

Royal Holloway, University of London

Leave of Absence Policy

Considering Withdrawal

If any student is considering withdrawing or interrupting or taking a leave of absence, we strongly recommend that they:

- Arrange to meet their Personal Advisor, Education Lead, Academic Co-ordinator or Head of Department to discuss the implications of withdrawing and options open to them.
- Seek support from the Student Wellbeing team at [Student Wellbeing - Royal Holloway Student Intranet](#) or by emailing wellbeing@rhul.ac.uk
- Seek guidance from the Students' Union Advice Centre at [Advice \(rhul.ac.uk\)](#) or by emailing advice@su.royalholloway.ac.uk
- In addition, if the student is receiving federal loans, we strongly recommend that they contact International Advice to discuss the effects of this decision on their federal loans at usloans@rhul.ac.uk and their visa at Internationaladvice@rhul.ac.uk.

Leaves of Absence

A Leave of Absence (LOA) is a temporary interruption in a student's program of study. In the context of Title IV funds, a LOA refers to the specific time period during a program when a student is not in attendance and will return to complete the program at the same point at which they left. In the context of U.S. Federal loans, this leave of absence is only available to students studying on a PhD programme and it must be agreed by their School, Department and Supervisory team. It is not available to students studying on Undergraduate or Postgraduate Taught programmes.

Official Withdrawal

A withdrawal refers to a student's intent to terminate their studies at the University completely with no expectation of return.

This procedure for this is set out in Return of Title IV Funds Policy.

Unofficial Withdrawal

An unofficial withdrawal is one where the student does not notify the University that they have ceased attending their programme of studies at the University.

This procedure for this is set out in Return of Title IV Funds Policy.

Approved Leaves of Absence

A Leave of Absence (LOA) is a temporary interruption in a student's program of study. At the University this can be an authorised absence or an interruption of more than 60 days. In order to qualify as an approved leave of absence to a student's studies rather than being counted as a withdrawal, the LOA must meet certain conditions. If the terms of the LOA that is agreed does not do this, the student will be considered as having ceased attendance at the University and withdrawn, and the University will then carry out a Return of Title IV Funds calculation (R2T4 calculation) (see Return of Title IV Funds policy).

Requirements for an LOA to qualify as an approved LOA:

- All requests for LOAs be submitted in writing for approval to their School and Department and the Doctoral School for approval. They must include:
 - The reason for the student's leave request.
 - The dates that the student wants the LOA to start and end. The maximum period of LOA granted will be 180 days in any 12 month period.
- The student must apply in advance for an LOA, unless unforeseen circumstances prevent them from doing so.
- The reason offered for an LOA will generally be non-academic in nature. It must allow for the reasonable expectation that the student will return from the LOA within the allowed time frame to complete the overall award for which they have enrolled.
- The LOA, together with any additional leaves of absence, must not exceed a total of 180 days in any 12-month period. (If the 180th day falls on a day the University will be closed, the length of the LOA will be reduced accordingly.)
- The University must allow students to complete the coursework started prior to the LOA.
- The student returning from an LOA must resume their education at the same point in the academic program that they started the LOA.
- All requests for LOAs will be reviewed by the Doctoral School and are dealt with on a case-by-case basis. The student will be notified in writing of the Doctoral School's decision.
- The Doctoral School will notify International Advice if any student who receives federal loans has made an LOA application that has been approved. International Advice will then review the LOA to verify if it satisfies the conditions of an approved LOA
- On the basis of this, International Advice will contact the student to explain how their LOA will affect their current Federal Loans and their responsibilities for repayment in the event they withdraw.

During the LOA, the University will not assess the student for any additional institutional charges, the student's financial need may not increase, and, therefore, the student is not eligible for any additional disbursements of Title IV aid.

If the student has a Title IV loan, prior to granting the LOA, International Advice will explain to them the effects that failing to return from an LOA may have on their loan repayment terms, including the expiration of the student's grace period (see below).

If the student's granted LOA meets these criteria, they are not considered to have withdrawn and no R2T4 calculation is required. When the student returns from the LOA, they will continue to earn the Title IV aid previously awarded for the period.

Returning from LOA

When the LOA is complete, checks will be made to verify that the student has returned to their studies. If the student returns from their LOA within the same academic year, the Doctoral School will contact the student's School/Department and Supervisor in advance of the student's return to check that the student is expected to return and the Supervisor is advised that they must inform the Doctoral School if the student does not return at the end of the LOA. If the student returns in the following academic year, they must complete the University's sign up procedures within three weeks of their return date and this is monitored by the Doctoral School.

Students who return earlier than anticipated

The University may allow a student to return to their studies before the expiration of the student's LOA to allow them to review material previously covered. However, until they resume the program the student is considered still to be on the approved LOA and the University cannot impose additional charges.

Students who fail to return from LOAs

A student who fails to return to the University at the end of their approved LOA will be treated as withdrawing and International Advice will report this change in the student's enrolment to the U.S. Department of Education. As the University is an institution that is required to take attendance, the withdrawal date for this student will be the date of student's last day of attendance in the R2T4 calculation.

Explanation of consequences of withdrawal to loan recipients

One possible consequence of this is that the student's grace period for a Title IV loan might be exhausted. Therefore in order for an LOA to be an approved LOA, prior to granting an approved leave of absence International Advice will inform a student who has a Title IV loan of the possible consequences a withdrawal may have on their loan repayment terms, including the exhaustion of their grace period if the period of absence continues for more than 180 days.

Unapproved LOAs

The University may also grant an unapproved Leave of Absence to students receiving federal loans. This will cover all Undergraduate and Postgraduate Taught students who interrupt for any period of time but intend to return to their studies, and Postgraduate Research students whose interruption does not meet the conditions of an approved LOA.

In these situations, the LOA will be considered a withdrawal for Title IV purposes. As the University is an institution required to take attendance, this means that the student's withdrawal date is the student's last day of attendance and International Advice will use this date to complete the R2T4 calculation.

Exit Counselling

When a student withdraws from the University, they are required to complete Exit Counselling at [Exit Counseling | Federal Student Aid](#). This provides important information on the repayment of their federal student loans and money management. International Advice will check that students undertake this Exit Counselling and document it in their records.

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