an outcome, the Student Services Team will invite you to a meeting to discuss the request. If you do not attend this meeting, this will be re-arranged once. If you do not attend for the second time, the Student Services Team will decide an outcome based on the information provided.

A7.23 If your request is granted, the Student Services Team will communicate an outcome to you in writing and will provide you with a period of 5 working days to provide any comment on the proposed leave of absence details. If you do not respond within this timeline, we will assume that you are in agreement with the leave of absence offered.

A7.24 Where a request is rejected, the Student Services Team will notify you in writing of the reasons for this, and how to request a review of the decision.

Determining a start date

A7.25 The start date for a leave of absence is generally the date that the College was notified of your intent to take a leave of absence. We will not typically backdate a leave of absence unless there are valid reasons for doing so. *As such, it is important that you engage with the College as soon as possible.*

Determining a return date

A7.26 If a Leave of Absence is approved, you will be transferred to your new intake, to rejoin at the same point that you left your original cohort. *This means that if you took a leave of absence in week 5 of a 10-week module, you would return to the new intake in week 5.*

A7.27 In exceptional circumstances, where you can provide evidence which shows that you were unable to engage with your studies, submit a Leave of Absence, or respond to communication regarding engagement, the Student Services Team may approve that the start date for the Leave of Absence is backdated.

A7.28 If a Leave of Absence is granted within the final month of module delivery, the return date will be backdated to the 1st of the month prior to the month in which

assessments take place on the new intake. This is to ensure that you have enough time to prepare for an assessment.

Return to studies

- A7.29 During the month prior to the expected return date, the Module Leader will invite you to a return to studies meeting. The purpose of this meeting is to ensure that you are properly supported on your return to studies.
- A7.30 If your leave of absence was granted for health reasons, we may request that you provide a 'fit note' from your doctor to confirm that you are fit to return to studies.
- A7.31 If you do not attend the return to studies meeting, this will be rearranged once. If you do not attend the meeting for the second time, you will be deemed to have abandoned your studies and will be withdrawn from your programme.
- A7.32 If you indicate that you do not wish to return to your studies, you will be withdrawn from your module/programme. The withdrawal date shall be backdated to the last date of engagement with your studies.
- A7.33 For students in receipt of a postgraduate loan, we will notify the Student Loans Company of your return to studies only where there is evidence of active engagement with the programme.

Changes to modules

- A7.34 We regularly review our programmes and modules to ensure they are up to date. Changes can happen when a programme goes through Periodic Review (C5) or where changes are approved through the Programme and Module Modification Policy (C7). We may also suspend modules which do not receive sufficient enrolments as set out in the Terms and Conditions. This means that it is possible that modules may be altered, introduced, or suspended during a leave of absence.
- A7.35 Where a module has changed or is no longer available, we will discuss with you whether it is possible to continue on the changed module, or whether a replacement module should be offered.
- A7.36 Where a replacement module is offered, we may need to adjust the return date for a leave of absence, which may mean that it extends over 12 months.

Requests for review of a leave of absence outcome

- A7.37 If you are dissatisfied with the outcome of a leave of absence request, or withdrawal decision where you have not returned from a leave of absence, you can request a review of the decision by contacting the Registrar (registry@collegalpractice.com) within five working days of receiving the outcome notification.
- A7.38 You should set out the reasons you believe the claim meets the eligibility criteria and enclose any additional evidence as appropriate.
- A7.39 The Registrar will consider the claim and communicate an outcome within 10 working days. Their decision is final and there is no further route for review at the College.