



Division of Student Affairs
Office of Student Care and Support

The Cooper Union
for the Advancement
of Science and Art

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The Cooper Union for the Advancement of Science and Art
The Office of Student Affairs
Procedures to Return to Study Following a Temporary Medical Leave of Absence due to a
Major Physical and/or Mental Health Event

When students are addressing a major physical and/or mental health related event, they may be automatically placed on a temporary medical leave of absence to allow them the time and space needed to focus on their health and wellbeing. This leave is intended to give students time to focus on their health and general wellbeing so that they can return to campus and be successful in their academic, professional, and personal pursuits.

We encourage students to take sufficient time to address the concerns that led to their temporary medical leave. Returning too soon sometimes results in the student continuing to struggle academically and personally.

Students who experience a major physical and/or mental health related event will need to be medically cleared to return to their studies.

This medical clearance process is designed to ensure that students have taken such care, and that appropriate supports and resources are in place for their return. The following guidelines apply to undergraduate and graduate students who are seeking to return to their studies at The Cooper Union following a temporary medical leave of absence due to a specific major physical and/or mental health event.

CLEARANCE TO RETURN AFTER A MAJOR PHYSICAL AND/OR MENTAL HEALTH EVENT

Guidelines governing the medical clearance to return to study following a major physical and/or mental health event seek to assure, through consultation with the student and their medical care providers, that the student will be able to function effectively in the autonomous student environment at The Cooper Union, without significant disruption to others in the Cooper Union community, and that the student can adequately monitor their own health. The clearance



process also provides a review of the ongoing supports a student may need (e.g. medications, and/or continued psychotherapy appointments, and/or continued medical appointments).

The Cooper Union relies on the information received from healthcare providers to evaluate a student's ability to function autonomously within the environment of The Cooper Union. The Cooper Union does not conduct a medical review or medical evaluation of the student. The Cooper Union uses the information received when a student was initially placed on a temporary medical leave of absence, coupled with the information provided to request their return to their studies, to ensure a student is ready to return to our academic community. The Cooper Union's review of the materials and/or treatment plans are procedural and circumstantial in nature. The Cooper Union's review is conducted to ensure that the issues that precipitated the temporary medical leave have been addressed, and that any ongoing treatment needs are able to be managed by the student, taking into account the limited direct resources available at The Cooper Union. Students at The Cooper Union are required to function independently and manage their own physical and mental healthcare needs.

Please note: The Director of Student Care and Support is available to answer questions about the requested materials or any other aspect of the process.

Materials Required for a Request for Medical Clearance to Return to Study Following a Major Physical and/or Mental Health Event: Each request must include the documents that are described in detail below.

Physical and/or Mental Health Treatment Provider Letter(s): Students are required to submit a letter, or letters, as noted below. Students must submit one letter, but students may submit letters from multiple care providers if appropriate (e.g. a therapist and psychiatrist or a primary care provider and specialist health provider). The student is required to have their treatment provider(s) (not a relative) email the letter to: alex.fischer@cooper.edu. The treatment provider's letter(s) must include the following:

- The provider's credentials and contact information.
- A description of the nature of the issue(s) and/or symptoms that led to the student's treatment.
- The type and length of the student's treatment and treatment goals.
- A description of the course of treatment and the changes the student has made during that time.



- A statement about the student's readiness to return to The Cooper Union and successfully navigate its academic and social context, including:
 - that the student will be able to function effectively in the autonomous student environment at The Cooper Union without significant disruption to others in the Cooper Union community; and,
 - that the student can adequately monitor their own health and independently maintain all required plans for continued care
- Detailed plans for continued care (as necessary) and for proactively managing future stresses.

Each student will receive an individualized form to provide to their healthcare provider(s) to help facilitate this process. Ideally the healthcare provider(s) will complete these forms but they can also submit their own letter provided their letter addresses all of the required points.

Consultation with Student's Academic Advisor and Dean: The Director of Student Care and Support will consult with the student's academic advisor and academic dean to ensure that the student is academically able to reengage with their coursework. Depending on the length of time that the student has been on a temporary medical leave, it may not be possible to make up essential coursework and/or experiences that are required for the successful completion of the student's courses. In these cases, the student will be provided with an opportunity to seek a medical withdrawal from these courses.

Student Care Review: Upon receipt of the Physical and/or Mental Health Treatment Provider Letter(s), the Dean of Students will review all the materials and information. The Director of Student Care and Support will meet with the student to discuss their situation and review the materials together.

As previously noted, the Director of Student Care and Support's review of materials and information is not a medical review of the materials and/or treatment plans, but rather a procedural and circumstantial review. The Director of Student Care and Support, in consultation with others, as needed, makes an individualized assessment of each student, and seeks to determine that the student has met the following clearance criteria:

- Received appropriate and sufficient treatment from psychological and/or medical health care providers. This is based upon information provided by the student and their healthcare provider(s) when requesting the initial medical leave, and again when requesting clearance to return.
- Demonstrates insight regarding the circumstances that led to their medical leave and an ability to use appropriate healthcare resources for prevention/treatment as needed and as recommended by their healthcare provider(s).



- Demonstrates sustained stability in relation to the medical issue necessitating the original medical leave of absence. This may be shown through documentation by the treating healthcare provider and/or the general activities of the student while on leave that contribute to the student's readiness to return to The Cooper Union.
- Demonstrates the ability to function in the autonomous student environment of The Cooper Union, without significant disruption to others in the community, with appropriate and reasonable support.
- Demonstrates an appropriate plan for maintaining their wellbeing upon return. The plan may include their academic and social life balance, their support system (family and friends) and how it contributes to their readjustment, continued care from clinicians, and other activities in which they will engage to care for themselves.

Upon completion of the review, the Director of Student Care and Support will:

- Notify the student the materials submitted are sufficient and indicate that the student is medically cleared to return to their studies. Depending on the materials submitted by the student and health provider, this notification may also include conditions required for return and/or continued enrollment; or,
- Notify the student that the materials submitted are not sufficient to indicate that the student is medically cleared to return to their studies. The Director of Student Care and Support will instruct the student on additional steps to be taken and/or materials required to be submitted.
- If the student is not yet ready to return to their studies, they will be able to request to withdraw from their current semester for medical reasons and to engage in a full medical leave of absence until such time that they are ready and cleared to return to their studies.
- If the materials are sufficient, the Director of Student Care and Support will notify the student's Academic Dean and the relevant administrative offices that we have documentation on file that support the student returning from their temporary medical leave of absence.

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