

LEAVE OF ABSENCE POLICY

This policy applies to all programs, except English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) programs with international students enrolled under F visas.

A leave of absence is a temporary break in a student's attendance during which s/he is considered to be continuously enrolled. If an institution elects to have an enrollment policy that permits a leave of absence, the policy must be published in the institution's catalog/handbook and must comply with the following requirements:

1. A leave of absence may be granted for emergency situations such as a serious illness, debilitating injury, or death in the immediate family.
2. A student must submit a written request for a leave of absence in advance of the beginning date of the leave of absence, unless unforeseen circumstances prevent the student from doing so. If a student does not request a leave of absence within a timeframe consistent with the institution's consecutive absence policy, s/he must be withdrawn.
3. The student must sign and date the leave of absence request and specify a reason for the leave. The reason must be identified in order for the institution to have a reasonable expectation of the student's return within the timeframe of the leave of absence as requested.
4. The student must attest to understanding the procedures and implications for returning or failing to return to his/her course of study.
5. The institution must document its approval decision relative to the leave of absence request in accordance with its published policy.
6. The institution must not assess the student any additional charges as a result of the leave of absence.
7. The length and frequency of leaves of absence must not impede student progress and must be reasonable within the context of the institution's curriculum.
8. A leave of absence must be limited to a maximum of 180 calendar days in any 12-month period or one-half the published program length, whichever is shorter. Multiple leaves of absence may be permitted provided the total of the leaves does not exceed this limit. An approved leave of absence may be extended for an additional period of time provided that the extension request meets all of the above requirements, and the total length of the leave of absence does not exceed the specified limit.
9. A leave of absence policy must also be in compliance with any applicable state and federal regulations. Federal or state regulations may differ from ACCET policy, and if stricter, take precedence. For example, a leave of absence granted to international students enrolled on M-1 and F-1 visas must be limited to five months, during which time the students must be out of the United States.