

Policy Title:	Student Leave of Absence Policy
Policy Number:	2005
Sponsor:	Vice President - Academic
Contact:	Manager, Student Experience
Approved by:	Academic Council
Date:	February 21, 2024
Next Review Date:	February 2, 2028

1. Policy Statement

Any student at University of Niagara Falls Canada (UNF) who plans to interrupt their studies for more than one term must request a leave of absence in advance of their expected departure. The student must specify, as part of the request, the intended term start date after the leave.

2. Purpose

UNF recognizes that occasionally, a student may wish or be required to interrupt his/her studies for a limited period of time. It is important for students to understand the implications of a leave of absence upon their overall program completion.

3. Scope

Any student who wishes to take a leave of absence from his/her studies for more than one (1) term should consult with the Student Experience Manager. A "Leave of Absence Request" form must be approved by the relevant Associate Dean.

The student must submit a "[Leave of Absence Request](#)" form at least two (2) weeks prior to the expected start date of the leave. The leave request must contain:

- Expected start date of the leave,
- Expected term start date of return to UNF;
- Reason for the leave; and
- Contact data while on leave.

If a leave of absence is for medical or compassionate grounds, the student must include appropriate documentation with the leave request form.

Student Services shall advise the student of the academic implications of a leave of absence and shall assist the student in developing a leave plan which includes dates of intended return.

The Associate Dean shall only approve a leave if Financial Services verifies a student has cleared all outstanding financial obligations to UNF.

A student on approved leave must contact Student Services prior to his/her return term start to determine availability of courses.

Students holding 'on-leave' status from the University are not normally provided with

academic supervision or with access to the University's facilities, technology, or services. Any student requesting an exception due to extenuating circumstances must provide a written rationale as part of his/her request. Access to the University's facilities, technology, or services during a leave of absence is granted only with prior written permission of the relevant Associate Dean.

The maximum duration for a leave of absence is normally two (2) consecutive terms. If a student is absent from UNF for more than two (2) consecutive terms without prior approval from the Associate Dean, the student may be withdrawn from the University.

Student on leave for periods longer than one (1) term may be subject to changes in their degree program requirements or degree completion pathway.

A student is not normally eligible for a leave of absence during the final research project of his/her program. Any student requesting an exception due to extenuating circumstances must provide a written rationale as part of his/her request.

Exceptions are granted only with the written permission of the Associate Dean.

International students on a leave of absence must ensure they remain in compliance with the terms and conditions of his/her study permit and/or visa. Domestic students on a leave of absence must ensure they remain in compliance with the terms and conditions of his/her student loans.

All documentation for requested leaves, whether approved or denied, will be held in the Registrar's Office as part of the student's official academic record.

Students have the right to appeal to the Vice President Academic (VPA) if the Associate Dean denies a leave of absence. The decision of the VPA is final.

There is no academic penalty associated with an approved leave of absence.

4. Definitions

These definitions apply to terms as they are used in this policy.

Word/Term	Definition
Leave of Absence	A period of time due to personal circumstances during which the student is absent from their studies after approval from the University.

5. Related Policies

- Final Grade Reviews and Appeals Policy Course Changes and Withdrawals Policy.

6. Responsibility

- Students are responsible for requesting a leave of absence in advance of their expected departure. Students are responsible for contacting Student Services to register for courses before term start.
- Students are also responsible for advising Student Services if they are unable to return to their studies when and as planned.
- Students on federal or provincial student loans are responsible for liaising with Financial Services on their eligibility.
- International students are responsible for ensuring they are not in violation of their study permit if they take a leave of absence.
- Student Services is responsible for assisting the student to develop a leave plan.
- The relevant Associate Dean is responsible for reviewing all requests for leaves of absence and for providing a written decision via email to the student within 2 working days. The Associate Dean is also responsible for providing a signed copy of the leave request form to the Registrar's Office for the student's permanent record.
- The Registrar's Office is responsible for retaining all records or leaves of absence, whether, approved or denied, as part of the student academic record.
- The Registrar's Office is responsible for monitoring students who have been absent longer than 2 terms. Student Services is responsible for contacting students on leave to verify their plans to return.
- The student completes and submits a "Leave of Absence Request" to Student Services for review by the Associate Dean (Undergraduate or Graduate Programs) in advance of the expected leave date.
- The Associate Dean forwards the Leave Request Form to Financial Services for clearance prior to reviewing the request.
- Financial Services verifies the status of the student's financial obligations to UNF, signs the request form, and returns it to the Associate Dean.
- If there is no outstanding balance owing to UNF, the Associate Dean reviews the request and determines if it is approved or denied, then advises the student of the decision via email within 2 working days, notifies Student Services of the decision, and provides a copy of the signed leave form to the Registrar's Office.
- If there is an outstanding balance owing to UNF, the Associate Dean denies the request and advises the student of the decision via email within 2 working days, then provides a copy of the signed leave form to the Registrar's Office.

- Once the Associate Dean approves the leave, Student Services ensures the student understands the implications of availability of courses on their return.
- The Registrar's Office records the leave decision in the student record.

The Registrar's Office provides reports each term to Student Services and to academic staff on the approved leaves in progress.