

Leave of Absence Policy

Students may determine that personal, medical, or financial circumstances necessitate postponing their normal academic program for at least one semester, with the intention of returning within two years to complete their degree, which can be considered a temporary separation from the university. This is considered a Leave of Absence (LOA). Students on leave are considered to be in continuous matriculation during the leave period. However, students should speak to their SHU Financial Assistance counselor to understand implications regarding their financial aid. **No leave of any kind will be granted after the last day of classes of the semester in which the leave is requested.**

General Policies & Guidelines

Students who are approved for a leave of absence must adhere to the following:

- Must vacate university housing on the date the LOA is approved. In rare, extreme situations a student may request minimal flexibility with this deadline from the Office of the Dean of Students.
- May not be on campus, visit as a guest, or attend college-sponsored events during the time of the leave. This includes participating in clubs, organizations, athletic activities, events, and campus employment, or using facilities or services that are afforded to current students (i.e., health or counseling services, library, recreation facilities).
- May not enroll in courses for the purpose of advancing his/her academic status at Sacred Heart University or another institution, unless the student has completed and submitted the [Transfer Request Permission form](#) and is approved by SHU officials.
- Students who do not return at the end of the leave or do not obtain an extension must apply for readmission. Students on leave must follow University policy before they return to the University, as outlined below.
- This policy does not bind the University to alter the curricula or major program, which may have been discontinued or substantially altered during the approved leave. Students who change their major upon their return will be under the major requirements in effect at the time of their return.
- Graduation requirements in effect for students at the time their approved leave begins will remain in effect when they return from their leave under the following conditions:
 - For Personal Leaves of Absence, the student must be in good academic and disciplinary standing at Sacred Heart University when their leave began.
 - For all Leaves of Absence, if a student was later placed on academic warning, probation, dismissal, suspension or expelled as the result of a judicial decision, the sanctions in place take precedence over the leave of absence.

Personal Leave of Absence

A student who plans to leave the College on a temporary basis for personal reasons, such as a financial or family- related matter, must complete and submit a [Leave of Absence Request Form](#) which will be provided after contact with the Dean of Students Office.

Medical Leave of Absence

At times, students need a leave of absence from the university for significant health-related issues. This policy applies to all active students at the university. In these circumstances, the student can request a medical leave of absence. The university reserves the right, in its discretion, to determine the length of the leave, taking into consideration the best outcome for the student. The outline below is provided to help reference each stage throughout the medical leave. All medical leaves follow the withdraw deadline of the active semester a student is requesting to leave.

Medical Leave of Absence Exit Process

1. Initial Contact

The student should first contact the **Dean of Students** to inform them of their intention to request a medical leave. During this conversation, the student will receive important information regarding the impact of the leave on their course of study and the process for returning.

2. Contacting the Appropriate Office:

The next step depends on the nature of the medical issue:

- **For mental health-related leaves:**

Contact the [Counseling Center](#) to initiate the leave request.

- **For physical health-related leaves:**

The communication will remain in the [Office of the Dean of Students](#).

In either case, the respective office will follow up with the student to gather any necessary additional information. A meeting may be scheduled as part of this follow-up process.

3. Approval and Documentation

Once the leave is approved by the **Counseling Center** (for mental health-related requests) or the **Office of the Dean of Students** (for physical health-related requests), the student will be notified. The student must then complete the [University Withdrawal/Leave of Absence form](#) indicating the reason as a medical leave of absence.

Medical Leave of Absence Return Process

Students wishing to return to school from medical leave should first contact the office associated with their initial medical leave request (Counseling Center/Office of the Dean of Students). It is

important that this request be made at least 21 business days prior to the intended semester start date. The timeline of the return is dependent on many factors, including but not limited to the timeliness of documentation submitted by the outside provider(s), the internal review process, and further contact with outside providers if more information is needed. It is possible that these factors will delay the return until the following semester rather than the semester for which the student is initially seeking to return. Students may be asked to provide releases of information with their treatment provider(s). Upon the student's request to return, the student will provide the following information **for each provider associated with their treatment:**

The name of the **licensed** provider with specialty in the area in which the student warranted treatment for, in addition to:

- Provider phone and fax number
- Provider email
- Name and location of the treatment center associated with the provider

Depending on the nature of the medical leave, and individual circumstances surrounding the initial leave, the provider will be sent the necessary documentation to be completed. The review process will begin once documentation from **all providers has been received**. If applicable, the personal statement outlined in the paragraph below will also need to be received. For mental health related leaves, this review process is conducted by the Executive Director of Counseling or designee, and if for physical/medical related leaves, this review process is conducted by the Dean of Students or designee. Please note the following:

- The return will be evaluated on a case-by-case basis, including whether a return to academics and/or housing is appropriate.
- Readmittance to the university does not guarantee readmittance into the student's previous program. Students should refer to the processes in the program student guide.
- The university reserves the right, in their discretion, to request a mental health evaluation from an independent provider, at the cost of the student, and at the choosing of the university.
- The office associated with the leave may request that more information be provided at a later date, if it is determined that the information provided in the documentation is not sufficient.
- Depending on individual circumstances, and during the review process, the office in receipt of the request to return may involve additional offices as necessary for the review.
- If the student needs accommodation(s) upon return, it is the responsibility of the student to contact the Office of Student Accessibility for assistance surrounding these needs.

If the reason related to the leave pertains to mental health, students will be asked to submit a personal statement describing (1) the experience away from the University, including activities undertaken (i.e. classes taken, employment, hobbies); (2) their current understanding of the factors that led to the need to take a leave; (3) insights gained from treatment, and (4) how the student will use that insight to make for a successful return.

If approved, the appropriate university office will be contacted to process the paperwork; allowing the student to access their account(s) and register for courses.

If not approved, the student may appeal the decision to the Dean of Students, or designee, whose decision shall be final.

Administrative-Initiated Leave of Absence

In some cases, students may need a leave of absence from the university due to behavioral or mental health concerns but are unable to request a voluntary leave themselves. An administrative-initiated leave may be imposed when a student:

- Poses a credible risk of substantial harm to themselves or others within the university community; or
- Significantly disrupts the educational, residential, or other activities of the university.

Before placing a student on administrative leave, the university will work with the student to determine whether reasonable accommodations can reduce the risk. If no such accommodations are feasible, the leave may be initiated. All decisions will comply with applicable federal and state laws.

The final decision rests with the Office of the Dean of Students, following review and recommendations from the Student Care Team and the Threat Assessment Team.

Administrative-Initiated Leave Withdrawal Procedure

1. Notification

The Office of the Dean of Students (or designee) will notify the student in writing if an administrative leave is being considered, including the rationale. While under consideration, the student may not be on campus or participate in classes, activities, athletics, or university housing. Online learning accommodations may be considered if appropriate. The student will be given an opportunity to respond to the concerns presented.

2. Review

The Student Care Team and Threat Assessment Team will review incident reports and related documentation. Faculty, staff, or coaches may also be consulted.

3. **Recommendations**

Findings and recommendations will be submitted to the Office of the Dean of Students (or designee).

4. **Independent Evaluation**

The university may require the student to undergo an evaluation by an independent licensed provider (e.g., mental health professional). The student is responsible for related costs and may be required to sign releases for the university to access relevant information.

5. **Decision**

After review, the Office of Student Conduct and Community Standards will contact the student. The written decision will include the length and conditions of the administrative leave.

Appeal Process

- The student may appeal by submitting a written petition to the Dean of Students within **two (2) business days** of receiving the decision.
- The petition may include additional relevant information, such as documentation from providers.
- The Student Care Team and Dean of Students will review any new information.
- The Dean of Students will communicate the final decision in writing. This decision is final.

Administrative-Initiated Leave Return Process

Students seeking to return from an administrative leave must:

1. Contact both the Dean of Students and the **Counseling Center designee**.
2. Provide the Counseling Center designee with the names and contact information of all licensed treatment providers (if the leave was mental health-related).
3. Submit a personal statement addressing:
 - Activities undertaken while away from the university.
 - Their understanding of the factors leading to the leave.
 - Insights gained from treatment or time away.
 - Plans for applying those insights to ensure a successful return.

The Counseling Center designee will obtain and review documentation from the student's providers. Final approval for return will be made by the Dean of Students and/or the Student Care Team lead after all documentation has been reviewed.

If approved, the appropriate university office will be contacted to process the paperwork; allowing the student to access their account(s) and register for courses.

If not approved, the student may appeal the decision to the Dean of Students, or designee, whose decision shall be final.

Financial Implications for any Leave of Absence

There may be financial implications for taking a leave of absence. Based on the last date of attendance, the semester's billing will be adjusted in accordance with the University withdrawal policy. Depending on the type of financial assistance provided, a calculation may be required to determine the percentage of aid earned for the semester.

Federal Aid Calculation:

If a student's last date of attendance is before 60% of the semester is complete (approximately 8-9 weeks into the semester) and they have received federal (Title IV) or state aid, then their financial aid will be recalculated, according to the percentage of the semester that was completed. The Federal Title IV formula for calculating this percentage is:

$$(\text{Days enrolled}) - (\text{Official breaks of five days or longer}) = \text{Total number of class days in the semester}$$

$$(\text{Number of class days enrolled in semester}) / (\text{Total number of class days in semester}) = \% \text{ completed}$$

If a student's last date of attendance is after 60% or more of the semester has elapsed, the student will have earned 100% of the financial aid awarded to them.

Institutional Aid Calculation:

The calculation for institutional aid earned is in line with the [Official Withdrawal Policy set by the Office of Student Accounts](#).

Semester Cost Calculation:

Review the [withdrawal/cost adjustment schedule](#):

Tuition is **reduced** by the below-noted percentage value based on the last date of attendance/withdrawal date in accordance with the length of the semester/term from which the student withdraws.

Flat-rate programs require withdrawal from **all** courses for tuition reduction. Per credit program tuition is adjusted based on the specific course withdrawal.

Fall & Spring Semesters (On Ground/Hybrid/ESL evening classes 9 to 16+week semesters)

- 100% **Before** start of 1st week through the Add/Drop deadline of the semester
- 80% **Before** start of 3rd week

- 60% **Before** start of 4th week
- 40% **Before** start of 5th week
- 20% **Before** start of 6th week
- 0% **After** start of 6th week

8-week terms (Modular/Online programs, including ESL)

- 100% **Before** start of first week
- 80% **During** the 1st week of Classes
- 0% **After** the 1st week of Classes

Intensive Terms (terms less than 8 weeks)

- 100% **Before** start of 1st week
- 0% **Once** class begins