

Procedure for Obtaining a Leave of Absence

SMU

Southern Methodist University



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Section 1: General Information (Please Read First)

What is a leave of absence?

A leave of absence is a temporary leave from the university – a kind of “time out” which may be necessary during your undergraduate career.

Why do students take leaves of absence?

Students may elect to take leave of absences for a variety of reasons, including:

Medical reasons due to accident or illness;

Family crises or some other personal situation that requires you to be away from school for some period of time;

Financial issues which may take time to resolve;

Academic difficulties which may best be handled by taking some time to refocus on your college work.

How long does a leave of absence last?

Typically, a leave of absence is for one semester or one academic year. A leave may be extended by contacting your academic department representative.

Is it easy to return to SMU?

Yes, the process can be an easy one especially if you have gone through the steps to file for a leave of absence and you plan ahead for your return. Following these guidelines will help assure that the degree requirements per the catalog of record when you initially matriculated at SMU still apply on your return; assist with financial aid processing; and provide you with the support you need to successfully return to SMU and finish your undergraduate degree.

I am thinking about taking a leave of absence. What do I do?

Everything you need to know, and all the steps you need to take are in this handbook.

I receive financial aid from state and federal sources. What should I do?

If at all possible, you should plan to meet with your financial aid adviser before making a final decision to withdraw. Your financial aid adviser will review your awarded aid and discuss with you any potential consequences of and/or impact on your aid status associated with your withdrawal. More information about this impact is available at www.smu.edu/srk/FinAid/finaidtitleIV.asp

Does a leave of absence automatically cancel my classes?

No. You must first meet with your adviser, complete the Leave of Absence form and submit the completed form to the Division of Enrollment Services – University Registrar’s Office. The effective date of the leave of absence is the date on which the Leave of Absence form is processed in the Registrar’s Office. Discontinuance of class attendance or notification to the instructors of intention to withdraw does not constitute an official withdrawal. If you cannot physically reach the SMU campus, then you should contact your advisor as soon as possible.

I plan to permanently leave SMU. Should I file for a leave of absence?

Yes. You may change your mind and decide to return to SMU in the future.

If I withdraw without taking a leave of absence, am I eligible to purchase health insurance?

No. If you do not take a leave of absence you are ineligible to purchase health insurance through the university.

While I am on a leave of absence, may I take courses at another college or university?

Leaves of absence are generally granted in order to give students time to deal with personal, family, financial, and/or medical reasons. A leave of absence is not a means to try to circumvent SMU's residency requirements. You should not plan to take courses at another institution during a leave of absence. In the event that you wish to pursue course work at another institution during your leave and receive credit upon your return to SMU, you should secure the necessary approvals IN ADVANCE. Please contact and discuss this option with your academic adviser.

Section 2: Filing for a Leave of Absence **Prior to the Start of the Semester**

Step One: Meet with your adviser

If you have not yet declared a major, meet with your academic adviser, review your reasons for taking a leave of absence, and retrieve a Leave of Absence form. Follow the required steps to complete the Leave of Absence form.

If you have declared a major, meet with your departmental adviser to review your reasons for taking a leave of absence, review your remaining degree requirements and retrieve a Leave of Absence form. Follow the required steps to complete the Leave of Absence form.

Step One - A: International Students

If you are an undergraduate international student, meet with an adviser in the International Office before finalizing your plans for a leave of absence. The United States Immigration and Customs and Enforcement Agency, (ICE), regulations require all undergraduates on student visas to maintain 12 credit hours per semester to be considered a full-time student. Students who find it necessary to take a leave of absence for reasons other than medical will usually be required to return to their country of origin until they are eligible to return to the United States of America. Please meet with your Foreign Student Adviser for complete details regarding your circumstances.

Step Two: Financial Aid

If you have been receiving scholarships, grants, or loans, follow the steps in Section 4 of this handbook. If your leave of absence is prompted by financial concerns, and you have not already done so, please set-up a meeting with a financial aid adviser to see if there are financial aid options available to help you avoid withdrawing from the term.

Step Three: Cancelling Enrollment

You must drop any courses in which you have enrolled for the upcoming term. You should complete this process in person and cannot do it electronically. If you are unable to do this in person, then you should contact your adviser for assistance. If you have pending Incomplete (I) grades and are unable to complete them prior to taking a leave of absence, you should meet with your professor to file for an extension. If this extension is not granted, these incomplete grades will become failing grades or “Fs.” Please note that the Incomplete Agreement that is signed by you and your professor has a maximum of up to 12 months to fulfill your course requirement.

Step Four: Housing

If you have a housing contract, you must contact the office of Residential Life and Student Housing (RLSH), at 214.768.2407, to inform them you are no longer enrolled in courses for the semester. You must follow the RLSH procedures to officially terminate your contract and to discuss any continued financial obligations. You must also personally cancel your meal plan at the Park ‘N Pony Office. RLSH does not automatically cancel the meal plan for you.

Step Five: Parking

If you have purchased and picked-up a parking decal, you will have thirty-days to return it to Parking Services (the Park ‘N Pony Office) for a full refund. If you have purchased but never picked-up your parking decal, you will receive a full refund when you complete the leave of absence process.

Step Six: SMU Identification Card

Once you have withdrawn from all of your courses, you are eligible for a 100% refund of any remaining balance on your Pony account minus a \$25 processing fee. Your refund will be mailed 3-5 business days after Park ‘N Pony is notified of your leave of absence.

Step Seven: Student Health Insurance

Check the status of your health insurance. If you have SMU Health Insurance, you will be discontinued from the program and receive a refund if you are not enrolled after the third week of classes. Keep in mind that if you are covered under your parents’ insurance policy, you generally have to be a full-time student (enrolled in a minimum of 12 credits) to qualify for coverage.

Step Eight: Library Books

You must return all library books or you will be assessed the charges to replace the book(s), plus processing fee(s) and fine(s).

Step Nine: Tuition and Fee Bill/Outstanding Charges

You must clear the bill for your student and miscellaneous accounts with the University. Make sure that you have no outstanding charges or that you have made the necessary payment arrangements. You should meet with someone from the Student Financial Services' Office to discuss the status of your account.

Section Three: Filing for a Leave of Absence **During the Semester**

Step One: Meet with your Adviser

If you have not yet declared a major, meet with your academic adviser, review your reasons for taking a leave of absence, and retrieve a Leave of Absence form. Follow the required steps to complete the Leave of Absence form.

If you have declared a major, meet with your departmental adviser to review your reasons for taking a leave of absence, review your remaining degree requirements and retrieve a Leave of Absence form. Follow the required steps to complete the Leave of Absence form.

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If you have been receiving scholarships, grants, or loans, follow the steps in Section 4 of this handbook. If your leave of absence is prompted by financial concerns, and you have not already done so, please set-up a meeting with a financial aid adviser to see if there are financial aid options available to help you avoid taking a withdrawal from the term since there could be further financial obligations. For more information go to www.smu.edu/skr/FinAid/finaidtitleIV.asp.

Step Three: Housing

If you have a housing contract, you must contact the office of Residential Life and Student Housing (RLSH), at 214.768.2407, to inform them you are no longer enrolled in courses for the semester. You must follow the RLSH procedures to officially check out of your assigned room and to discuss your financial obligations. You must also personally cancel your meal plan at the Park 'N Pony Office. RLSH does not automatically cancel your meal plan for you.

Step Four: Dropping Courses

Before the end of the fifth day of classes: After completing the Leave of Absence form you must officially withdraw from your courses for the term at the Registrar's Office. This will result in no courses showing on your transcript for the semester, and a pro-rata refund per the schedule found in the publication *Financial Information: Southern Methodist University*, which is found at www.smu.edu/bursar.

After the fifth day of classes and before the conclusion of the tenth week of classes: After completing the Leave of Absence form you must officially withdraw from your courses for the term at the Registrar's office. This will result in your receiving grades of **W** in each course in which you were enrolled. Any refunds of personal payments or from reduction of tuition costs, if applicable, will be determined according to the percentage listed in the publication *Financial Information: Southern Methodist University* which is found at www.smu.edu/bursar.

After the tenth week of classes: Due to an unforeseeable and/or unavoidable illness or emergency which occurs after the tenth week you should pursue grades of Incomplete by speaking with each of your professors. You may receive a grade of Incomplete (**I**) if at least 50 percent of the course requirements have been completed with passing grades and your professor accepts as a justifiable reason your request for Incomplete grades. If you are unable to complete your **I** before the established deadline, you should contact your professor to request an extension.

Step Five: Tuition Refund Insurance

If you withdraw during a semester and you are participating in the Dewar's Tuition Refund Plan (TRP), and if the reason for your leave of absence is medical, you may file a claim for a TRP credit. Forms for filing a claim are located in Student Financial Services in the Blanton Building.

Step Six: Parking

If you have purchased and picked-up a parking decal, you will have 30 days to return it to Parking Services (the Park 'N Pony Office) for a full refund. If you have purchased but never picked up your parking decal, you will receive a full refund when you complete the leave of absence process.

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Check the status of your health insurance. If you have SMU Health Insurance, you will be discontinued from the program and receive a refund if you are not enrolled after the third week of classes. Keep in mind that if you are covered under your parents' insurance

policy, you generally have to be a full-time student (enrolled in a minimum of 12 credits) to qualify for coverage.

Step Nine: Library Books

You must return all library books or you will be assessed the charges to replace the book(s), plus processing fee(s) and fine(s).

Step Ten: Tuition and Fee Bill/Outstanding Charges

You must clear the bill for your student and miscellaneous accounts with the University. Make sure that you have no outstanding charges or that you have made the necessary payment arrangements. You should meet with someone from the Student Financial Services' Office to discuss the status of your account before your withdrawal is completed.

Section Four: What You Should Know About Financial Aid

Step One: Let Us Know

Since financial aid involves many important variables, it is one the reasons they are included as part of this process. You should make sure that you meet with your financial aid adviser to fully discuss any impact your withdrawal will have on your aid status. Please note the Financial Aid Office will at the beginning of the term cancel your aid for any semester that you are not enrolled.

Step Two: Student Loans

If you have borrowed student loans, ask your lender or servicer how your leave of absence will affect your grace period and repayment. If you are not already in repayment, expect to enter repayment immediately or after expiration of the grace period, depending upon the loan. If you begin to receive loan billing statements, do not ignore them. Call the lender(s) to inquire about deferment and forbearance possibilities. Keep copies of all correspondence you send to your lender(s). Once you re-enroll at least half-time, notify each lender and inquire about an in-school deferment.

Federal Stafford Loan, Federal PLUS Loans: If you are not sure who your lender is, log into www.nslds.ed.gov/nslds_SA/ to find that information.

For private loan programs such as CitiAssist or Sallie Mae Signature Loan, please notify your lender of your leave of absence.

Step Three: Work Study

If you have a work-study job, you must notify your employer of the date your leave of absence begins. You must stop earning money through the Federal Work-Study program as of the date you drop to half-time enrollment.

Step Five: SMU Scholarships and Grants

Recipients of Presidential, Hunt Leadership, International Baccalaureate, and Distinguished Scholarships notify the University scholarship administrator about a

planned leave of absence will be considered for a leave of absence from the scholarship program. You will be notified in writing of the status of your scholarship and if you are approved for a leave. The letter will state the conditions for the reinstatement of your scholarship. Before you return to SMU, you must **notify** the Financial Aid Office and the scholarship administrator of your expected date of return.

Step Six: Other Renewable Academic Scholarships

If you are the recipient of any other renewable academic scholarships, you must notify the awarding agency or department in writing of your leave of absence. Specify the reason for the leave as well as its expected duration. If you are approved for a leave of absence from the scholarship program, please request reinstatement of the scholarship prior to your return to SMU.

Step Seven: Returning in the Spring Semester

If your leave of absence occurs before or during the fall semester and you plan to return in the spring semester of the same academic year, you should complete the financial aid application process if you have not already done so. This includes responding to requests for additional information. If you have already been awarded financial aid for the academic year and you have notified the Financial Aid Office about your planned leave of absence, the Financial Aid Office will send you a revised Award Notice, if one is required. You should call your Financial Aid Advisor at least six weeks prior to your return to insure that you have done everything you need to do to receive your funds.

Step Eight: Returning in a Future Academic Year

If you will not be returning to SMU until a future academic year (fall or spring), plan ahead for your return. Check the financial aid website, www.smu.edu/financial_aid for required forms and deadlines for aid application in the new academic year. You must also continue to satisfy all financial aid general eligibility requirements; for example, you must not default on a student loan while you are on your leave of absence.

Section Five: Returning to SMU

Step One: Let Us Know!!!

Before you return, contact your academic department/adviser to inform them of your return date. They will notify the Registrar's Office of your impending return.

Step Two: Contact Financial Aid

Please review the financial aid website, www.smu.edu/financial_aid for applications that need to be completed for consideration of financial assistance. It is your responsibility to insure to request and to complete the application materials and to apply by the stated deadlines for complete eligibility. Priority deadlines for completion of aid applications for fall enrollment are March 1 and spring enrollment are November 1.

Step Three: Contact Housing

If you wish to reside on campus, you must contact the Residence Life and Student Housing Office, 214.768.2407, to request the necessary forms to reapply for campus

housing. Campus housing is limited; so you should reapply for housing as soon as you know when you will be returning to SMU.

Step Four: Contact and Meet With Your Adviser

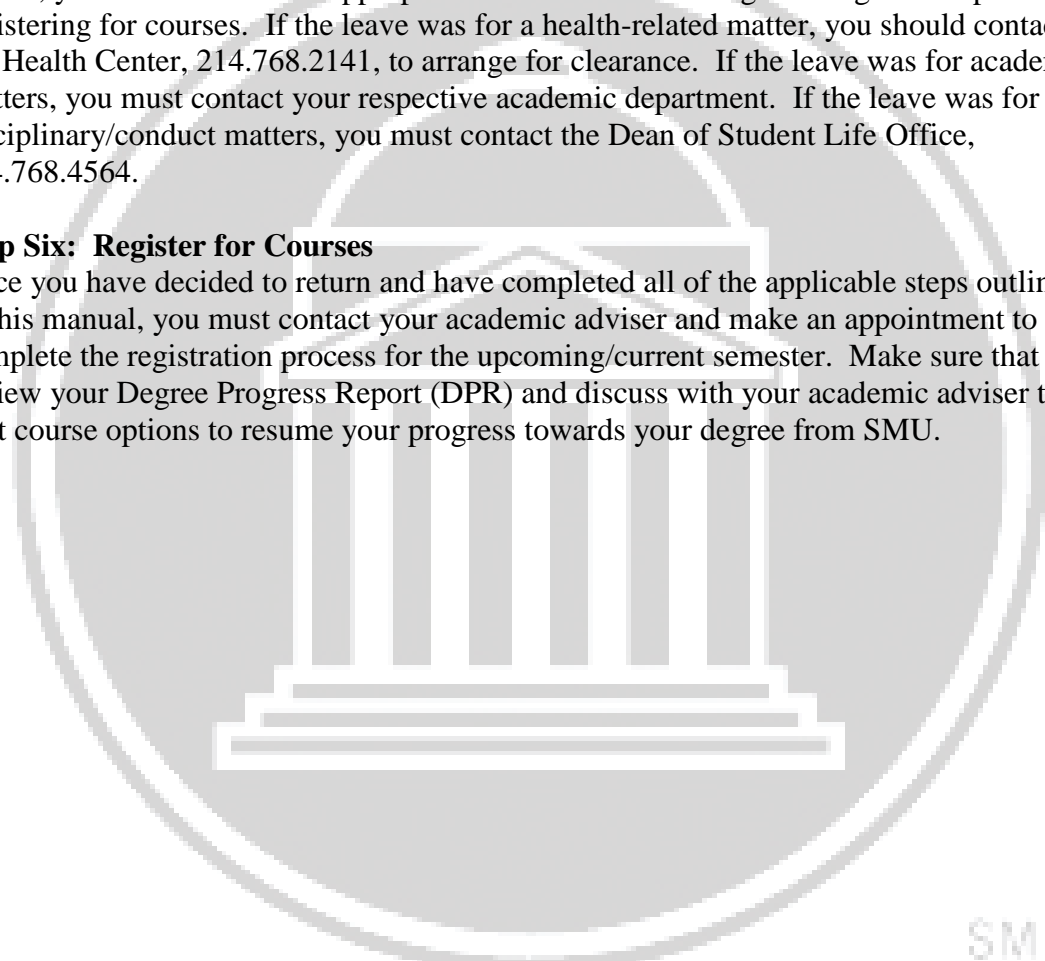
In order to register, you must first meet with your academic adviser and have the leave of absence hold lifted from your student records.

Step Five: Receive Appropriate Clearances

If your leave of absence was due to a medical reason or for an academic or disciplinary reason, you must receive the appropriate clearances from the governing offices prior to registering for courses. If the leave was for a health-related matter, you should contact the Health Center, 214.768.2141, to arrange for clearance. If the leave was for academic matters, you must contact your respective academic department. If the leave was for disciplinary/conduct matters, you must contact the Dean of Student Life Office, 214.768.4564.

Step Six: Register for Courses

Once you have decided to return and have completed all of the applicable steps outlined in this manual, you must contact your academic adviser and make an appointment to complete the registration process for the upcoming/current semester. Make sure that you review your Degree Progress Report (DPR) and discuss with your academic adviser the best course options to resume your progress towards your degree from SMU.



Welcome Back!

The guidelines addressing this new SMU policy are modeled after the policies governing leave of absence at the University of Southern California (USC).

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Leave of Absence Procedure Summary

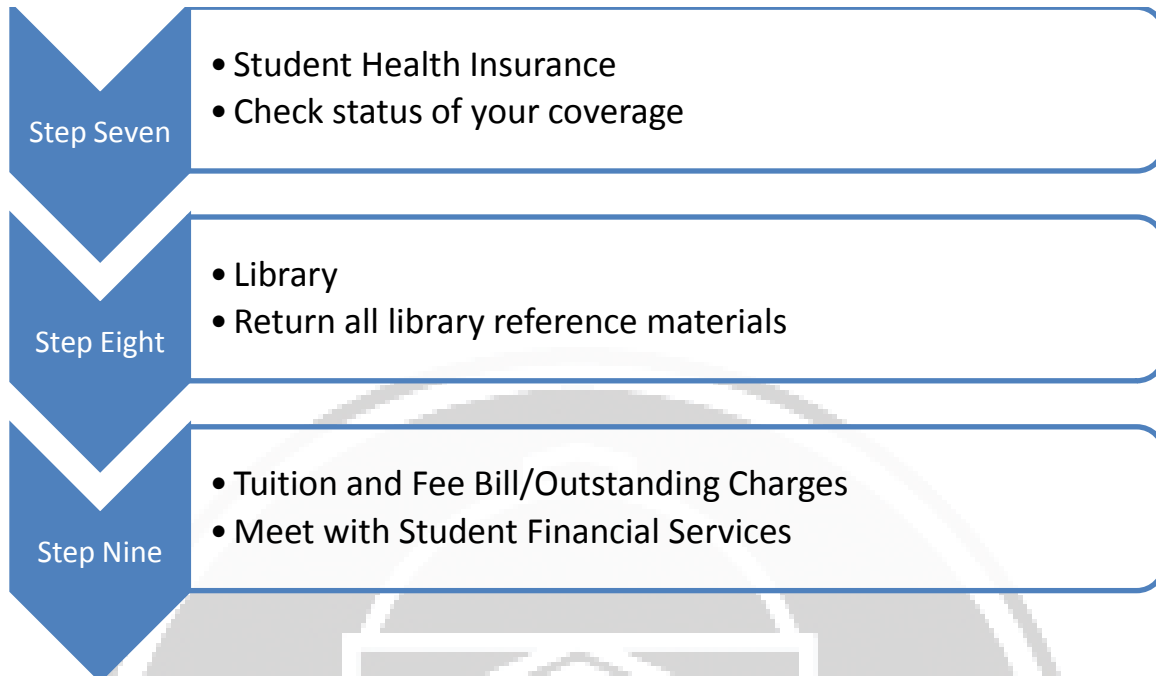
LOA Prior to the Start of the Term



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LOA During the Term

