



Southern Methodist University Student Leave Policy

ACCOUNTABLE DEPARTMENT/UNIT:	Student Retention – Office of the Provost. General questions about the policy content should be directed to the Assistant Provost and Director of Student Retention, ext. 8-4300.
ABSTRACT:	Policy explains what undergraduate students need to do to take a leave of absence or to formally exit the university.
RELATED INFORMATION:	Leave Request Form [PDF] Student Petition for Withdrawal/Cancellation [PDF] Consent Form for Medical Withdrawal [PDF] Tuition and General Student Fees Schedule for Regular Cancellation/Withdrawal

Policy Statement

Students must sometimes interrupt their studies for a variety of reasons (financial, academic or personal). In such instances, a student may leave Southern Methodist University by either formally exiting (this means leaving the university with no intention of returning) or by taking a leave of absence (this means leaving the university temporarily, with the firm and stated intention of returning).

A Leave Request Form must be completed by all students choosing to take a leave of absence or who are formally exiting the university to assist in working out any conditions that may be necessary to officially exit or ensure a smooth return. Notifying instructors or no longer attending classes does not complete the process. Electronic forms are available on the University Registrar website.

Students are required to fill out all information on the form, including all comment sections relating to reasons for their leave of absence. The process will not be complete until all necessary forms have been submitted and a formal exit interview has occurred. International students who are here on a F1 or J1 visa must consult the International Student and Scholars Services Office, for information on possible visa implications prior to going on leave. All students must meet with the Director of Student Retention prior to their departure.

Leaves during the academic semester/term will take effect as of the date signed on the Student Petition for Withdrawal/Cancellation form or, in the event that no Student Petition for Withdrawal/Cancellation is required, on the date indicated on the Leave Request Form as submitted by the Director of Student Retention. After the Leave Request Form and the Student Petition for Withdrawal/Cancellation form are both received in the University Registrar's Office, they will be processed. The recording of student courses and grades for taking a leave during a semester follows the deadlines for semester or intersession courses, as follows:

- On or before the university deadline to drop classes with W (withdrawal) grades: W (withdrawal) grades will be assigned to all classes.
- After the university deadline to drop classes but on or before the last day to withdraw from the University: W (withdrawal) grades will be assigned to all classes.
- After the last day to withdraw from the University: Permanent grades assigned by the instructor will be recorded.

Student Account Refund/Credit Information

In the case of student petitions for withdrawal or cancellation, refunds are determined by the effective date and made only after the student officially withdraws/cancels enrollment. If a student fails to attend class or simply notifies an instructor of intent to withdraw/cancel, those instances in and of themselves **do not** constitute an official withdrawal. A withdrawal/cancellation does not inform processes in University housing. If a student currently lives in University Housing, they will need to contact the office regarding change in residential status.

When a student officially withdraws or cancels her/his enrollment, there is the possibility of refund of tuition and fees based upon the effective date of the withdrawal or cancellation. The effective date of the withdrawal/cancellation is when the petition is processed by the University Registrar's office. Students can find the "Tuition and Fees Schedule for Withdrawal/Cancellation" on the [Bursar's Office website](#) or by contacting the Division of Enrollment Services at 214-768-3417.



Procedures/Process

The following is an explanation of each form component along with important notes, as well as an abbreviated step-by-step guide for each office to follow in the administration of this policy. Items noted in **bold text** require mandatory action. *Italicized* items are on the basis of applicability to the student's status. The possible exemption to this policy will be for those who are processed for an involuntary withdrawal from SMU (e.g. disciplinary suspension)

1. Student initiates process via verbal or written notification of request.
2. Notified Administrator should instruct the student to complete a Student Petition for Withdrawal/Cancellation, should their enrollment necessitate it. Upon completion of the Student Petition for Withdrawal/Cancellation, Administrator should immediately submit the petition per instructions indicated.
3. Notified Administration should also instruct the student to complete the Leave Request Form which potentially includes additional meetings with university administrators.
4. The final step involves the student scheduling an exit interview with the Director of Student Retention, where they will submit the Leave Request form.
5. The Director of Student Retention will scan a copy of the Leave Request form to the University Registrar's Office.

Student Personal Information/Contact Information:

Basic demographic information regarding the student, their course of study and means of contact.

- Please note the school of record for the student at the time of submission. (i.e. if the student is in the process of declaring or switching schools, do not list intended, but rather current.)
- Major/Minors – for declared students, should be only those officially declared; for pre-majors, should be pre-major interests

Leave Information:

Students should denote the type of leave/activities in which they will participate when not present at SMU.

- Educational Leave – A student who wishes to pursue outside educational opportunities will submit an Educational Leave of Absence. Activities for educational leaves include, Non-SMU approved study abroad or an Internship experience. If a student does not wish to return to SMU, it is instead considered Transfer or a Formal Exit.
- Medical Leave – A student who must interrupt study temporarily because of illness or injury may be granted a Medical Leave of Absence, contingent upon the submission of documentation from a health care professional confirming that the student is unable to engage in educational study. **Such documentation must be submitted by the medical provider to SMU Health Center Director along with the Consent Form for Medical Withdrawal**; it may include a statement as to when the student may be expected to resume studies. Authorization of a Medical Withdrawal by the SMU Health Center requires a multiple week time period. The Consent Form for Medical Withdrawal can be obtained from the Health Center.

In order to return to SMU from a medical leave, students must have a substantial period of time of medical/psychiatric stability which is documented by their treating clinicians and agreed upon by the appropriate director from SMU. In addition, the student who took a medical withdrawal for psychological/psychiatric reasons is expected to demonstrate the ability to manage life stressors as evidenced by activities such as taking a class at community college, getting a part time or full time job or doing volunteer work. Additional stipulations may be imposed on an individual basis as warranted. If a student has taken a medical withdrawal for mental health reasons, they must adhere to the agreed upon follow up treatment plan for six months following readmission. Failure to do so may result in a "Hold" being placed on a student's admission or in a student's being withdrawn for medical reasons.

- Personal Leave – Students who must interrupt study temporarily for reasons other than those described above may request a personal leave of absence. Reasons may include, but are not limited to, financial status; child care; illness, bereavement, or other critical matters in one's family; changes in one's outside employment; and other situations as required by applicable law.
- Service Leave – A student who must interrupt study temporarily to fulfill a compulsory military obligation for a specific length of time will be granted a military leave of absence to fulfill that obligation. The student seeking a military leave of absence must provide the Office of the Dean of Students and the University Registrar's Office with written documentation from the



appropriate military authorities (including dates of the period of obligation). Additionally, students who will fulfill an alternative service experience (e.g. church mission work or Peace Corps) should also submit a service leave which should include documentation regarding when you will be expected to resume studies.

- Transfer (Formal Exit) – If a student does not wish to return to SMU, it is instead considered Transfer or a Formal Exit. Students who denote a transfer will be discontinued as SMU students.
- Students who are taking a type of leave (not a transfer) should complete the boxed information. They will circle the semester in which they would like the leave to begin and end, and indicate the year of each semester as well. Students can contact the University Registrar and/or Director of Student Retention if they would like to extend or shorten leave period.

Leave/Exit Checklist:

Students should check off all items on the checklist that are applicable based on their student status as well as type of leave or formal exit.

- ☐ *Student Petition for Withdrawal/Cancellation* – This form can be retrieved from the University Registrar’s website. This form will be submitted to the student’s academic dean before being forwarded to the University Registrar. Note the effective date of the withdrawal/cancellation is when the petition is processed by the University Registrar’s office, and that date affects course enrollment and refund/credit possibilities. Students will submit this for the following reasons:
 - They **do not** plan to complete the **current semester/term**.
 - If they are enrolled in future semesters.
 - Completing a Medical Withdrawal
- ☐ *International Student & Scholar Services* – If a student holds a F1 or J1 Visa they **MUST** consult with an Advisor in this office to discuss implications of visa status.
- ☐ *Financial Aid* – Students who receive Federal Financial Aid or SMU Scholarships should visit with their Advisor to understand possible loan repayment considerations and stipulations of federal funding or scholarship status. For students taking a leave, this meeting will also assist them with understanding deadlines and any other financial considerations to enable aid for the semester/term they plan to return.
- ☐ *SMU Bursar* – Students should check with student accounts for any unpaid balances and settle them with the Bursar. If students are taking a leave, they can also learn about payment dates in anticipation of their return. For students who are formally exiting, no transcripts will be released if there are any outstanding balances on their student account.
- ☐ *Dean of Students Office* – Students will meet with this office if they have current or pending conduct violations. Students who are formally exiting the university can also get any statement of good standing forms signed by the Dean’s staff.
- ☐ *Office of Residential Life & Student Housing* – If a student currently lives in University Housing, they will need to contact the office regarding change in residential status. Students will receive information regarding moving timelines and requirements.
- ☐ *Health Center* – If a student is filing a Medical Withdrawal, they will begin their process with the administrators in the Health Center
- ☐ **Academic Advisor** – Students should meet with their Academic Advisor regarding academic intentions and knowledge regarding ability to successfully complete a degree in a timely fashion (in the case of a leave). For students taking a leave, they should contact their Academic Advisor prior to the enrollment period for the anticipated semester of return to prevent any enrolling delays.
- ☐ **Director of Student Retention** – Students will meet with the Director of Student Retention or other Retention staff to complete an exit interview and to submit the Leave Request Form. The Leave Request Form will be sent to the University Registrar’s office for processing. For students who are transferring, the exit interview will also include the completion of a Formal Leave Survey.



Frequently Asked Questions

What is a Leave Request?

A student may leave Southern Methodist University by either taking a leave of absence (leaving the university temporarily with the firm and stated intention of returning) or by formally exiting the university (leaving the university with no intention of returning). Students taking any type of leave must manage enrollment, which may include a withdrawal or cancellation, and complete this form to ensure all requirements are met to either conclude their experience with the institution or to preclude the requirement of reinstatement for return. Upon submission, this form will be processed and a student's status will be updated accordingly by the University Registrar's Office. All students should participate in an exit interview, and students formally exiting the institution should also complete a Formal Leave Survey.

Why do students take a Leave?

Students take a Leave for a variety of reasons including but not limited to illness, military service, family challenges, or purely personal reasons.

How long does a Leave last?

The length of your Leave depends upon what you note on your Leave Request form, which is not to exceed 24 months.

What SMU resources do I have access to while on leave?

Your SMU student ID card will not work on campus while you are on leave. You will not be able to access the Residence Halls, dining facilities, fitness facilities or parking facilities. You will still have access to your SMU email account as well as my.smu.edu.

Do I need to request Leave if I will only be out for a semester?

No. You will not need to request a Leave if you will be out for a fall or spring semester. If you plan to be out for a full academic year, it is recommended to request leave in order to avoid being discontinued.

How can I request an extension on my Leave?

You can request an extension by contacting the Director of Student Retention or the University Registrar's office.

How many times can I extend my Leave?

The longest amount of time you can be out on leave before being discontinued is 24 months.

What happens if I do not return from my Leave as planned?

If you do not return as noted on your Leave Request and do not notify the institution of an extension, you may be discontinued and need to apply for reinstatement.

How can I confirm that my Leave has been processed?

You will be able to contact the Director of Student Retention.

Do I need to complete a Student Petition for Withdrawal/Cancellation?

If you do not plan to complete the current semester and/or if you are enrolled for a future semester you will need to complete a Student Petition for Withdrawal/Cancellation.

What are the special circumstances for the Medical Leave?

A student who must interrupt study temporarily because of illness or injury may be granted a Medical Leave of Absence, contingent upon the submission of documentation from a health care professional confirming that the student is unable to engage in educational study. Such documentation must be submitted by the medical provider to SMU Health Center Director along with the Consent Form for Medical Withdrawal; it may include a statement as to when the student may be expected to resume studies. Authorization of a Medical Withdrawal by the SMU Health Center requires a multiple week time period. Students must complete the Medical Withdrawal process prior to submitting the Leave Request form.



Can I begin my leave during the middle of the semester?

You can begin your leave in the middle of the semester. If you choose not to complete the semester you will also need to complete a Student Petition for Withdrawal/Cancellation.

If I take a Leave during the semester, will I receive a refund?

For information regarding the refund schedule visit the Bursar's Office website at <http://www.smu.edu/EnrollmentServicesBursar/Policies> or contact the Division of Enrollment Services at 214.768.3417.

What will happen to my financial aid award if I take a Leave?

Please contact the Office of Financial Aid for questions regarding financial aid and the effect Leave will have on merit awards and need-based aid.

May I take courses for credit at another institution during my Leave?

You may take courses at other institutions while on Leave, however, there is no guarantee coursework will transfer to SMU for credit nor go toward degree and graduation requirements. To ensure successful transfer you will need to complete an Advanced Approval of Transfer Work petition.

What do I need to do in order to return from my Leave?

If you return in the semester noted on your Leave Request form, you will receive your enrollment appointment time and date via my.smu.edu, and you can enroll in required courses for the semester of return.

Are my parents notified if I take a Leave?

No. Your parents will not be notified by the University of your Leave.

Can I take a Leave if I am on Academic Probation?

Yes. If you leave on academic probation, you will return on academic probation. If you leave in good standing, you will return in good standing.

Will a Leave appear on my transcript?

No. There will be no permanent notation of leave on your formal academic records.

Will a leave delay my graduation?

A Leave may delay graduation depending upon the requirements necessary for your degree. You can consult your Academic Advisor and/or Academic Records Office to find out how a Leave may impact your graduation date.