

# LEAVES OF ABSENCE AND WITHDRAWALS

Balancing academic, personal, and professional responsibilities can be a significant undertaking. Circumstances both good and bad can arise that are outside of a student's control and that may impact academic performance and/or progress. In such cases, taking a leave of absence or withdrawing from a semester can have a salutary effect. Students who wish to withdraw from a term in progress, cancel registration for an upcoming term for which they have already registered, or take a planned leave of absence must consult with their respective academic advisors and submit a leave of absence / withdrawal form. Failure to do so in a timely fashion can have financial as well as academic consequences.

Depending on the date of a student's withdrawal, loan funds already received by the student may need to be returned to the lender. Federal grant awards such as the FSEOG, Pell Grant, and GS scholarships may also be decreased. Students who withdraw should contact the [GS Office of Educational Financing](#) for more information about possible required adjustments to their federal and/or institutional aid, or if they have questions about their student account.

Leaves of absence for up to three years from the last completed term are granted to undergraduate students who anticipate returning to Columbia to complete their studies. Leaves of absence for up to one year are granted to Postbac Premed students who anticipate returning to Columbia to complete their studies. Students who intend to take a leave of absence must submit a Leave of Absence/Full Withdrawal Form via the Forms tab on the [GS Student Success Portal](#). Failure to follow this procedure can have academic as well as financial consequences and may lead to being dropped from the rolls of the School.

When requesting a leave or withdrawing from GS, international students must also notify the International Students & Scholars Office (ISSO) immediately.

To re-enroll after a leave of absence, students must complete the re-enrollment process by the required deadline. **Note:** An undergraduate student whose absence from the School of General Studies exceeds three years from their last completed term must formally reapply to the School through the GS Office of Admissions. A Postbac Premed student whose absence from the Postbac Premed Program exceeds one year must formally reapply to the Program through the GS Office of Admissions.

## Leave of Absence Guidelines

All correspondence from the University sent to students via U.S. mail goes to the address on file with Student Information Services which may be viewed via Student Services Online (SSOL). Students are responsible for making changes to that address by following the instructions on SSOL for a change of address.

### Financial Aid

- Students who borrowed under a federal or Columbia student loan program will need to complete an Exit Loan Counseling Interview, and will be notified by email of their exit counseling responsibilities.
- Students who were awarded any federal financial aid (Title IV aid) that has not disbursed to their student account and wish to know if they are eligible for a late disbursement of this aid must contact a counselor at the GS Office of Educational Financing.

- Students will receive an email communication from the GS Office of Educational Financing which will identify any required revisions to their financial aid per federal regulations and/or GS policy.
- It is recommended that students contact the GS Office of Educational Financing in March for information regarding forms and deadlines for financial aid applications for the upcoming academic year.
- Students with a credit on their student account should contact the GS Office of Educational Financing to request a refund. Students with financial aid must wait until their aid has been recalculated to [request a refund](#).
- Depending on the date of withdrawal, the student's tuition and other charges will be recalculated based on the Withdrawal Schedule established by the Trustees and published on the [University Registrar website](#).

### Health Insurance

Students who withdraw from a term in progress will no longer be eligible to receive Student Health insurance. Students withdrawing for medical reasons must notify their GS advisors immediately if they would like to maintain health insurance, and must also reach out to the [Student Health Insurance Office](#) to request a continuance of their student health insurance plan. For more questions on the impact of a withdrawal or leave on student health insurance, please refer to the [Columbia Student Health Insurance Plan](#).

### Dining Services and Flexdollars

Meals and Dining Dollars are generally non-refundable and non-transferable, even for non-used balances; exceptions to this rule are permitted only upon official academic withdrawal from Columbia University. For students withdrawing from a term in progress, a refund is possible for the unused portion of the plan or dining dollars, if students immediately notify [Dining Services](#) of their withdrawal and have this confirmed by their GS advisor. Refunds may be requested at the Dining Services located at 125 Wallach Hall.

### University Housing

Eligibility for housing is limited to students enrolled at GS full-time. Students have 30 days to vacate their unit, and must contact Columbia Residential to terminate their lease.

### Refunds

If you have a credit on your student account, contact Student Financial Services to request a refund. Students with financial aid must wait until after their exit interview and their aid has been recalculated to request a refund.

### University Privileges

- E-mail accounts are kept active from six to nine months for students who take a leave or withdraw; however, e-mail accounts are deactivated within a week for students who are suspended or dismissed, or who transfer or permanently withdraw from the School.
- Swipe access to University buildings is suspended during a student's leave or period of withdrawal from the School.
- Library privileges are normally suspended during a student's leave or period of withdrawal from the School.
- Access to Dodge Physical Fitness is suspended during a student's leave or period of withdrawal, except in those cases where a student chooses to pay a membership fee to continue receiving access to these facilities.

- Students on leave or withdrawal from a term in progress and/or suspended from GS are not allowed to enroll in another Columbia school during this period without written permission from the Dean of Students.
- Students who are not enrolled will not be able to participate in university events, workshops, programming, etc until the term in which they are re-enrolled.

## Withdrawal from a Semester in Progress

Circumstances occasionally require that a student withdraw from a semester in progress. Withdrawal means dropping all courses in a given term, as opposed to dropping a portion of the program. Withdrawal from a term in progress may have serious financial and academic consequences, and thus students should meet with their advisors so that they can make an informed decision.

All withdrawals are noted on a student's transcript. If the date of withdrawal is before the end of the eleventh week of classes, the student's transcript will not reflect the individual courses attempted during the term. If the withdrawal is after the eleventh week of classes, the student's transcript will include all courses attempted, with each course receiving a GPA-neutral mark of W (indicating authorized withdrawal).

Students who wish to withdraw must submit the Leave of Absence/Full Withdrawal Form via the Forms tab on the [GS Student Success Portal](#); notifying instructors or failing to attend classes does not constitute formal withdrawal. Absence from classes without officially withdrawing from the semester can result in failing grades in all courses.

A student's tuition may be prorated depending on the date of the written notification of the withdrawal (please see below).

## Additional Facts and Policies for Students Withdrawing from a Term in Progress

- Students withdrawing from a term in progress are charged a \$75 administrative processing fee.
- Depending on the date of a student's withdrawal, tuition and other charges will be recalculated based on the Withdrawal Schedule established by the Trustees and published in the Student Fees booklet.
- Students who withdraw from their studies after the eleventh week of the semester may be advised not to return for at least four months (a minimum of one semester), to allow time to address the situation that led to the withdrawal.

## Involuntary Leave of Absence

The Dean of Students, or his or her designee, may place a student on an Involuntary Leave of Absence for reasons of personal or community safety. This process will be undertaken only in extraordinary circumstances when there is compelling information to suggest that the student is engaging in or is at heightened risk of engaging in behavior that could lead to serious injury to others, including as a result of physical or psychological illness. In addition, the Involuntary Leave process may be initiated if, based on an individualized assessment, it is determined that there is a significant risk that the student will harm him/herself, and that the risk cannot be eliminated or reduced to an acceptable level through reasonable and realistic accommodations and/or on-campus supports.

## Involuntary Leave of Absence Policy

This policy provides students with general information regarding an Involuntary Leave of Absence. For more specific information regarding the circumstances and processes for an Involuntary Leave of Absence, as well as conditions relevant to returning from Leave, students should refer to the Academic Policies or speak with the Dean of Students. Students are responsible for understanding the implications of an Involuntary Leave of Absence for housing, financial aid, health insurance, and progress toward the degree.

This policy will not be used in lieu of disciplinary actions to address violations of Columbia University rules, regulations, or policies. A student who has engaged in behavior that may violate rules, regulations, or policies of the University community may be subject to the dean's Discipline Process of his or her particular school. A student may be required to participate in the disciplinary process coincident with being placed on an Involuntary Leave of Absence. A student who is placed on an Involuntary Leave of Absence while on academic and/or disciplinary status will return on that same status.

Before an Involuntary Leave is considered, efforts may be made to encourage the student to take a Voluntary Leave of Absence. These procedures are described in the Voluntary Leave of Absence Policy. A readmission process may still be required of a student electing a Voluntary Leave to determine his or her readiness to return to school (e.g., whether returning to school may increase the risk of self-harm and/or harm to others).

When safety is an immediate concern, the DOS (or his or her designee) may remove a student from the campus pending final decision on Involuntary Leave. If this action is deemed necessary, the student will be given notice of the removal. An opportunity to be heard by the DOS and, if desired, to appeal the final decision will be provided at a later time.

For more information, students should visit the [Essential Policies](#) or consult their respective advisors in the Dean of Students Office.

## Medical Leaves and Medical Withdrawals

When students are faced with health issues that have a negative impact on study habits, course attendance, or class preparation, they are urged to consult with their advisors to discuss taking a medical leave of absence from the university. Students who are hospitalized during an academic term or who miss class for more than two weeks due to health issues are advised to take a medical withdrawal from the term in progress. Doctors at [Medical Services](#) as well as counselors at [Counseling and Psychological Services \(CPS\)](#) can also help students evaluate whether a medical leave is advisable.

Students must provide medical documentation from a health care provider whose specialty is appropriate to the associated condition to support their requests for medical leaves or medical withdrawals. As part of the re-enrollment process, students will also be required to supply current medical documentation from a health care provider whose specialty is appropriate to the associated condition, and to be evaluated by the relevant branch of [Columbia Health](#).

In exceptional cases, when there is sufficient information to suggest that as a result of physical or psychological illness, a student is engaging in or is likely to engage in behavior that could lead to injury to self or others, the Dean of Students, in consultation with UHS, CPS, and the Office of Public Safety, may place a student on an involuntary leave of absence for reasons of personal or community safety.

Students who withdraw from their studies for medical reasons are not allowed to return for at least four months (a minimum of one semester), to allow time to address the situation that led to the withdrawal.

## Leave for Military Duty

Under the Higher Education Opportunity Act of 2008 (HEOA), institutions are required to readmit an individual who left school or did not accept an offer of admission in order to perform military service. The following sections explain the eligibility and readmission requirements of this policy.

### Eligibility

Students are eligible for readmission under this provision if, during their leave, they performed or will perform voluntary or involuntary active duty service in the U.S. armed forces, including active duty for training and National Guard or Reserve service under federal authority, for a period of more than 30 consecutive days, and received a discharge other than dishonorable or bad conduct. In general, the cumulative length of absence and all previous absences for military service (service time only) must not exceed five years.

### Requirement of Notice

If a student is planning to take a leave for military service, he or she must give advance written or verbal notice of military service to the Dean of Students, unless such notice is precluded by military necessity. To be readmitted, students must give notice (written or verbal) of their intent to re-enroll to the Dean of Students no later than three years after the completion of the period of their service. If a student is recovering from a service-related injury or illness, he or she must notify the school no later than two years after their recovery.

A student who does not submit a timely notification of intent or provide an attestation within the designated time limits may not be eligible for the benefits outlined herein.

### Tuition and Fees

For the first academic year in which the student returns, he or she must be readmitted with the same tuition and fees charges the student was or would have been assessed for the academic year when the student left, unless there are sufficient veterans' educational benefits or institutional aid to pay the increased amount of tuition and fees. For subsequent academic years, the student may be charged the same tuition and fees as other students in the program.

### Readmission Requirements

The school must allow the student to re-enroll in the next class or classes in the same program, with the same enrollment status, number of points, and academic standing as when he or she was last in attendance at Columbia. The student may also request a later date of admission or, if unusual circumstances require it, the institution may admit the student at a later date. If the school determines that the student is not prepared to resume the program where he or she left off, the school must make reasonable efforts at no extra cost to the student to enable the student to resume and complete the program. Such reasonable efforts include, but are not limited to, providing a refresher course and allowing the student to retake a pretest, as long as they do not place an undue hardship on the school. If reasonable efforts are unsuccessful or the school determines that there are no reasonable efforts that the school can take, the school is not required to readmit the student.

If the program to which the student was admitted is no longer offered, the student must be admitted to the program that is most similar, unless the student requests or agrees to admission to a different program.

## Tuition Refund Schedule

For the complete tuition refund schedule please refer to the [University Registrar website](#).

## Re-enrollment

Undergraduate students must manage their re-enrollment through the Dean of Students Office such that they return within three years of the end of their last completed semester at GS. As part of this process students should arrange to have cleared all registration holds so as to be enrolled at Columbia by this specified timeframe.

Leaves of absence for up to one year are granted to Postbac Premed students who anticipate returning to Columbia to complete their studies.

Students granted re-enrollment must return to Columbia the following semester and complete that term to maintain their academic status at GS. Students who desire to return after a withdrawal must complete the required actions detailed on the Re-Enrollment tab within the [Student Success Portal](#) by the listed due date (including a personal statement addressing the circumstances of their withdrawal, if applicable). Petitions for re-enrollment are reviewed by representatives of the Committee on Academic Standing for undergraduate students or of the Premedical Committee for Postbacs.

Note: An undergraduate student whose absence from the School of General Studies exceeds three years from their last completed term must formally reapply to the School through the GS Office of Admissions. A Postbac Premed student whose absence from the Postbac Premed Program exceeds one year must formally reapply to the Program.

### Regular Re-enrollment Checklist

1. Review and resolve any registration holds with appropriate offices (Student Financial Services for financial holds; Columbia Health for health holds, etc.)
2. Register for a class (or multiple classes) in the upcoming semester.
3. Schedule an appointment with GS advisor.

### Medical Re-enrollment Checklist and Deadlines

In addition to submitting a re-enrollment form and personal statement in the [Student Success Portal](#), all students who take a medical leave or withdraw for medical reasons must have their physician or other health care provider support their readiness to resume their studies. To demonstrate this support, students must submit documentation from a health care provider whose specialty is appropriate to the associated condition that led to the student's leave or withdrawal. Students submit this documentation to the Associate Dean of Student Wellbeing. It is evaluated by the GS Medical Leave Re-Enrollment Committee. In addition, students requesting to return from a medical withdrawal or medical leave may be required to be evaluated by the relevant branch of Columbia Health to complete the re-enrollment process. Undergraduate students who are granted re-enrollment are asked to participate in a brief re-orientation program to support their return.

It is a student's responsibility to ensure that the re-enrollment application is submitted through the [Student Success Portal](#) (including the personal

statement and additional documentation, if applicable) is received by the relevant deadline. Late and incomplete petitions will not be considered.

### **Medical Withdrawal/Leave of Absence Re-enrollment Deadlines**

### **Medical Re-enrollment Checklist**

1. Review and resolve any registration holds with appropriate offices (Student Financial Services for financial holds; Health Services for health hold, etc) except the "Advisor Hold"
2. Complete re-enrollment form
3. Send personal statement and medical documentation to Associate Dean of Student Wellbeing
4. International students must also contact ISSO for re-enrollment
5. If requested, schedule an evaluation with the relevant branch of Columbia Health to complete the re-enrollment process
6. Upon approval of re-enrollment petition, schedule a re-enrollment appointment with your GS advisor and the Associate Dean of Student Wellbeing