



Leave of Absence Policy

This policy only applies to PhD students in receipt of Title IV Federal Aid at Swansea University. A Leave of Absence (LOA) cannot be approved for students enrolled on Undergraduate or Postgraduate Taught programmes as a student returning from a LOA must resume study at the same point in the academic programme that he or she began the Leave of Absence (LOA).

The purpose of this policy is to confirm Swansea University is compliant with federal regulations, 34 CFR 668.22 (d), regarding the process for students requesting a Leave Of Absence (LOA). Students requesting a LOA while enrolled at Swansea University must adhere to the policies and procedures established by their College/School and the Financial Aid Office. In addition, students receiving federal financial aid must understand and follow leave of absence federal regulations in this policy, which may affect the amount of financial assistance received.

Any student considering requesting a leave of absence should consult with the Financial Aid Office to determine how their financial aid will be affected.

A LOA is a temporary interruption in a student's programme of study. A LOA cannot exceed 180 days in any 12-month period and may have a serious impact on a student's financial aid. Any student considering requesting a LOA that received financial aid, should consult with the Financial Aid Office to determine how their financial aid will be affected.

For students who have federal aid, a Leave of Absence (LOA) must meet certain conditions to be counted as a temporary interruption in a student's education, instead of being counted as a withdrawal requiring a school to perform a Title IV return calculation. If a LOA does not meet the conditions in 34CFR 668.22(d), the student is considered to have ceased attendance and to have withdrawn from the school and the school is required to perform a Title IV return calculation.

For a LOA to qualify as an approved leave for Title IV purposes, according to federal regulations, [34 CFR 668.22 \(d\)](#), the following criteria outlines the requirements to process an approved LOA:

- The student must request the leave of absence in writing to their College/School for approval; it must be signed and it must be dated. The letter should clearly state the reason(s) for the request. The Financial Aid Office must also be advised at this point.

- A LOA cannot be granted for academic reasons (i.e. to keep a student from failing).
- The student must apply in advance for an LOA, unless unforeseen circumstances prevent the student from doing so (i.e. injured in an accident).
- There must be reasonable expectation that the student will return from LOA to continue enrolment at Swansea University.
- An approved LOA is a temporary interruption in a student's programme of study during which the student is considered to be enrolled.
- The LOA together with any additional leaves of absence, must not exceed total of 180 days in any 12-month period, and may have a serious impact on a student's financial aid.
- Schools may neither credit a student's account nor deliver loan proceeds to the student borrower while the student is on an approved leave of absence.
- Federal educational loan regulations state that if an approved LOA student borrower fails to return after 180 days (6 months) in any 12-month period, the borrower will be considered as withdrawn from school for loan repayment purposes, and may be required to return a portion of the aid previously received in the loan period when the LOA was approved.
- For purposes of administering federal financial aid, a student who is receiving financial aid funds and is granted a LOA is not to be considered withdrawn and no return of Title IV calculation is required. If a student does not meet the LOA criteria, the student is considered to have withdrawn from Swansea University (for financial aid purposes only), and a Title IV return of funds calculation is required.
- A student returning from a LOA must resume training at the same point in the academic programme that he or she began the LOA.
- If a student is a Title IV recipient, upon receipt of an LOA notification the Federal Aid Office informs the student of loan obligations, possible revisions in aid, deferment options, and consequences of failure to return. These may impact their loan repayment terms, including the exhaustion of some or all of the student's grace period. The information provided will also include the financial consequences if the student fails to return from LOA.
- Upon return from LOA, the institution may **not** assess the student any additional institutional charges. The student's need may not increase, and therefore, the student is **not** eligible for any additional federal student aid (Title IV funds).
- Upon the student's return from the LOA, he or she will continue to earn the federal student aid previously awarded for the period.
- If a student has a loan from an outside provider such as Sallie Mae, they should contact their loan servicer for more information before applying for a LOA.

Impact of a Leave of Absence on Financial Aid

Students taking a Leave of Absence or withdrawing from the Institute should be prepared for the impact that these courses of action may have on their educational loans.

Leave of Absence - six months (180 days) or less:

- Your federal loans will enter into grace. Federal Direct student loans have a six month grace period.
- During a grace period, you are not required to make payment on your federal student loans.
- If you return to school (at least half-time) within the grace period, your federal student loans re-enter into an “in school” status. You are not required to make payments with this “in school” status.
- You will want to contact the lender(s) of any private student loans you may have to determine whether you are required to make any payments when you are not enrolled in classes. Many private lenders offer six month grace periods.

Leave of Absence - Greater than six months (180 days) or a Withdrawal

- Federal Direct student loans will enter into repayment. If you are unable to make payment, you will need to contact your student loan servicer to determine if you qualify for a deferment (unemployment deferment, economic hardship deferment, etc.) or forbearance to postpone payments. If you do not qualify for a deferment or forbearance, then you may be eligible to have your monthly payment amount reduced based on different repayment plans. If you do not know who your federal student loan servicer is, [you will find their contact information through the National Student Loan Data System at www.nslds.ed.gov](http://www.nslds.ed.gov).
- Private or Alternative Student Loans - Contact your loan holder to make payment arrangements.

Grace periods:

- You only qualify for one grace period per federal student loan. Once the grace period for a federal student loan has been exhausted, you must make payments unless you have been approved for a deferment or forbearance. [Additional information about federal student loans can also be found at www.studentaid.ed.gov](http://www.studentaid.ed.gov).
- Student borrowers are given a six month grace period on most types of federal loans starting at the date enrolment ceases. During this time, lenders will treat the borrower’s loans as if the borrower were still enrolled in school full-time. Once a grace period is used on a specific loan, it will not be given again. At the end of this six month grace period, the student will be required to enter repayment on their federal educational loans until they return to school; however, deferment or forbearance options are available if the student makes a request to their lender.

Federal Policy for Returning Federal Student Financial Aid

Students who are granted a leave of absence (that is expected to last 180 days or more) after paying for the payment period's tuition will be treated as withdrawn. The following federal policies will apply:

At that point, Swansea University is required to calculate the amount of financial aid the student earned and the amount of financial aid that must be returned. These calculations are based on the time the student was enrolled in that payment period. The percentage of the payment period the student completed is the percentage of aid the student can keep. The percentage of the payment period the student did not complete is the percentage of aid that must be returned.

Once a student completes more than 60% of the payment period in question, the student has earned 100% of the aid they received for that payment period and no federal refund is required.

The Financial Aid Office will have 30 days after the day of determination to calculate a refund and return funds via the Return to Title IV calculation process.

If a student received federal student aid before withdrawing, being dismissed, or being granted a leave of absence, any tuition refund calculated will be returned to the federal aid programmes first. Federal regulations mandate that the percentage of the payment period the student did not complete will be the percentage of available federal aid the student did not earn.

If the student received more federal student aid than they earned, the school must return the unearned funds to the student's lender in a specified order through the COD system.

When a refund is required, the amount of the student's aid that the school is required to return to the student's lender is determined by multiplying the amount of the student's tuition and fees by the percentage of the payment period the student did not complete.

Once institutional and federal refunds are complete, the student will be required to pay any remaining balance due the school within 30 days.

Revised 30th July 2019

***Jan Gosling,
Head of International Administration and Compliance***