

INVOLUNTARY LEAVE OF ABSENCE POLICY

I. Introduction

The University of Pennsylvania provides a wide range of services to support and address the mental and physical health needs of students. Our first concern is for the health and welfare of each individual in our community. Our goal is to enable all of our students to participate fully as members of Penn's academic community. However, students whose psychiatric, psychological, or other medical condition causes them to pose a threat to themselves or others, or causes them to significantly disrupt the educational and other activities of the University community, may be required to take a leave of absence from the University. Under these circumstances, students will be given the opportunity to take a voluntary leave through the process in place in their school. Should a student decline to take a voluntary leave, the University may determine that the student's health and welfare, and/or the needs of the community, require a period of involuntary leave of absence. The following policy establishes the protocol under which an involuntary leave of absence may occur and the process for return from leave.

II. Guidelines

The University may place a student on an involuntary leave of absence or require conditions for continued attendance under the following circumstances when the student exhibits behavior resulting from a psychological, psychiatric, or other medical condition that:

- threatens, harms, or has the potential to harm the health or safety of the student or others;
- causes or threatens to cause significant property damage; or
- significantly disrupts the educational and other activities of the University community.

The process for withdrawal and return from leave is set forth below.

III. Withdrawal Process

When a student exhibits any of the behaviors described above, the matter should be brought to the attention of the Office of the Vice Provost for University Life who will be responsible for informing the Vice Provost for Education (or such person who holds those responsibilities at the time) that an involuntary leave may be warranted. The Office of the Vice Provost for University Life will manage the process, convene case conferences, and work with University and School offices to coordinate the delivery of services. In most cases, the student will be required to undergo an immediate assessment of his or her psychological, psychiatric or other medical condition. This assessment will be performed by Counseling and Psychological Services (CAPS), the Student Health Service, or other appropriate professionals.

The student will be notified that the Provost's Office is seeking to determine whether he or she should be required to take a leave of absence. When reasonably possible, the student will be given the opportunity to confer with the Vice Provost for Education or his/her designee to provide additional information for consideration.

In consultation with the School Dean and the Office of the Vice Provost for University Life, the Vice Provost for Education will review the available information and make a decision that may include the following:

- that the student remain enrolled with no conditions;

- that the student remain enrolled subject to conditions (including a description of those conditions); or
- that the student be placed on an involuntary leave of absence.

If the University's decision is to allow the student to remain enrolled subject to conditions, then the student's failure to comply with the conditions may, after appropriate consideration, result in the imposition of an involuntary leave.

If the University's decision is to require an involuntary leave of absence, the decision will also indicate the length of the leave and, in consultation with the student's school, describe the conditions (if any) under which the student may seek to return from leave.

The student shall be informed in writing by the Vice Provost for Education of the leave decision and the basis for the decision, the effective date of the leave, and conditions for return (if applicable). If a student is permitted to remain enrolled subject to conditions, the student shall be informed in writing of the effective date and the duration of the modified attendance.

IV. Appeal

A student subject to this policy may appeal any decision of the Vice Provost for Education to the Provost. A student who wishes to appeal must submit a written letter of appeal to the Provost within three (3) days of receipt of the Vice Provost for Education's decision. The letter of appeal must state why the student believes that the Vice Provost's decision was unwarranted under the circumstances. After reviewing the appeal letter the Provost may meet with the student, as the Provost determines appropriate. In addition, the Provost may review relevant documents and confer with University officials before reaching a decision on the appeal. The Provost will render a decision upholding, rejecting, or modifying the determination of the Vice Provost for Education.

In addition to the appeal process described above, a student subject to this policy may also seek a resolution of concerns through the grievance procedures described in the Penn Book.

V. Temporary Removal

If the Vice Provost for Education has reason to believe, based on the information available, and in consultation with professionals with appropriate expertise, that the student's continued presence on campus poses an imminent threat of significant harm to him or herself or to others in the community, the Vice Provost for Education may take immediate action to remove the student from campus pending receipt and review of relevant information and a determination. At the Vice Provost for Education's discretion, this temporary removal may remain in place pending completion of any appeal process.

VI. Process for Return from Leave

A student seeking a return from leave must apply in writing to the Office of the Vice Provost for University Life. Such a request must be submitted no less than 30 days before the beginning of the semester in which the student seeks to reenroll. The student must demonstrate that he/she has met any conditions for return specified by the University.

The University may require any documentation or evaluation it deems appropriate. (Reports from health professionals should be directed to the director of CAPS or Student Health Services.) In addition, the University may require a release from the student to enable CAPS or SHS to discuss the student's condition with his/her treating health professional.

In consultation with the School Dean and the Office of the Vice Provost for University Life, the Vice Provost for Education will review the request and other relevant information, including the student's compliance with specified conditions for return from leave and the assessments of CAPS or Student Health Services and other health professionals, and make a determination of whether it is appropriate for the student to return.

If the Vice Provost for Education denies the request to return from leave, the student may challenge that decision by submitting a written appeal to the Provost within 5 days of receipt of the Vice Provost's decision.

VII. Confidentiality

All records concerning involuntary leaves of absence will be kept in accordance with the University confidentiality policy and other applicable policies. The student's transcript will indicate only the notation of "leave of absence."

Note: A student on leave may not participate or hold a leadership position in a registered University organization.

VIII. Administration of the Process

Administrative duties with respect to convening this leave process and maintaining its records will be the responsibility of the Office of the Vice Provost for University Life.

(Source: Almanac, March 16, 2010, Volume 56, No. 25 (<http://www.upenn.edu/almanac/volumes/v56/n25/absence.html>))