Graduate Student Leave Policies

Voluntary Medical Leave

A graduate student may be granted a voluntary medical leave of absence in cases in which the student’s health is impeding normal academic progress.

Voluntary medical leaves are typically granted for one semester at a time. The student must submit written documentation establishing the need for leave to the Graduate School from a legitimate health care professional, such as a Student Health or Counseling and Psychiatric Services (CAPS) clinician or the student's private or family physician. The Graduate School will decide whether to grant the leave of absence, and may do so in consultation with Student Health, CAPS, and/or private health care professionals. It is preferable, but not mandatory, that Student Health or CAPS be involved before a student departs on a voluntary medical leave of absence. The Graduate School will inform the Registrar when a voluntary medical leave is granted and will inform the student of re-enrollment procedures.

Voluntary medical leaves will be administered according to the Guidelines for Medical Leave of Absences, found in the Student Handbook at http://www.georgetown.edu/student-affairs/policies.html#MedicalLeaveofAbsence.

Parental Leave Policy for Graduate Students

The Graduate School offers support for graduate students who need to take leave in connection with the birth of and/or full time care of a new child during their period of enrollment. The goal in offering this support is to allow graduate students to continue their studies with as little disruption as possible. Parental leave is intended to enable the graduate student to continue to make progress toward his or her degree. It does not grant additional semesters of funding or change the time-to-degree deadlines. This policy requires communication and cooperation in good faith between the student seeking the leave, the faculty, and the student’s department.

The terms of the policy are as follows:

1) To be eligible for parental leave, the graduate student must be the primary and full-time caregiver of a newborn child or a child five years old or younger newly placed in the home.

2) The graduate student must submit a written request no less than three months before the expected date of the start of the leave to the Graduate School’s Associate Dean for Academic Affairs.

3) Graduate students may take up to six weeks of parental leave within the first six weeks immediately following the birth, adoption, or foster placement of a child. The six weeks
of parental leave must be taken consecutively immediately following the birth or placement of the new child. Students seeking parental leave shall provide documentation to the Graduate School sufficient to demonstrate that they are the full-time primary care provider of the child.

4) During parental leave, the graduate student may attend classes and work on course assignments to the extent possible, but his or her program director should advise the professors in these courses to be flexible about attendance and assignment deadlines during the period of leave. Upon the student’s request, he or she will be granted Incompletes in these courses, with the understanding that the courses should be completed by the end of the following semester.

5) Graduate students may request a voluntary medical leave instead of, or in addition to, parental leave. Taking either a voluntary medical leave or a parental leave may have implications for a student’s health insurance. Students should consult with the Student Health Insurance Office prior to requesting either option.

6) International students should consult with the Office of International Programs about the visa consequences of receiving either voluntary medical leave or parental leave. This consultation should occur prior to the submission of the request for parental leave to the Graduate School.

7) Doctoral Graduate Assistants. The following additional terms apply to graduate students in a Ph.D. program with an assistantship.

- The doctoral graduate assistant will continue to receive his or her assistantship stipend during the six weeks of parental leave.

- During the period of parental leave, the doctoral graduate assistant will be relieved of the service requirement of his or her assistantship. During the remainder of the semester (before and/or after parental leave), the doctoral graduate assistant’s program will assign him or her to assistantship duties, consistent with the academic nature of assistantship appointments.

- The granting of requests for parental leave will not affect tuition scholarships held by graduate assistants.

- Students supported by external research grants, fellowships, or awards must follow the policies of their funding agency. Many funding agencies and organizations defer to the institutional policies of the student’s university, but if a funding agency or organization has its own policy, the rules of the granting agency or organization will prevail. If fellowship benefits are suspended or deferred during this period, and the appropriate documentation is submitted, the Graduate School will assume funding responsibility for the period during which the student is on an approved parental leave.
Leave Policies for Doctoral Graduate Assistants

Graduate assistantships offer doctoral students research and teaching opportunities that are an important part of their educational program. Doctoral Graduate Assistants are therefore considered to be students, not University employees.

As part of their academic training, doctoral students who hold an assistantship have a service obligation to assist in teaching, research, or other matters of an academic nature for 15 hours per week. Doctoral students holding assistantships have no paid vacation time, and should schedule their vacations during school holidays or the summer; not during the semester. Faculty should make every effort to honor university holidays for doctoral graduate assistants, however, in the event that doctoral graduate assistants' work (e.g., in labs) must continue during university holidays, they should be given an equal number of days off that are convenient to research and teaching demands at other points during the period of appointment. Doctoral graduate assistants who work during the summer should be compensated in addition to their regular, academic year assistantships and enrolled in the appropriate FICA-exempt graduate assistantship category.