



Cooper Union Discretionary Leave of Absence Policy

I Rationale

Personal, medical, financial or academic circumstances may arise that cause a student to consider interrupting their studies at Cooper Union. A student may take a break from school by either withdrawing from the school (with no intention of returning, *Withdrawal from the School*), withdrawing from courses for the term (Term Withdrawal) or by taking a Leave of Absence (with the intention of returning, a specification for Leave of Absence (LOA) that is established in the regulations). Taking a break from school needs to be an informed and deliberated decision on the part of the student.

There are three kinds of leave, Medical Leave of Absence (MLOA) Discretionary Leave of Absence (DLOA), and Required Leave of Absence (RLOA) available at the Cooper Union.

- **Medical leave and withdrawal from a semester being sought on medical grounds require approval from the Office of Student Affairs before advancing to the school/Dean’s office for approval.**
- **Discretionary leave, military leave, and withdrawal from a semester on non-medical grounds require approval from the student's school/Dean's office.**
- **Required Leave of Absence (RLOA), is an option available to the Academic Standards Committees of the three degree granting schools to provide students who have not passed essential courses or are unable to make normal progress toward their degree the opportunity to repeat courses and master content required for successful progression in the plan of study. Students who have been required to take a RLOA are asked to review the RLOA policy.**

In all cases, a leave of absence will entail adjustments to the academic plan as well as the student’s academic, financial aid and billing records. Therefore, when taking a leave of absence from school, the student must consult with their advisor and/or their School’s deans office as well as the registrar’s, financial aid, and student accounts offices (offices in the HUB) to take appropriate action to their records. International students have an additional responsibility to review regulations regarding their visa status when entertaining a leave of absence and therefore, must consult with the International Students and Scholars Office (also in the HUB).

This policy provides specific guidance on the process to advance a petition for a Discretionary Leave of Absence (DLOA).

DLOA Policy

This policy provides guidance on the process to advance a petition for a discretionary leave of absence. The process is established to inform the student's decision to take a leave of absence before signing off on the leave. This is because there are financial aid, billing and registration implications (among other considerations) associated with taking a leave. The review processes put in place are outlined to provide students assurance as to the responsible consideration and handling of their petition to take a discretionary leave.

- This policy establishes the importance of informed consent. When considering a discretionary leave, students are strongly encouraged to discuss the petition with their academic advisor, including the impact of taking a leave on their academic plan and whether options other than a leave exist. Students may also want to discuss their plans for their time away from Cooper Union, particularly if they plan to take a course elsewhere.
- A student's decision to take a leave should also take into consideration regulations associated with US visa status and financial aid, including loan repayment policies. There are federal regulations that guide when and for how long a student may take a leave before there are financial aid considerations, particularly loan repayment.
- International students must consult with the International Students and Scholars Office regarding federal visa regulations prior to submitting the petition for a discretionary leave of absence.

II Policy Statement

Should a student seek a temporary break from school on the basis of medical considerations, with the intention to return to Cooper Union, a medical leave of absence should be pursued. Students are advised to review the policy and processes established in the [Medical Leave of Absence Policy](#). Medical leave and withdrawal from a term on medical grounds requires approval from the Office of Student Affairs. This process is initiated in conjunction with the Director of Student Care and Support. Student Affairs will verify and confirm the nature of any medical leave and/or withdrawals and communicate with the student's academic school. It is the student's academic school that ultimately approves all leaves and withdrawals.

Should a student seek a temporary break from school, not on the basis of medical considerations, with the expressed intent to return to Cooper Union, they can submit a letter to their dean's office requesting a discretionary leave of absence, accompanied by the [Discretionary Leave of Absence Petition](#) a.k.a. DLOA Petition. Discretionary leave, military leave, and term withdrawal on non-medical grounds require informed consent on the part of the student and approval from the student's school/Dean's office. The process of taking a discretionary leave will not be complete until all necessary signatures are secured on the DLOA Petition. Students are encouraged to monitor their email during this process.

Each School may maintain standards within their schools for Leave of Absence that will inform eligibility and the school specific approval process. Students should always consult their school advisor and School-based policies for additional considerations and internal standards/limits in the taking of discretionary leave.

A. The DLOA Petition

Should the dean's office determine that the request for the discretionary leave of absence is appropriate, the DLOA Petition will be advanced to the Registrar who will initiate the review by the Registrar's and International Students and Scholars offices to assess any adjustments to the registration and SEVIS records (if the student is on an F1 visa), as well as to the financial aid and billing offices to assess financial aid and subsequent billing implications. Students will then be contacted by each office, as appropriate, to discuss the consequences of taking leave. When contacted, students must follow up to arrange a meeting with the contacting office. Each office will sign off on the DLOA Petition signifying that they have discussed the implications of leave with the student.

The student will be asked to acknowledge that they have been informed of how taking a leave will impact their registration status, financial aid and student account and signify that, having been duly informed, they are seeking to pursue the leave by signing off on the DLOA Petition. The registrar's office will then submit the signed DLOA to the Dean's office for final approval. Should the petition for discretionary leave be approved by the student's dean's office the petition form will be advanced to the Registrar's office to update the academic record and initiate billing and financial aid adjustments.

B. Guidance on taking a Leave of Absence

The following guidance regarding "leave of absence" applies to discretionary leave, medical leave, military leave as well as withdrawal from a semester and "stopping out".

- "Term Withdrawal" and "Stopping Out" will count as a term of leave.
- The petition for leave of absence must be made proactively, ideally before the beginning of the term in which the leave is sought, but no later than close of the add/drop period at the beginning of the term. The close of the add/drop period is indicated on the Academic Calendar.
- A student is limited to four leave of absence terms in the course of completing their undergraduate degree program at Cooper Union. The maximum of four leave of absence terms is the sum of non-consecutive and / or consecutive leave of absence terms.
- In completing the DLOA form, the student is asked to establish the term in which they intend to return to classes. Students seeking to be on leave for more than one term such that they will be on leave for more than 180 days will need to be administratively withdrawn from School. This is an administrative action to comply with federal regulations. In the event the student needs to be withdrawn from School, they will be asked to reinstate their record by completing the Reinstatement Form.
- Students who request **consecutive** leaves of absence, sequential leaves for more than one term, will need to be complete the Reinstatement Form in order to reactivate their record so that they can return Cooper Union and register into courses.
- The Registrar's office will process leave of absence requests (DLOA and MLOA Petitions) recording the effective data and return date of the leave in the system. Based on these record updates, the registrar sends official communications to students regarding their status, and notifies relevant offices (Student Financial Services, Campus Safety and Security, Advising Offices, etc.) of student status changes.

As students consider their course of action, they are advised that

- Notifying instructors or no longer attending classes does not supplant or complete the leave process. Students are required to submit a DLOA petition.
- An incomplete DLOA Petition, or one that has not been signed by the student (attesting to Informed Consent) or the dean's office, will result in courses remaining on the record. If the leave is not approved, grades will be assigned and students will be charged for the term.
- In the event the petition for discretionary leave is not approved by the dean's office, students are strongly advised to explore options with their advisor. These options could include persisting in all courses or selective course withdrawals.
- Each School may maintain standards within their schools for Leave of Absence that will inform eligibility and the school specific approval process. Students should always consult their school advisor and School-based policies for additional considerations and internal standards/limits in the taking of discretionary leave.

Should a student be granted a Leave of Absence or administratively withdrawn from the Cooper Union, they are not enrolled for the term and as such, will not have access to the Cooper Union facilities, including labs or studios. Students on leave or who have withdrawn for the term, are not permitted to live in university housing, attend classes or maintain employment as students at Cooper Union while their leave is in effect.

III Relevant Definitions

- **Discretionary Leave of Absence:** A discretionary leave of absence is a temporary separation that is requested by the student for reasons other than health related circumstances. Students can petition to take a discretionary leave of absence up to the close of the add/drop adjustment period. During this period, courses can be dropped from the record thus, there is no record of course enrollment or grades earned during the leave period. Students seeking to take a Discretionary Leave of Absence must have the intent to return to Cooper Union.
- **The Add/Drop or "Course Adjustment Period":** During the course adjustment period at the beginning of the term, students have the opportunity to make adjustments to the courses in which they are enrolled for that term by adding or dropping courses. Dropping courses will result in all evidence of course enrollment being removed from the student record. Advisor approval is required, in part to ensure that the student is enrolled full time and progressing in their degree plan; meets financial aid and Cooper Union scholarship requirements; or for F1 students, that they meet the obligations under a student visa. In some cases, students have been provided consideration for part time enrollment, as with an Accommodation Verification Letter, AVL. It is important for these students to work with their advisors to develop a plan to make degree progress. The Add/Drop period is established in the [Academic Calendar](#).
- **Effective Date:** The date in which the leave goes into effect is the effective date of the leave. The effective date should coincide with the start and end dates of the semester during which the leave is to be taken; the DLOA Petition requests the "date of request". The effective date is noted in the system of record by the Registrar if the petition for discretionary leave is approved by the Dean's office, and establishes whether it is appropriate to drop courses from the record, based on the dates of the add/drop period.

- **Registration Status:** The process of signing up for courses is called registering. Students are charged tuition and fees when they register. Students are considered enrolled when they attend classes. A student on a leave of absence is not enrolled in courses and therefore, is not considered to be registered. Therefore, there are certain privileges that are unavailable to the student when on leave including, but not limited to, residing in university housing, accessing university resources, and receiving direct supervision by faculty members.
- **Stop Out:** Students who stop attending courses but do not take formal action to their record by petitioning for a leave of absence or course withdrawal for the term will be considered “stop outs”. Because students who stop out have not taken action to their record by notifying their advising office or the registrar, they run the risk of having grades assigned to their record and will be responsible for the tuition expense for the term. Therefore, students who are believed to have stopped out (no attendance or homework/project submissions) will be asked by their dean’s office to formally notify the school of their decision not to attend courses by submitting a course withdrawal or institutional withdrawal request. In the event the student takes no action, they will be administratively withdrawn from the term by the Registrar’s office.
 - Stop Out students will have one term to pursue record adjustments. Should they be withdrawn, their withdrawal will count as one of four allowable terms of leave of absence.
- **Satisfactory Academic Progress:** Withdrawal from courses counts against [Satisfactory Academic Progress, SAP](#). Federal financial aid regulations require that students meet minimum academic requirements to make progress toward degree and remain eligible for financial aid. The Office of Financial Aid has established standards in keeping with federal guidelines to monitor academic progress. These standards are established in the SAP policy including GPA and credit progress requirements.

Definitions of Key Academic Actions

- **Administrative withdrawal:** A withdrawal from a courses and/or the school, executed by the office of the registrar to comply with federal or institutional policies. Pertinent to taking a leave of absence, federal regulations establish that a leave of absence cannot exceed 180 days in any 12-month period for financial aid recipients. To comply with these regulations, students on Leave of Absence for more than 180 days will be administratively withdrawn from Cooper Union by the Registrar and be asked to reinstate their record by applying for reinstatement.
- **Course “drops”:** By dropping a course or courses prior to the end of the add/drop period, all evidence of the course is removed from the student’s transcript. This will result in financial aid and tuition billing adjustments. After the first day of classes, students are responsible for [Registration Fees](#).
- **Course withdrawal:** Students have the ability to petition to withdraw from courses after the add/drop period until the close of the withdrawal period. The close of the withdrawal period is determined in accordance with federal regulations, when 60% of the term is completed. The close of the withdrawal period is established in the Academic Calendar. By withdrawing from a course, the student has sought approval to cease attending the course. Because withdrawal from a course is sought after the adjustment

period, the course will remain on the academic record. Withdrawal from a course will be reflected by a grade of “W” being assigned to the course indicating it was “attempted” but not completed.

- **Term Withdrawal:** Withdrawal from all courses for the term. A student can petition to withdraw from all courses after the add/drop period. This usually occurs in the case of exigent circumstances. Full withdrawal from courses will result in a federal financial aid recalculation, and potentially, a re-assessment of the Cooper Union tuition grant in keeping with the [refund schedule](#).

In the event a student withdraws from all courses after the add/drop adjustment period, the term will count as one of the four terms of “leave” that are allowable. The students should discuss the need to withdraw from all courses for the term with their advisor. In such cases, students are also strongly encouraged to discuss the impact of full-term withdrawal on their [Cooper Union Tuition Grant](#) and potential financial obligations that result from the withdrawals with the financial aid office. Moreover, students should review how withdrawal from all courses after the add/drop adjustment period impacts [Satisfactory Academic Progress, SAP](#) and financial aid eligibility.

- **Withdrawal from the School:** A student who seeks to withdraw from The Cooper Union is severing their relationship with the school. A student who withdraws from the school is not seeking to return. If, in executing a withdrawal from Cooper Union, the student is seeking to withdraw from all courses after the add/drop period, a federal financial aid recalculation, and potentially, a re-assessment of the Cooper Union tuition grant in keeping with the [refund schedule](#) will need to be conducted.

IV Associated Policies

- Course Add/ Drop period
- Course Withdrawal
- Withdrawal from Cooper Union
- Reinstatement

V Guidance for Students and Advisors

- Student Guidance in Taking Leave of Absence (*pending*, Registrar’s webpage)
- Student Guidance in Returning from Leave of Absence (*pending*, Registrar’s webpage)
- Advisor Guidance

