

Leave of Absence Policy

Responsibility for Policy:	Registrar and Chief Operating Officer
Relevant to:	All LJMU Staff, Students and Academic Partnerships
Approved by:	Academic Board, 29 June 2015
Responsibility for Document Review:	Academic Registrar/ Head of Registry Services
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RELEVANT DOCUMENTS

- LJMU Academic Framework
- UKVI Sponsor Guidance

RELATED POLICIES & DOCUMENTS

Leave of Absence Policy

- 1.1 Liverpool John Moores University operates a leave of absence policy that allows students a temporary and official period of time away from their studies. A leave of absence from a programme of study may be requested by a student for a variety of reasons including medical, financial and personal reasons.
- 1.2 It is recommended that students considering making a request for a leave of absence seek advice and guidance from both their Programme Leader and Student Advice and Wellbeing Services.
- 1.3 In certain circumstances academic staff, for example a Programme Leader or a Personal Tutor, may raise the possibility of a leave of absence with a student.
- 1.4 The granting of a leave of absence is not an automatic right and the decision will be made on an individual basis by the Programme Leader, and in consultation with the relevant Assistant Academic Registrar if necessary.
- 1.5 A leave of absence is permitted to commence at an appropriate stage in the academic calendar. The date a period of leave of absence will begin can vary and depends upon a student's individual needs and programme of study. The student's date of resumption of studies will be at an appropriate date in the academic calendar.
- 1.6 The start date of the leave of absence will only be back dated when a student has not been in a position to make a request at the time their studies were interrupted (for example, critical illness).
- 1.7 When applying for a leave of absence, a student is required to propose a date for the return to study. When a leave of absence request is approved, approval is given for a leave of absence until the agreed return date only.
- 1.8 Periods of leave of absence are only permitted for up to 12 months. If a student requires a further leave of absence, this requires a new application to be made. Only in exceptional circumstances will three consecutive leaves of absence be considered. This is to ensure that a student's earlier learning is fresh prior to their recommencing study.
- 1.9 Whilst on a leave of absence, a student may not participate in any programme-related activities including assessments. Students on a leave of absence may access support services offered by Student Advice and Wellbeing Services and IT Services.
- 1.10 Students will be contacted one month before they are due to resume studies advising them of registration requirements.
- 1.11 For some programmes of study and for some students, additional requirements will need to be met prior to a student's return. Students will be advised of any additional requirements at the point when the leave of absence is granted.
- 1.12 Any student not returning from leave of absence as agreed will be deemed to have

withdrawn from their programme.

1.13 International students studying on a Tier 4 visa should note that a leave of absence will be reported to the UKVI. Students should also advise the UKVI that they are returning home. International students will have to apply for a new visa prior to returning to the University to resume their studies.

1.14 The following general principles will be used when coming to a decision regarding a leave of absence.

- A leave of absence will not be permitted after your last teaching week of the academic session (not revision week).
- All marks obtained prior to the leave of absence will be retained and carried forward unless there was subsequently a deferral granted in accordance with the usual Personal Circumstances application process.
- A Leave of absence should not be used as a mechanism for preventing academic failure. Poor marks or failure to engage are not valid reasons.
- Marks to be carried forward will be recorded on the student's record in SIS along with the outcomes of any relevant Personal Circumstances Panel. In certain circumstances, where there are linked assessments, or group assignments, it may not be appropriate to carry marks forward.
- The University cannot guarantee that a student will be able to continue on the same modules after returning from leave of absence. If there are significant changes to the programme or an individual module, then it may not be possible to carry marks forward in the manner agreed at the time the leave of absence was granted.
- In certain circumstances, students may be permitted to return to study on a reduced academic workload (see separate guidelines, appendix 1).
- Students will be required to attend an appointment with their Programme Leader on their return to study.
- When a programme is closed to new entry, it may not be possible to approve a Leave of Absence.

1.15 Students will be informed in writing of the outcome of a leave of absence application.

1.16 The University reserves the right to take disciplinary action against a student while they are on a Leave of Absence if there is a proven breach of the University's Student Code of Behaviour.

2.0 Appeals

2.1 Where a request for a Leave of Absence is rejected, the student has the right to appeal.

2.2 A student may appeal against the outcome of a leave of absence request if they can demonstrate:

- that there has been a material administrative error
- some other material irregularity has occurred

- that the decision to reject the Leave of Absence request was unreasonable in the circumstances

- 2.3 Disagreement with the decision to reject a Leave of Absence request is not in itself grounds for appeal.
- 2.4 There are strict deadlines for the submission of an appeal. Students must lodge the appeal with the Student Governance Office within 10 working days of notification of the outcome of the Leave of Absence request
- 2.6 If the appeal is upheld, the Programme Leader will meet with the relevant Assistant Academic Registrar to reconsider the Leave of Absence application.

Guidance notes on the appeals process and appeals forms are available at

<https://www.ljmu.ac.uk/about-us/public-information/student-regulations/student-appeals>

Appeals forms are completed at

<https://myservices.ljmu.ac.uk/>

Reduced Academic Workload – Guidance

Context

Every year a proportion of the student body takes leave of absence or withdraws from LJMU on the basis of extenuating circumstances. In some instances, students could be retained on programmes through a more flexible approach to study, in line with the Student Support regulations. This would enable students to reduce their academic workload and maintain their funding.

Please note that this provision would not be used to mitigate against failure.

Extract from The Education (Student Fees, Awards and Support) (Amendment) Regulations 2012

Students who attend a full time course on a part time basis (para. 167)

When a student is deemed to be eligible for support on a designated course he is generally eligible for the duration of the course, subject to the rule on tuition fee and living costs support and regulations 3 and 5. The fact that the student attends part of the course on a part time basis does not render the course itself part time. As long as the course is full time the student should remain eligible for full time support. A possible scenario might be a student who is unable to continue to attend full time because of some unforeseen circumstances such as ill health. The student must request to undertake a particular year of the course on a part time basis over two years and their entitlement to fee support will be determined in accordance with Regulation 13(5).

Guiding Principles

This provision should only apply to small numbers of students each year. To ensure equity of experience and expectation guiding principles are listed below.

- Students may request a reduced academic workload but the nature and requirements of the programme will determine whether the request is granted. This will include consideration by those programmes requiring professional accreditation.
- A reduced academic workload cannot be backdated. Students will normally apply at the start of the academic year for permission to reduce their workload for that academic year. It is anticipated that normally students will request this provision to be applied in a subsequent level/academic year.
- There must be academic consultation and agreement for the reduced academic workload to be put into place. This will be agreed by the Programme Leader and the relevant Faculty Registrar.
- The reduced academic workload will be applicable for a finite period of time, and no more than two academic years.
- There must be a verifiable reason for applying for this provision. Faculty Registrars will formally record the outcomes of the reduced academic workload requests.
- A reduced academic workload will apply to only ONE particular level of a programme. Students will revert back to full time at the end of the specified time. If the particular circumstances persist, students should be counselled about the options available to them.

- This provision should be considered alongside the other support mechanisms contained within the Academic Framework, for example coursework extensions and deferred consideration.
- This provision will only apply to Home/EU students. Tier 4 students cannot be considered for this arrangement.

Administration of the scheme

Given the anticipated small numbers applying for this provision, the administration may become complicated and difficult to manage. To mitigate against any potential confusion in tuition fee and registration matters, arrangements will be confirmed in writing to the student and one point of contact identified within Academic Registry.

It is also important that the correct use of language is observed – these students will be full time students attending a full time course but for less than the prescribed number of hours.