

Graduate Student Leave Policy

Version: 2

Responsible Executive: Dean, Graduate Affairs

Responsible Offices: Graduate Affairs

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للعلوم والتقنية
King Abdullah University of
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1. Purpose

Upon registration, students are expected to maintain continual enrollment at the University until completion of their graduation requirements. From time-to-time, however, events occur that may cause students to request withdrawal from courses, leaves of absence or withdrawal from the University.

This policy outlines permitted leaves of absence or vacation leave that may be approved on the understanding that the student will return to the University at the end of the leave period.

2. Scope

This policy defines graduate student leave types.

3. Policy

3.1 Leave of Absence: General

During their enrolment at the KAUST students are allowed one general leave of absence which may be approved for up to one year. While on a general leave of absence students do not receive a stipend and must vacate housing if the absence is greater than 90 days. Upon return to the University housing will be reallocated according to availability.

Students are required to complete a Request for Leave of Absence form for a general leave of absence. Applications for a leave of absence must be received by the Registrar prior to the leave commencement date and the Add/Drop window, failing which the student may receive a failing or withdrawn grade for courses enrolled for that semester.

As a condition for a general leave of absence students must be in good academic standing, have completed at least one semester, and should be meeting their academic milestones in the expected timeframes.

At least two weeks prior to return to the University, students must confirm their return date with Graduate Operations, GPC and academic advisor. Students who do not return to the University by the approved return date may be dismissed for abandonment of program.

Those students going on a leave of absence shall arrange and pay for their flights or other transportation to and from the University.

3.2 Leave of Absence: Medical Leave

Short term periods of medical leave (defined as five or fewer days) do not require supporting documentation. Longer periods of medical leave require supporting documentation from a treating health or medical health professional.

Should students suffer from an illness or disability that requires frequent or lengthy absences that impact their ability to complete academic requirements, consideration will be given to an extended leave of absence to include the current semester, but no longer than 12 months. Should additional extended medical leave be required, a detailed medical report from the KAUST Medical Services must also be supplied with the application.

Short periods of medical leave will not affect stipends. For periods of leave greater than five days, a justification for the continuance of stipend payments is required and will be considered based on the information supplied.

3.3 Leave of Absence: Maternity Leave

Enrolled female students may be eligible for six weeks of maternity leave with evidence of an expected delivery date. Commencement of maternity leave should begin no earlier than two weeks prior to the birth of the child, however, exceptions will be considered on a case-by-case basis.

While on maternity leave, students will receive their full stipend and will retain benefits, including housing, medical insurance, and school privileges for eligible dependents. Students seeking additional leave (such as the remainder of a semester), may apply for an additional general leave of absence for this period.

Students are not eligible for maternity leave and its associated benefits in their first semester of study. Students who have given birth prior to the onset of the academic year are permitted to begin studies if no more than the first two weeks of the semester would be missed. Students who are pregnant upon acceptance to the University but have not yet enrolled may apply for a deferral of a maximum one year for maternity leave. If the deferral application is approved, no stipend would be paid during the deferral period. Absences of more than one year require students to reapply for admission.

3.4 Paternity Leave

Enrolled male students are eligible for 3 days of paternity leave. The requested days should be taken on or around the birth of the baby but no longer than 6 months after the date of birth.

Students are required to complete a Request for Leave of Absence form, selecting paternity leave and attaching a copy of the expected delivery date or birth certificate.

3.5 Vacation Leave

Living and studying on the University campus represents a full-time commitment and is necessary for academic success.

Graduate students may take vacation days during each academic year, which is defined by the published Academic Calendar.

Unused vacation days do not carry over to the following year.

M.S. Degree, non-Thesis

M.S. graduate students (non-Thesis) are entitled to annual vacation defined as the official University holidays and intersession days.

M.S. Degree, with Thesis

Upon transitioning into the M.S. with Thesis program, students are entitled to 2 weeks' vacation (inclusive of any Eid holidays) for the duration of the degree program. Students receive Saudi National Day, Founding Day, and any other national holidays in addition.

Ph.D

Doctoral students (including M.S./Ph.D students) are entitled to 3 weeks annual vacation in addition to the Eid holidays and any other national holidays.

Vacation Planning

M.S. with Thesis and Doctoral students must discuss their vacation plans with their Academic Advisors at least 4 weeks prior to the proposed vacation. The requested vacation times shall not conflict with the student's academic obligations, coursework, research, or other responsibilities. MS with Thesis and Doctoral students, with authorization from the student's Academic Advisor, can work through the Eid periods taking the corresponding number of days at a later/prior time during the same year.

No leave form is required for vacation leave, however all students must discuss their vacation plans with their Academic Advisor.

3.6 Bereavement Leave

The University recognizes that students may encounter extenuating personal circumstances which make them unable to attend to their academic studies for a brief period of time. In certain situations, and supported by proper documentation, Graduate Affairs may authorize a short bereavement leave with no effect on student status or stipend.

Bereavement leave may be granted in an instance of the death of a child, spouse, or parent. Bereavement leave is 7 days, exclusive of travel days. Requests for additional time are subject to the procedures for a general leave of absence request.

Students seeking bereavement leave must submit a Request for Leave of Absence form, which can be arranged with their Graduate Program Coordinator and Academic Advisor, as required. The Graduate Program Coordinator will then seek the necessary approvals on behalf of the student. Upon return to the University, students must provide Graduate Affairs Operations with a copy of an official Death Certificate or similar document.

3.7 Compassionate Leave

The University recognizes that students may encounter extenuating personal circumstances that make them unable to attend to their academic studies. In certain situations, and supported by appropriate documentation, compassionate leave may be approved.

3.8 LOA – Admission Deferral (PhD Only).

KAUST will permit graduate students who have completed their MS degree and have successfully applied to roll-over into a KAUST PhD program to take a break before restarting their studies. Such a request would generally be considered suitable for students who have completed their MS at the end of the Spring semester and then request to resume their studies as a PhD student in the Fall. In exceptional circumstances such a leave of absence may be considered for graduates who have or expect to complete their MS at other times.

If approved the student may retain their KAUST housing if the requested LOA is less than 90 days. No stipend will be payable for the duration of the Admission Deferral Leave period.

3.9 Involuntary Leave of Absence

The Dean of Graduate Affairs may place a student on an involuntary leave of absence if such an action is deemed reasonably necessary for the protection of the University community or for the personal safety or welfare of the student involved.

4. Other matters – Program Duration

Any approved duration of a leave of absence (other than vacation leave) will not be considered in the determination of a student's overall length of stay (program duration).

5. Authority

The Provost is responsible for interpreting the Graduate Student Leave Policy, for establishing the guidelines required to administer the policy and for determining the appropriate authority to approve student leave.

This policy will be maintained by Graduate Affairs Operations.

6. Failure to Comply

Members of KAUST have a responsibility to understand and follow this policy and are expected to comply with it. A violation of this policy may result in appropriate disciplinary action, including the possible termination from KAUST.

Please refer to the [Disciplinary Policy](#)

7. References

[Graduate Student Leave Approval Guidelines](#)