

Policy for Student Leave of Absence in the Pritzker School of Molecular Engineering

Voluntary Leaves of Absence

The following types of voluntary leave are generally available to graduate students. Graduate students should consult with the PME Dean of Students Office to discuss the implications of taking a leave on their academic progress and to better understand procedures/expectations particular to the PME.

- **Personal Leave of Absence.** Students may apply for a personal leave of absence for any reason. A student may be approved by the dean of students for a leave of absence of up to four academic quarters.
- **Medical Leave of Absence.** Students may apply for a medical leave of absence if temporarily unable to continue in their program due to illness or injury. A student may be approved for a medical leave of absence by the dean of students for up to four academic quarters.
- **Parental Relief Leave of Absence.** A student who becomes a parent during their program may request a one-quarter Parental Relief Leave of Absence to care for the new child, and pregnant students for whom it is medically necessary, may request a Parental Relief Leave of Absence during pregnancy. Such leaves may be granted by the PME dean of students. Students are still eligible for University privileges during a Parental Leave of Absence. (For more information, refer to the [Graduate Student Parent Policy](#).)
- **Military Leave of Absence.** Students may apply for a military leave of absence in order to fulfill service in armed forces. This includes students from countries outside the United States who leave for service in their country's armed forces.
- **Curricular Degree Leave of Absence.** Students may apply for a leave of absence to pursue another degree program that is integral to their Ph.D. The appropriateness, relevance, and length of time of the additional degree should be evaluated by the student's primary program and requires written endorsement by the program (Director of Graduate Studies, PI, & Dean of Students). A student may be approved by the dean of students for a curricular degree leave of absence for up to three years.

While taking a leave of absence will typically not impact standing in the doctoral program, it sometimes may impact standing within a research group. **Students seeking a leave are encouraged to speak with their PIs about on-going research projects, grant expectations for funding of student research, and long-term plans for the research group *before* finalizing a leave of absence.**

International students should note that immigration regulations require continuous enrollment on a full-time basis. Therefore, **international students must consult with the Office of International Affairs before requesting to take any leave of absence.**

Students who have borrowed through a student loan program, are required to contact Graduate Financial Aid or call 773.702.6061 to arrange for an Exit Counseling meeting to discuss grace period and repayment options. **Failure to meet this requirement may result in restrictions of student privileges.**

For Ph.D. students who matriculated prior to summer quarter 2016, leaves of absence do not extend their eligibility to register beyond the total of twelve years from entry into the Ph.D. program (or ten years for students in the School of Social Service Administration). For students who matriculated in summer quarter 2016 or after, leaves of absence can extend their eligibility to register beyond the total of nine years from matriculation into a Ph.D. program.

Expectations for Leaves of Absence

Certain rights and privileges extended to registered students are generally not available to students on a voluntary leave of absence unless they have received written permission from the Dean of Students or the Dean of Students in the University:

- Students on voluntary leaves of absence do not attend classes;
- Students on voluntary leaves of absence are not eligible for University housing;
- Students on voluntary leaves of absence cannot participate in Recognized Student Organizations (RSO) activities that are not otherwise open to the public;
- The USITE Computing Clusters are not available to students on a leave of absence and email access continues for two quarters only (after one year, all mail files, personal Web pages, and online directory data are deleted).

Students on a voluntary leave of absence may continue to have access to other rights and privileges:

- Athletic facilities are available to students on voluntary leave of absence for a fee;
- Career Advancement and UChicagoGRAD resources are generally available to students on voluntary leave of absence;
- Borrowing privileges at the library are available for a fee (computer workstations are available at the Regenstein Library to anyone with library access);
- Students on a medical leave of absence who are enrolled in U-SHIP may access the on-campus [Student Health Service](#) (SHS) and [Student Counseling Service](#) (SCS) through the remainder of the plan year in which their medical leave of absence was granted (i.e., August 31st). These students will be assessed the quarterly Student Services Fee for access to these on-campus health services. For more information, see the [Student Health Insurance Policy](#) section.

Requesting a Leave of Absence

Students can apply for a leave of absence by sending the PME dean of students a formal request outlining the reason for your leave and your plans while on leave. The request must include:

1. the date when your leave will begin,
2. the quarter you plan to return from your leave,
3. confirmation that your PI is *aware* of your plan to be away from research (note: students do not need to share personal details related to the leave, nor do they need explicit PI support for the leave),
4. and your preferred means of communication and contact information (phone and email).

Requests from students seeking a medical leave of absence must also include:

5. whether or not you are on U-Ship and if you wish to remain on U-Ship during your leave (note: students on medical leave will need to pay the quarterly premiums while on leave)*;
6. and, supporting documentation from your physician or therapist (a statement supporting the leave, confirming that a treatment plan is in place, and noting when they expect you to be able to resume studies).

**Students on medical leave will need to pay for the quarterly premium if they remain on USHIP. The USHIP coverage will continue through the current plan year (August 31st). Because students are eligible for a maximum of four (4) quarters of USHIP coverage, when the Medical/Parental Leave of Absence crosses plan years (e.g., Spring quarter until following Winter quarter), insurance coverage may be provided that crosses two separate plan years, at different premium rates. Students must take action to enroll in USHIP the following autumn quarter if the medical leave will continue in the new plan year. Note that while on USHIP, students will be assessed the University Student Services Fee each quarter (i.e. autumn, winter, spring), unless the student lives 50+ miles from Hyde Park during the leave and have requested an exemption from me as the PME Dean of Students. Payment of the University Student Services Fee allows access to SCS and SHS, which is required to obtain referrals. Exception: Students who live 50+ miles from Hyde park will not be charged the \$50 USHIP non-referral deductible.*