



**Royal College of Art**  
Postgraduate Art & Design

## **Leave of Absence Policy**

### **Introduction**

1. During their period of study, students may experience circumstances that affect their ability to continue their programme of study. In some situations, the best course of action may be to take a temporary break from study, known as a leave of absence.
2. Leave of absence is an authorised break from studies, but not an automatic entitlement, so may be refused depending on the circumstances and evidence provided. Leave of absence requests are considered appropriate when the student will reasonably be in a position to complete the programme on their return. Until a leave of absence is authorised by the Registrar, the student is still continuing their programme of study as normal. All agreed leaves of absence should be reported to ABCD.

### **Definition**

3. A leave of absence is an authorised break from the student's programme of study, where there is no academic engagement during the course of the break, including access to the College and use of its resources. A student on a leave of absence will remain registered to their programme, but will not be enrolled. They will not be liable for any fee while on a leave of absence and will not have access to College facilities or tuition sessions.
4. A leave of absence should not be used as a short-term solution where an alternative option would be more beneficial to the academic progress of the student (for instance applying the Extenuating Circumstances Policy, awarding a referral in an assessment, etc.)
5. A leave of absence will normally be given for a specific requested period of time not exceeding twelve calendar months. A student's re-entry point into their programme of study will usually be the beginning of the next available term or academic year, as appropriate, and will be calculated to ensure that the student is able to join the programme at the same point at which they left it.

6. A student may apply for a leave of absence at any point during the academic year, at the time that the circumstances arise that are adversely affecting their ability to study.
7. Where a student is unable to progress to a subsequent stage of their programme as a result of their failure to achieve the conditions for progression, then they may be required to take a leave of absence in order that they can be assessed in the elements of assessment that they have not passed and re-join the programme at an appropriate point.

### **During Leave of Absence**

8. During a leave of absence, the student's enrolment status will be amended accordingly for the duration of their absence. The student will not be considered enrolled during the period of absence but shall remain registered as a student on their programme. Students on a leave of absence shall not be considered to be students for the purposes of assessing council tax exemption or any other purpose that requires the College to confirm that a student is enrolled to an external agency.
9. The student shall not be liable for any tuition fee for the period for which they are on a leave of absence. Where tuition fees are owed for the period of study taking place before the beginning of the leave of absence, the College may require payment in full before the student's enrolment is reactivated.
10. Funding or scholarships may be affected by the approval of a leave of absence. In some cases, the student may render themselves ineligible for the continuation of funding by taking a leave of absence. It is the responsibility of the student to confirm the rules and regulations of individual studentships or other sources of funding prior to taking a leave of absence, and taking any appropriate action.

### **Application for Leave of Absence**

11. The authorised approver for leave of absence requests is the Registrar, acting on the recommendation of the student's Head of Programme, or Head of Research Programmes for research students. The Registrar shall not normally approve any request for a leave of absence which has not been recommended for approval by the relevant Head of Programme or the Head of Research Programmes.

12. Leave of absence requests must be approved by the Registrar before the period of leave is confirmed. Retrospective leaves of absence shall only be granted in exceptional circumstances.
13. The student shall be notified of approval of their Leave of Absence request by the Registry and shall be given guidance about their return to study.

### **Return from Leave of Absence**

14. At the end of the agreed period of leave of absence, it is the responsibility of the student to notify the Registry and their Head of Programme, or for Doctoral students, the Head of Research Programmes, of their intention to return to their programme of study.
15. Where a leave of absence was granted on medical grounds, the College reserves the right to require the student to supply appropriate medical evidence to demonstrate their fitness to return to study.
16. Access to facilities will be reactivated to take effect from the first day of re-enrolment onto the programme, subject to the student confirming their intention to return and completing payment on any outstanding fee balance.
17. A registered student will be deemed to have withdrawn from their programme of study if they do not return to study following the end date of their Leave of Absence or have an extension to their leave of absence approved by the Registrar.

### **Refused Leave of Absence**

18. In the case that a request for a leave of absence is not approved, the student is expected to continue their programme of study in accordance with the College's Academic Regulations.
19. Where a request for Leave of Absence has been refused, a student has the opportunity to appeal the decision. A student may appeal a decision if there is evidence of one or more of the following:

- i) an error in the assessment, based on the Leave of Absence criteria as defined in the Regulations;
- ii) additional evidence relating to the assessment that could not be made known when the original decision was made.

20. Intention to appeal should be submitted to the Registrar, and further information or evidence can be submitted alongside the appeal. All appeal requests will be considered by the Chair of the ABCD, whose decision shall be final.

### **Extension to Leave of Absence**

21. Normally, Leave of Absence is approved for a maximum of twelve months. In the event that a student is unable to return to studies at the end of the Leave of Absence, they will need to apply for an extension. A further application should be made with updated supporting evidence. Students may only extend a leave of absence beyond two years in exceptional circumstances, on the approval of the Head of Programme, or the Head of Research Programmes for Doctoral students, and ABCD; where any such request is denied, and the student does not return to their programme, then the student shall be deemed to have withdrawn from their programme of study.

Senate  
June 2018

Amendments Trevor Pearce June 2022