THE GLASGOW SCHOOL OF ART

Leave of Absence Guidance

Academic Registry

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LEAVE OF ABSENCE GUIDANCE

1. What is a Leave of Absence?

1.1 During their period of enrolment, students may experience a range of significant challenges that might impact on their ability to fully engage with their programme of study and to maximise their academic potential. In certain situations, a student may decide to apply for an authorised break from study, this is known as a *Leave of Absence*.

1.2 Leave of Absence from studies has wider implications, detailed in §3, therefore, the decision to take an authorised break from studies should not be taken lightly.

1.3 A Leave of Absence is not an automatic entitlement and may be refused depending upon the circumstances and the evidence provided.

1.4 Once granted a Leave of Absence from their studies, a student is normally unable to return within the same academic session.

1.5 A Leave of Absence should not be sought, nor would be granted, as a means to extend study periods.

1.6 A Leave of Absence can only be requested and approved for one academic session. Under ***exceptional circumstances***, Leave of Absence may be renewed for one further academic session.

1.7 Academic regulations set out the minimum and maximum timescale within which a programme of study must be completed. A student applying for Leave of Absence must be able to resume studies and complete their programme within the **required timescale.** Further details regarding minimum and maximum programme duration can be obtained within the University of Glasgow Regulations for 'Degrees, Diplomas and Certificates awarded in conjunction with The Glasgow School of Art: https://www.gla.ac.uk/myglasgow/apg/policies/uniregs/#currentedition

2. Who is eligible to apply for a Leave of Absence?

2.1 Any full or part time student who is enrolled and is not at risk of exceeding the maximum duration of study of an undergraduate, postgraduate or research programme at the Glasgow School of Art as per the programme regulations.

3. Leave of Absence – Implications

Student Enrolment Status

3.1 Once a Leave of Absence application has been approved, the student ceases to have an *Enrolled* student enrolment status for their period of absence. Their registration status will be recorded as being "Leave of Absence" for the period of absence.

3.2 Students who are granted a Leave of Absence are not entitled to access GSA provision, such as attending classes, teaching, tutorials, academic supervision, GSA residential accommodation (see §3.10-3.12) or Student Counselling Services during the period of authorised absence. In addition, they are also not eligible to undertake any assessments or examinations during the Leave of Absence period.

3.3 Students on a Leave of Absence have no borrowing rights. There is no automatic entitlement to Canvas (however, the GSA student email address would remain active). Students should return all borrowed material ahead of taking a Leave of Absence.

3.4 Students who are granted Leave of Absence may not enrol as a GSA exchange student at one of GSA's partner institutions. The period covered by a student's Leave of Absence will also invalidate any entitlement to exchange grants (e.g. Turing Grants and/or any Travel Bursary awarded through GSA from external/internal donors since these require a student to be fully enrolled at GSA). In some instances, this may require a student to re-pay monies already disbursed. Further, Leave of Absence will not be granted on the grounds that a student, having completed the period of exchange, wishes to extend their stay for the remainder of the academic session at the partner institution. This includes as a continuing exchange student, if permitted by the partner school, or as a fee-paying independent period of study at the partner school.

3.5 Any pre-existing GSA processes, (such as investigations into plagiarism, misconduct etc) would normally continue during any approved Leave of Absence.

3.6 All time spent on Leave of Absence for Undergraduate and Taught Postgraduate programmes still counts towards the maximum permitted period of registration.

Financial Implications

3.7 If considering and before making an application for Leave of Absence students should arrange an appointment with a Student Welfare Advisor at welfare@gsa.ac.uk to discuss the impact that a Leave of Absence may have on their tuition fee funding, student loan, scholarship etc. Students should also contact their funding body and/or the Student Loans Company concerning the implications of a Leave of Absence relative to their current and future funding.

3.8 GSA is obliged to contact a student's funding authority if there is a change to their enrolment status. Students are strongly advised to notify their funding provider or other sponsor when considering or taking Leave of Absence.

3.9 A student that is required to repeat part of their programme on return from Leave of Absence will normally be expected to pay tuition fees for the part of the programme they are repeating.

Students should contact Student Welfare for advice (welfare@gsa.ac.uk) regarding repeat year funding.

3.10 Students who are on a Leave of Absence may be entitled to council tax exemption but should query this with their local council.

Accommodation

3.11 If a student living in GSA's student residential accommodation is granted a Leave of Absence or withdraws from their programme, then their halls of residence contract will be concluded from the day that keys are returned to the Accommodation Office.

3.12 In order to facilitate travel or onward planning students may be permitted to extend their stay within residential accommodation. Rent and contract duration will be calculated only for accommodation used and until keys are returned to the Accommodation Office.

3.13 If applicable, students considering a Leave of Absence are advised to contact the Residential Accommodation Manager regarding their early exiting from the halls of residence.

Visa Implications

3.14 International students who are in the UK on a student visa, will find their right to remain in the UK affected by a Leave of Absence from their study. During a period of Leave of Absence, the student's visa (and those of any dependants) will be cancelled and they will be required to return to their home country for the duration of their Leave of Absence. Students will be required to apply for a new visa before returning to study.

3.15 International students who are in the UK on a student visa and considering a Leave of Absence are strongly advised to arrange an appointment with a Student Welfare Adviser (welfare@gsa.ac.uk).

4. Grounds for Applying for a Leave of Absence

4.1 The student enrolment status of *Leave of Absence* covers both medical and non-medical circumstances.

4.2 All Leaves of Absence which are categorised as being for *Medical* reasons may require a medical certificate or letter to be submitted at the time of applying for the Leave of Absence and at the time of submitting the *Return Confirmation Form*.

4.3 Non-medical grounds for Leave of Absence are as follows, and students are required to state the grounds on which they are applying and provide the necessary supporting evidence:

- Pregnancy and Maternity Related Absence constitutes a separate category of Leave of Absence and statutory Guidance should be followed. Pregnant students are advised to read GSA's Student Pregnancy and Maternity Policy published at: https://gsadocuments.net/wp-content/uploads/2024/01/Student-Pregnancy-andMaternity-Support-Policy.pdf

- Maternity Support Related Absence: Considered valid grounds for a Leave of Absence application.

- Transfer of degree programme: This is relevant in situations where it is too late in the current academic session to transfer programmes.

- Placements: The category of "Placement" should be used to cover all approved absences arising when students are temporarily absent from GSA while undertaking an industrial placement or internship which is not part of their programme of study.

- Other: The reasons for Leave of Absence arising from situations such as family bereavement, financial hardship and other adverse personal circumstances.

5. Evidence Requirements

5.1 Leave of Absence is not an automatic entitlement for non-medical situations, and the student must give valid reasons and supporting documents to evidence their request in order to have their application considered.

5.2 Leave of Absence on appropriately evidenced medical grounds will normally be automatically authorised, however, this is on the basis that the medical evidence provided is from a UK registered medical professional, such as a practising medical Doctor or Consultant and addresses the impact the medical condition has on the student's ability to study.

5.3 Examples of unacceptable reasons for requesting a Leave of Absence include problems with equipment or technology, travel difficulties, holidays, or moving house, but are not limited to these scenarios.

6. Applying for a Leave of Absence

6.1 Students considering making an application for Leave of Absence for an academic session or part of an academic session should contact their Programme Leader or Head of Department in the first instance to discuss their circumstances and explore possible alternatives to taking a Leave of Absence.

6.2 The Programme Leader is responsible for approval of applications and students must meet with them to discuss their Leave of Absence.

6.3 When a student has decided to apply for a Leave of Absence, the relevant application form should be obtained directly from their programme team or on the Student Intranet.

6.4 Students applying for a Leave of Absence must have appropriate grounds in order for their application to be approved (see §4 for examples of appropriate grounds).

6.5 Students must be able to support their grounds for the application with appropriate documentary evidence (see §5 for examples of appropriate grounds for an application to be approved). This should normally be provided at the same time as the application form, but if this is not possible, the reasons for the delay should be supplied along with an approximation of when it will be available.

6.6 Authorisation of a Leave of Absence is not guaranteed and is granted at the discretion of the student's Programme Leader and Head of School after consideration of the student's circumstances and evidence provided.

6.7 Leave of Absence will not be granted on the basis of either potential or actual academic failure.

6.8 Prior to authorising the Leave of Absence, it is the responsibility of the Programme Leader to:

- Ensure that the student has been interviewed by them in person.
- Confirm the date of re-admission.
- Determine any conditions of return, including a return to study process.
- Ensure that the student has all the information they require including a departmental contact with whom they are able to liaise prior to their return to study.
- Ensure that, in approving the request, the student will not exceed the maximum duration of their programme of study.
- Consult with any other relevant departments, for example, FACS, DH&T and Student Welfare.

6.9 The completed form must be returned to Registry (with all relevant signatures, including the student's) by the Programme Leader or programme team before the Leave of Absence will commence.

6.10 Students who have a request for Leave of Absence approved will be notified to their student email by Registry. Students who have a request for Leave of Absence approved will be notified, to their student email, by Registry who will confirm the start and end date of the Leave of Absence.

6.11 Once processed, all authorised Leaves of Absence will be entered on to the Student Record System, and the relevant notifications made to third parties, such as the UK Border Agency, Student Loans Company and Student Awards Agency for Scotland.

7. Retrospective Leaves of Absence

7.1 Retrospective Leave of Absence is the exception not the norm.

7.2 In order to submit a request for retrospective Leave of Absence, the student must normally provide independent third-party evidence, as to why they were unable to present the evidence at the time.

7.3 Where a student is too unwell to make contact regarding an application for Leave of Absence or extending an existing Leave of Absence, it is acceptable for a family member or medical professional to send in a medical certificate and for the Leave of Absence paperwork to be completed retrospectively.

8. Returning to Studies After Leave of Absence

8.1 Registry will contact students prior to their intended return. Students are required to complete a *Return Confirmation Form*. Failure to respond to Registry within the specified

deadline may result in the student being formally withdrawn from their programme at GSA and students in this position will be notified by Registry. Students are responsible for advising Registry of any change of postal address/email address during their Leave of Absence.

8.2 The student must fulfil any conditions, set at the time their Leave of Absence was granted, and the Programme Leader must be satisfied that any conditions of return have been met prior to the student returning to study.

8.3 Where a Leave of Absence has been granted on the grounds of personal circumstances that adversely affect studies, the student will be expected to provide evidence of their capacity to resume their studies prior to being readmitted to their programme.

8.4 The Programme Leader is responsible for arranging a meeting with the student during the term preceding their expected return to discuss the student's re-entry to their programme of study.

8.5 Programme Leaders are responsible for assessing the student's needs and ensuring that an appropriate re-entry plan is in place for their return to their studies.

8.6 If students wish to apply for an extension to their Leave of Absence, they should contact their Programme Leader as soon as possible to discuss their circumstances. If applicable the student may then be advised to make another application for Leave of Absence following which the process above will apply.

8.7 Students should be reminded that, if eligible, it is their responsibility to apply for the payment of their tuition fees for the academic session in which they are returning to their studies.

9. Failure to Return from a Leave of Absence

9.1 A student will be deemed to have withdrawn voluntarily from GSA if they do not return to study by the approved end date of the Leave of Absence and will receive notification of their withdrawal from Registry.

9.2 A student's voluntary withdrawal in these circumstances shall not affect their liability to pay any unpaid tuition fees or other fees or charges.