

# Student Leave of Absence Policy

For the most current Student Leave of Absence policy, visit the Villanova Policy Library at <https://villanova.policytech.com/docview/?docid=1343&public=true>

Regardless of the reason, a student contemplating time away should speak with the Dean's office of the student's academic college or the Dean of Students Office as early as possible. Except as otherwise stated in this policy, all requests for leave must be made in writing. A student's eligibility for any adjustment of tuition and fees based on a leave will be determined according to the Tuition Refund policy.

International students who are studying in the United States on a student visa should contact the International Students Services Office before submitting a leave of absence request to the University, as taking a leave of absence can have significant visa-related implications.

This policy may not be used in lieu of disciplinary action to address any violations of University rules, regulations, policies, or practices, and students on leave remain subject to the provisions of the Code of Student Conduct. A student who is placed on voluntary or involuntary leave while on academic and/or disciplinary probation will return to that same status.

## **Non-Medical Leave of Absence**

Villanova recognizes that it is sometimes necessary for students to interrupt their enrollment for a period of time and take a leave of absence. Students may take a nonmedical leave for a variety of reasons including, for example, to attend to academic, personal, or financial matters.

### Non-Medical Leave of Absence Process

A student who wishes to take a non-medical leave of absence must take the following steps:

1. Submit a completed "Request for Non-Medical Leave of Absence" form (available online at: <https://www1.villanova.edu/villanova/provost/resources/student/policies/absence.html>) to the Dean's office of the student's academic college or the Dean of Students office, or their designee; and
2. Meet with a designated staff or faculty member to review the request.

Students may request a non-medical leave at any time during the semester, but must complete such requests - including any requisite evaluation and related paperwork - no later than the last day of classes in a semester. If a student does not complete a nonmedical leave request by the last day of classes, the University will deem the request late and consider it for the following semester.

If the University finds good cause, a leave may be granted. Because every student's situation is different, the terms of a non-medical leave will be determined individually, including the duration of leave, any restrictions from living in residence halls or coming on campus or attending University events, and any conditions for the student's eligibility to return to campus following the leave.

The process for returning from a non-medical leave is covered in the Return Following a Leave section.

## **Medical Leave of Absence**

Students may request a medical leave of absence (MLOA) if they experience health situations that significantly limit their ability to function successfully or safely in their role as students.

### MLOA Process

A student seeking a MLOA must take the following steps:

1. Submit a completed “Request for Medical Leave of Absence” form (available online at <https://www1.villanova.edu/villanova/provost/resources/student/policies/absence.html>) to the Dean’s office of the student’s academic college or the Dean of Students office, or their designee; and
2. Meet with a designated staff or faculty member to review the request.

The student may be asked to schedule and undergo an evaluation by the Student Health Center and/or the University Counseling Center before a leave is granted. This evaluation will occur after the student has met with the Dean, Associate/Assistant Dean, or their designee. The student may be asked to sign a release allowing the Student Health Center and/or the University Counseling Center to discuss their evaluation of the student with the Dean, Associate/Assistant Dean, or their designee who is reviewing the request.

After evaluating the student, the Student Health Center and/or the University Counseling Center will determine whether a significant health issue has compromised the student’s health, safety or academic success, and will submit an individualized recommendation to the Dean, Associate/Assistant Dean, or their designee regarding the student’s request for a MLOA.

The Dean, Associate/Assistant Dean, or their designee reviewing the request will make the final determination whether to grant the MLOA and will notify the student of the decision in writing. Because every student’s situation is different, the terms of a MLOA will be determined individually, including the duration of leave, any restrictions from living in residence halls or coming on campus or attending University events, and any conditions for the student’s eligibility to return to campus following the MLOA.

Students may request a MLOA at any time during the semester, but must complete such requests – including any requisite evaluation and related paperwork for the Dean’s office – no later than the last day of classes in a semester. If a student does not complete a MLOA request by the last day of classes, the University will deem the request late and consider it for the following semester.

### **Involuntary Leave of Absence (ILOA)**

If a student is unable or unwilling to take a voluntary leave of absence, the Dean of the student’s academic college, the Dean of Students, or their designee may initiate an individualized assessment to determine whether the student should be involuntarily separated from the University.

The Dean of the student’s academic college, the Dean of Students or their designee may place a student on an involuntary leave of absence (ILOA) in situations where a student does not want to take a leave voluntarily, and current medical knowledge and/or the best available objective evidence indicates that:

- the student poses a significant risk to the health, functioning, or safety of others; or
- the student is unable or unwilling to carry out substantial self-care obligations and poses an actual risk to the student’s own safety not based on mere speculation, stereotypes, or generalizations about individuals with disabilities.

In no case will the University require a leave based on a student’s mental or physical condition itself.

### **ILOA Process**

Except in emergency situations, before placing any student on an ILOA, the Dean of the student’s academic college, the Dean of Students, or their designee will (a) notify a student in writing that the University is seeking to determine whether the student should be required to take a leave of absence, and (b) conduct an individualized assessment.

In making this individualized assessment, the Dean of the student’s academic college, the Dean of Students, or their designee will:

- consider available information and documentation regarding the student's behavior;
- if feasible, hold a hearing with the student, which the student's parent(s) or legal guardian(s) may attend, and allow the student to provide any information the student believes is relevant to the determination;
- consult with other appropriate University members, which may include, but are not limited to, professors and representatives from the Student Health Center, University Counseling Center, Residence Life, Department of Public Safety, Office of Disability Services, and/or the Dean of Students Office. The University may require that the student receive an evaluation by the Student Health Center and/or University Counseling Center, and to authorize the Student Health Center and/or University Counseling Center to share the results and recommendations of their evaluation with the reviewing Dean or their designee. If a student refuses to participate in the evaluation or to authorize the release of the evaluation results, and there is an actual or imminent health risk, the University may restrict the student's access to educational programs and activities, University services, entry to the campus, and/or ability to reside in a residence hall; and
- carefully consider the opinions and recommendations of the student's treating providers, if available, along with the opinions and recommendations of any other healthcare professionals consulted by the University.

The Dean of the student's academic college, the Dean of Students, or their designee will consider factors such as the following: the nature of the student's conduct; the impact of the student's conduct on others in the community; the nature, duration and severity of the risk; the likelihood of potential injury; and whether reasonable modifications of policies, practices or procedures will mitigate the risk and allow such student to continue to attend classes and otherwise participate in the University's educational programs.

Reasonable modifications do not include changes that would fundamentally alter the University's academic program or unduly burden its resources or staffing capabilities or with respect to the required level of care or monitoring, that would exceed the standard of care that a university health service or counseling center can be expected to provide. A student's failure to comply with reasonable modifications may result in the student being asked or required to leave the University.

The Dean of the student's academic college, the Dean of Students, or their designee will determine whether the student (1) may remain in attendance without conditions or restrictions, or (2) may require a reasonable accommodation or accommodations to continue in attendance, or (3) may not continue in attendance or participate in educational programs and activities, use University services, and/or continue to reside on campus. The Dean of the student's academic college, the Dean of Students, or their designee will notify the student in writing of the decision. If a leave is required, the decision will specify the duration of the leave, any restrictions from coming on campus or attending University events, any conditions for the student's eligibility to return to the University following the ILOA, and available appeals procedures. These determinations will be made on an individual basis.

### **Return Following a Leave**

Some students who take a leave will have no requirements attached to their return to the University. However, students may be subject to specific requirements for their return based on the circumstances of their departure. Any conditions or requirements for return will be based on an individualized assessment of the student, including consideration of current medical knowledge and/or the best available objective evidence. The goal of these conditions is to prepare the student for a successful return to the University.

A student who is placed on a leave of absence for any reason, voluntary or involuntary, may apply to return to the University by writing to the Dean's office that granted the leave. The student must demonstrate that the student has met any conditions or requirements that were specified for the student's return to the campus community.

For health-related leaves, the student may be required to provide documentation from treating providers regarding: (a) the treating provider's work with the student and the student's clinical status; (b) an opinion as to the student's readiness to resume academic studies, with or without reasonable accommodations; (c) an opinion as to the student's ability to function as a successful member of the campus community, with or without reasonable accommodations; and (d) a completed Community Provider Report Form for Student's Requested Return to Villanova University. Any documentation from treating providers must be signed, dated, and (other than the Community Provider Report Form) submitted on letterhead. Because the University must consider the opinion of a student's treating providers, the student will also be asked to sign releases allowing appropriate University professionals to communicate directly with the student's treating providers.

The student also may be required to undergo an evaluation by the Student Health Center and/or the University Counseling Center.

The Dean, Associate/Assistant Dean, or their designee that granted the leave, in consultation with the Student Health Center and/or the University Counseling Center, will carefully consider the opinions and recommendations of the student's treating providers, if available, and any other health care professionals consulted by the University. The Dean, Associate/Assistant Dean, or their designee will notify the student in writing of the decision regarding the student's return, including appropriate appeal procedures if the request is denied. A student whose request to return is granted may be required to provide written acknowledgement from the student's parent(s) or legal guardian(s), confirming that they approve of the student's return to campus.

Students on leave must complete their request to return submissions by December 1 for the spring semester, April 1 for the summer semester, and July 1 for the fall semester. These deadlines ensure that the appropriate University officials have enough time to review the student's request. The University will attempt to be flexible and review requests completed within a reasonable time after the relevant deadline. Nevertheless, if there is information missing from the request, and/or the University needs additional time to contact the student's treating provider(s) (for health-related leaves), the University may consider the student's return for the following semester than the semester for which the student initially sought to return.

Students should check in periodically with their academic Dean's office during their leave, as indefinite leaves are not permitted.

### **Appeals**

A student may file an appeal regarding (a) the student's placement on an involuntary leave, or (b) the denial of the student's request to return from any leave, whether voluntary or involuntary. The student must submit the appeal in writing within ten (10) business days of receiving the decision being appealed. If an Associate/Assistant Dean or their designee issued the decision, the student may direct an appeal to the Academic Dean of the student's college. If the Dean of Students or their designee issued the decision, the student may direct an appeal to the Vice President for Student Life (VPSL). The student may not remain on campus during the appeal period.

Appeals should clearly state the specific grounds for appeal and should present relevant information, including medical or clinical evidence, in support of the student's position. The student may be required to sign a release to enable the Academic Dean or VPSL to consult with the student's health care providers. The Academic Dean or VPSL will review the record and any additional information submitted by the student in the appeal and will render a written and final decision within ten (10) business days of receiving the appeal. The Dean of Students or VPSL may extend the time limits set forth above as necessary.

### **Military Leaves and Returns**

Villanova recognizes that students who serve in the U.S. armed forces may be required to take a leave from their program or course of study due to military service. Military service refers to service, whether voluntary or involuntary, in the armed forces, including service by a member of the National Guard or

Reserve on active duty, active duty for training, or full-time National Guard duty under federal authority, for a period of more than thirty (30) consecutive days under a call or order to active duty of more than thirty (30) consecutive days. This does not include National Guard service under state authority.

### Student Responsibilities

The student must provide notice of any military leave as far in advance as is reasonably possible under the circumstances. This notice (a) should be directed to the Dean's office of the student's academic college or the Dean of Students Office, or their designee, (b) may be provided by the student or any warrant, commissioned, or noncommissioned officer authorized to give such notice, and (c) does not need to indicate whether the student intends to return to the school. In circumstances where military necessity precludes the student from providing advance notice, such as service in operations that are classified or would be compromised by such notice, the student should provide notice to the University as soon as possible, including an attestation of military service that necessitated the student's absence.

The student must provide notice of intent to return to the University to the Dean's office that granted the leave within three (3) years after the completion of the period of service. Any student who experiences an illness or injury incurred or aggravated during the period of service must notify the University within two (2) years after the period needed for recovery from the illness or injury. If the student fails to provide notice as required in this paragraph, the University's standard procedures for returning following a leave will apply.

Notices made under this section may be oral or in writing, although written notice is preferred to the extent possible.

### Military Leave Process and Return

Following notice of intent to resume the program or course of studies, the student may return to the program or course of study with the same academic status and standing as the student had prior to taking the military leave. If the same program is no longer offered or has changed substantially in the interim, the University will permit the student to enroll in a similar program, to the extent possible and appropriate under the circumstances. If the student would like to enroll in a different program or course of study at the conclusion of the military service, the student must complete the regular admission and enrollment process for that program or course of study.

The cumulative length of the absence and all previous absences from the University for military service generally may not exceed five (5) years.