

**SAN JOSE STATE UNIVERSITY
ONE WASHINGTON SQUARE
SAN JOSE, CA 95192**

S15-3, University Policy, Leaves of Absence for Students

Legislative History:

Rescinds S88-1 and S93-1

At its meeting of March 2, 2015, the Academic Senate approved the following policy recommendation presented by Senator Frazier for the Instruction and Student Affairs Committee. This policy outlines general provisions for leaves of absences (LOAs) for students, categories of LOA-eligible students, procedures for LOA applications and processing, exceptions to eligibility, and other items. LOAs for students have been granted for many years at SJSU, according to procedures and practices that have, over time, diverged remarkably from prior policy on the matter. A revision is therefore needed that accounts for procedures now established as well as new proposals.

On October 15, 2019, President Mary A. Papazian signed and approved Amendment A to University Policy S15-3. Amendment A updates LOA categories, eligibility, procedures, and exceptions.

On February 14, 2022, Interim President Steve Perez signed and approved Amendment B to University Policy S15-3. The reorganization of Undergraduate Education and the College of Graduate Studies (CGS) resulted in title changes to the roles named in the Leave-of-Absence Committee. Amendment B corrects these titles and designates the Associate Dean of Inclusive Student Success to replace the Associate Dean of Graduate Studies seat.

Action by University President:

**Approved and signed by
President Mohammad Qayoumi
on March 18, 2015.**

**University Policy:
Leaves of Absence for Students**

Background
and Rationale:

Leaves of absence (LOA) for students have been granted for many years at SJSU, according to procedures and practices that have, over time, diverged remarkably from the two policies previously

passed on the matter (S88-1 and S93-1). A revision is therefore needed that accounts for procedures now established as well as new proposals.

This policy outlines general provisions for LOAs, categories of LOA-eligible students, procedures for LOA applications and processing, exceptions to eligibility, and other items. The policy is guided by certain principles: when considering granting LOA to students, personal and financial hardships should be acknowledged, especially in light of the fact that the granting of an LOA has no deleterious effect on other students or other applicants for admission. Limits on the duration of leaves up to two years should not be imposed as long as the originally stated, legitimate reason remains in effect for the student. Retroactive leaves should be considered in instances in which advising was inadequate or the ability to file for the leave was impaired, such as with a sudden illness, unforeseen surgery, or accident.

In addition to those principles, it should be noted that previous policies S88-1 and S93-1 were far more restrictive than the principles outlined herein. They are also out of date, contained inaccurate information, and referred to offices and personnel no longer in existence.

Resolved: That the following policy be implemented effective immediately.

Approved: February 17, 2015
Vote: 11-0-0
Present: Amante, Branz (non-voting), Bruck (non-voting), Frazier (chair), Hernandez, Huang, Kelley, Kress, McPherson, Miller, Rees, Sullivan-Green, Walters
Absent: Brooks, Campsey, Feist, Sofish
Financial Impact: None
Workload Impact: Possible increase if number of leave-of-absence petitions rise

University Policy

Leaves of Absence for Students

I. General Provisions

Students who have attended at least one semester as matriculated students and who are in good or probationary academic standing may choose to be voluntarily absent from the university (“stop out” or not enroll) for one semester (Fall or Spring) without submission of a leave-of-absence petition or any penalty. A student must return the semester following a stop-out semester and continue his or her enrollment as a matriculated student unless the stop-out semester is immediately followed by an approved leave of absence. If a student does not return in the semester following the one semester stop-out, application for re-admission for the next available admission term is required. If the student is in disqualified status or was disenrolled the previous semester for nonpayment of fees, he or she can neither apply for a leave of absence nor enroll after the initial absent semester without application for re-admission.

II. Categories of Leaves of Absence

Documentation and a personal statement are always required (though see certain limitations below). Supporting memos from faculty advisors or mentors may be included but are optional, except in the case of educational leaves.

1. **Medical Leaves.** These leaves (including physical and mental health leaves) must be supported by submission of the Treating Healthcare Professional’s Verification of Medical Condition Form. Details of the medical condition or the type of healthcare professional consulted should not be included, only that there is a medical condition that justifies the leave and is supported by a State-certified healthcare professional’s authorization with respect to both the severity of the medical condition and the period of need for a leave, as given by means of the Treating Healthcare Professional’s Verification of Medical Condition Form. A semester of pregnancy, maternity, or paternity leave (beyond the first stop-out semester) is acceptable.
2. **Primary Caregiver Leaves.** In most cases, a healthcare professional’s certification of need for the care must be included by submission of the Treating Healthcare Professional’s Verification of Medical Condition Form, as indicated above.
3. **U.S. Military Deployment Leaves.** For students called to U.S. active duty, leave requests must be supported by a copy of the U.S. military orders. Such leaves may be for as long as five years. They may occur during the first semester of matriculation.

4. **Educational Leaves.** These are leaves in which the student gains some value to his or her educational program by being away from campus. The personal statement must address the educational advantage to be gained, and there must be a clear educational objective for award of the leave. At least one supporting letter from an advisor, mentor, or chair from SJSU as well as the consent of the associate dean of the college is also necessary.
5. **Personal Leaves.**
 - a. **Personal Hardship Leave.** This category encompasses a variety of social or financial insecurities, including, but not limited to, financial hardship, temporary job relocation, increased work hours in order to maintain employment, or housing insecurity. A personal statement of understanding is required and must include objectives to resolve the personal insecurity to be able to return successfully to one's studies.
 - b. **International Military Service.** For international students called to active military duty, leave requests must be supported by a copy of the military orders. Such leaves may not exceed four consecutive semesters.

III. Process

To request a leave of absence, undergraduate and graduate students shall submit a petition to the Registrar's Office after obtaining the necessary signatures on the petition. A decision shall be made within 30 days, and the student shall be informed, along with reasons in the case of a denial, via email. Other than for a first-semester leave, leaves shall not be granted for a current semester. Approval by the Registrar or designee for leaves other than first-semester, retroactive, and educational leaves shall be awarded when the reason for the leave is clearly within the parameters of these guidelines and documentation is provided to substantiate the reason.

For first-semester, retroactive, and educational leaves or in cases in which the Registrar determines that a university review is needed, the petition shall be forwarded for ultimate decision to a Leave-of-Absence Committee consisting of the Vice President for Student Affairs (or designee), the Associate Dean of Undergraduate Education, and the Associate Dean of Inclusive Student Success, with a majority vote required for approval. The Registrar or designee shall also serve as a nonvoting member of this committee. Students awarded a leave of absence may return to active enrollment the semester following the leave without application for re-admission. These students are guaranteed the right to return to their department and degree program even if that program has restricted access during the time of the approved leave, such as by admission caps. The Registrar shall inform the departments/schools of the award, denial, extension, and duration of leaves within a timely period.

IV. Leave Durations and Extensions

Fully approved petitions for leaves must be submitted prior to the first semester of the period requested. Leaves, other than for U.S. military duty, may be requested for a maximum of four Fall and Spring semesters, typically two semesters at a time, including an initial stop-out semester. In other words, the initial stop-out semester shall be considered part of the maximum of four consecutive semesters. Petition submission would then be required before the start of the semester following the stop-out semester.

Extensions can be requested prior to the first day of classes following the approved leave by submission of a new leave-of-absence petition. If the request is for a different reason than the original leave, an explanation and documentation for that reason must be provided. Exceptions to the maximum of four consecutive semesters shall be rare.

At the end of the leave period, failure to enroll in classes shall result in disenrollment from the university. Application for re-admission would then become necessary for a return to matriculated status at the university. An early return from leave must be accompanied by written notice to the Registrar's Office in order to activate the student's enrollment once again. For students in academic cohorts, restrictions may apply for early returns; see "Exceptions" below. Students cannot graduate during a leave of absence, so they must enroll in classes the semester following a leave to complete their programs during those semesters.

V. Retroactive Leaves of Absence

Retroactive leaves may be granted for up to two semesters after the semester of the student's last enrollment, excluding summer and winter sessions. These leaves shall modify the enrollment status retroactively. After two semesters, the student will be required to reapply and be subject to current application deadlines.

VI. First-Semester Leaves of Absence

These leaves, which are to be awarded sparingly, are for matriculated students exclusively. Therefore, the student must have been admitted into the university rather than merely applying for admission. Any conditions or provisions imposed on admission status that are still in effect shall carry over to the semester of re-enrollment following the leave.

VII. Course Expiration

Course expiration, as per long-standing SJSU practice, (10 years on undergraduate courses and 7 years on graduate courses) shall remain in effect even for students who have taken leaves of absence. Upon a student's return, the student's catalog rights shall pertain to his or her most recent admission date.

VIII. Exceptions

1. **Graduate Students in RP Status.** Per University Policy S17-5, a further exception to the allowance of a one semester stop-out is for graduate students who have completed all degree requirements except their thesis, project, comprehensive examination, or other culminating experience. These students may not stop out but must maintain continuous enrollment every Fall and Spring semester until the culminating experience has been completed and approved. During this stage of a graduate student's career, leaves of absence for any reason beyond medical or U.S. military duty shall be precluded except under rare circumstances.
2. **International Students.** International students are eligible for leaves of absence when authorized by International Student and Scholar Services. Lack of enrollment for any reason other than prevention of the ability to pursue one's studies by severe medical circumstances shall result in the student having to leave the United States. If the student is able to return from abroad at the expiration of the leave period, he or she shall derive the benefits of having had the formal leave, such as avoiding the readmission process. However, other restrictions, such as in the ability to work within the United States, may be imposed by federal immigration regulations.
3. **Cohort Programs.** Students who are members of an academic cohort may be restricted by their respective departments or schools in the duration of their leaves. Thus one-semester leaves may not be possible if it is necessary for course enrollment to join a future cohort, which usually would start after one academic year.