

Involuntary Student Leave of Absence Policy

Purpose

To outline the process by which a Weill Cornell Graduate Student (WCGS) doctoral or master's student may be placed on an Involuntary Leave of Absence from the Graduate School when their behavior poses a risk to community safety or disrupts the learning environment.

Scope

This policy applies to all graduate students enrolled at WCGS, including those participating in off-site educational activities.

Policy

When there is actual or threatened disruption to the Graduate School community or learning environment—including, for example, risk of harm to self, peers, or others—WCGS may place a student on an Involuntary Leave of Absence.

The Graduate School is committed to maintaining a safe, supportive learning environment. In cases where a student's conduct or behavior undermines this environment, separation may be necessary if there is sufficient evidence that the student is engaging in, or is likely to engage in, disruptive or unsafe behavior.

Procedure

The Associate Dean for Academic Affairs (or designee) may initiate this process after receiving a report of concern. The steps are as follows:

1. The student will be notified in writing that an involuntary leave is under consideration and the reason(s) why.
2. The student will be given an opportunity to respond.
3. The Associate Dean for Academic Affairs (or designee) will gather relevant information and make an individualized assessment of the student's ability to participate safely and meet expectations for professionalism and adherence to technical standards.
4. Consultation may occur with other offices as appropriate. During these consultations, these individuals will pay particular attention to the criteria for invoking an involuntary leave, specifically whether the student's behavior is disruptive of the Graduate School's learning environment and whether the behavior poses a direct threat to the safety of others. Consideration will also be given to accommodations that may reasonably be provided that will mitigate the need for the involuntary

leave. A mental or physical health evaluation may be required if deemed helpful to inform the decision.

5. A final decision by the Associate Dean for Academic Affairs will be issued in writing to the student.
6. The Office of the Associate Dean for Academic Affairs will notify the Registrar regarding the effective date of the involuntary leave as well as the date of determination of the leave.
7. The student may appeal the decision to the Dean of WCGS (or designee) within five (5) business days. The decision on appeal is final.
8. When safety is an immediate concern, the Associate Dean for Academic Affairs (or designee) may remove a student from the WCGS pending final decision on involuntary leave. If this action is deemed necessary, the student will be given notice of removal. An opportunity to be heard by the Associate Dean for Academic Affairs and appeal the decision will be provided at a later time.

If involuntary leave is imposed, the student will be informed of the steps required for re-enrollment (see *Request for Re-enrollment* below). If not imposed, conditions for continued enrollment may be set.

A. Implications of an Involuntary Student Leave of Absence

If an involuntary leave is imposed, the following conditions apply unless otherwise specified in the written decision:

- **Leave in Effect/Duration of Leave:** The leave remains in effect until the student satisfies the prerequisites for re-enrollment as determined by the Associate Dean for Academic Affairs, based on an individualized assessment.
- **Campus Access:** The student must leave campus within the timeframe set by the Associate Dean for Academic Affairs. The student may only visit campus if explicitly authorized in writing for a specific purpose and duration.
- **Transcript Notation:** The leave will be recorded as a “Leave of Absence” on the student’s transcript.
- **Financial Obligations:** The student remains responsible for certain financial obligations as determined by institutional policy. All students who receive the status of Involuntary Leave of Absence are considered to be withdrawn from the institution for federal enrollment reporting purposes and will be reported to the US Department of Education as such. The student is responsible for any obligations associated with loss of subsidies due to the withdrawal.
- **Parental Notification:** The Associate Dean for Academic Affairs reserves the right to notify a parent, guardian, or other appropriate individual if such notification is deemed necessary for the student’s well-being. This individual may also be asked to assist in arranging the student’s safe departure from campus

1. Request for Re-enrollment

To initiate a return from involuntary leave, the student must submit a formal written request to the Dean of WCGS, with a copy sent to the Associate Dean for Academic Affairs. The request should include documentation demonstrating that all conditions for return have been met.

The Associate Dean for Academic Affairs, in consultation with the WCGS Dean will review the request. Additional consultations may occur with relevant offices or personnel. Conditions may be imposed to support a successful reentry to the WCGS environment.

Definitions

Direct Threat: Behavior that presents a substantial risk of harm to the health or safety of others.

Involuntary Leave of Absence: A non-voluntary separation from the Graduate School initiated when a student's behavior poses a Direct Threat to others or significantly disrupts the learning environment.

Compliance with this Policy

The WCGS is responsible for administering this policy and ensuring compliance. Students are expected to comply with all directives issued under this policy, including conditions for return if placed on involuntary leave. Failure to comply may result in further disciplinary action, up to and including dismissal.

Contact Information

Office of the Associate Dean for Academic Affairs

Email: assoc-dean-grad@med.cornell.edu

References

WCGS Policy - Standards of Conduct

University Policy 4.6 – Standards of Ethical Conduct

University Policy 7.3 – Processing and Reporting Changes in Student Enrollment Status Under Title IV

Policy Approval

This policy was approved by the Executive Committee of the Weill Cornell Graduate School of Medical Sciences on June 16, 2021.