IOB leave of absence policy[1]

1. Purpose

The purpose of the *Leave of Absence Academic Policy* is to facilitate Governing Boards to support students who may require a leave of absence from their programme in order that they may return to complete their programme. It is one of a range of programme supports available where a student requires a specified period of time off for a variety of personal, medical or academic reasons. The responsibility for deciding the most appropriate course of action for a student in such cases lies with the IOB Programme Board.

2. Definitions

2.1 Leave of absence

A Leave of Absence is defined as an extended period of time from a programme of study. This is requested by the student and approved by the IOB Programme Board. The purpose of a leave of absence is to enable and facilitate a student to take an approved and specified period of time off before returning and completing the programme.

2.2 Retrospective leave of absence

Retrospective leave of absence is defined as an extended period of time away from the programme of study, where that period of time has passed.

Retrospective leave of absence is not normally permitted. However, it may be granted by the

Programme Board where it is satisfied that:

a.   the student has extenuating circumstances,

b.   there is no other available solution for the student given their circumstances, and

c.   the student has not normally been engaged in any programme activity[2].

3. Scope

The *Leave of Absence Academic Policy* relates to all students who may require a leave of absence from their programme. The policy and procedures are effective across all IOB Programmes – the IOB Programme Board is responsible for deciding on all applications. Retrospective applications will be approved by the IOB Programme Board only in the circumstances outlined in item 2.2 above. All applications from students are submitted to the IOB Programme Office.

---

[1] This IOB Leave of Absence Policy mirrors closely that of UCD approved by ACEC May 2019.

[2] A retrospective leave of absence application is not a replacement for an extenuating circumstances application: where there has been student programme activity an extenuating circumstances application would seem most appropriate. Retrospective leave of absence is an additional option that may be considered by the Programme Board where circumstances warrant it

4. Principles

4.1 Principles – General

4.1.1. IOB is committed to fairness in its dealings with all students. In this, it recognises that it may not always be possible for a programme to offer a leave of absence. Where a programme cannot offer a leave of absence it should publicise this and communicate it clearly to students.

4.1.2 The purpose of a leave of absence is to provide students with time off in order that they can return to and successfully complete their programme. IOB commits to providing information to students during their leave of absence on procedures for returning to the programme

4.1.3 Students are responsible for making it known to the IOB Programme Office that they might need a leave of absence as soon as is possible and normally in advance of any period of time off.

4.1.4 A leave of absence is one of a range of options available to the IOB Programme Board in supporting the academic welfare of their students. It is normally applied for in advance of time.

4.1.5 During a leave of absence, the student's participation in the programme is suspended. Students may not take a leave of absence in order to remediate failed modules

4.1.6 A retrospective leave of absence will only be granted by the IOB Programme Board in cases where there are extenuating circumstances. Each Governing Board will submit an annual report documenting all retrospective leave of absence applications it approved during the previous academic session. This report will be submitted to UCD University Programme Board.

4.1.7 There are a number of possible implications of taking a leave of absence. IOB is responsible for providing information regarding possible implications and students are advised to access support systems within IOB for advice before making a leave of absence application.

4.2 Principles – refusing a Leave of Absence

4.2.1 A student in the first trimester of the first stage of their programme is not normally eligible for a leave of absence.

4.2.2 A student is not eligible for a leave of absence for the trimester following acceptance of a transfer offer.

4.2.3 In certain circumstances, e.g. based on programme requirements and structure it may not be possible to authorise the requested leave of absence period. In this instance, the IOB Programme Board will recommend either an alternative leave of absence period or an alternative arrangement for the student.

4.2.4 A student is not eligible for a leave of absence where there is a pending disciplinary action.

4.2.5 Where the Programme Board refuses a leave of absence application, they have a responsibility to suggest an alternative solution for the student.

4.3 Principles: Returning from a leave of absence

4.3.1 A student is governed by UCD's Academic Regulations, IOB rules, codes and policies, and the Programme regulations and structure in place when they return from a leave of absence.

4.3.2 A student will be automatically enrolled to their programme at the start of the trimester they are due to return from their leave of absence.

4.3.3 Where a student requires additional time off they must contact the IOB Programme Office. Where a student fails to return from a leave of absence and has not applied for a further leave of absence period their registration will be cancelled.

4.3.4 A student cannot return from a leave of absence where they are in bad financial standing with IOB.

4.4 Principles – Duration

4.4.1 The academic coherence of a student's study is a key consideration in all leave of absence applications. This policy is not prescriptive regarding the total amount of leave of absence time that a student may be permitted to take over the lifetime of their programme. However, a period 1/3 of the total length of the programme is recommended as the maximum amount of leave of absence time[3].

4.4.2 Individual programmes are responsible for publicising the feasibility of a leave of absence period(s) for their programme and should communicate this clearly to students where it is not possible to offer a leave of absence.

4.4.3 All students may apply for a leave of absence for a period of one, two, or three trimesters within an academic year.

---

[3] The possibility of withdrawing (and subsequently applying for re-admission) should be discussed where a student requires a longer period of time off.

NOTE: the difference between a leave of absence and a withdrawal is as follows. A student who has taken a leave of absence has the right to resume their studies at the end of the approved leave of absence period. Where a student who has withdrawn wishes, at a later date, to return to that programme, they must apply to be re-admitted

5. Roles and responsibilities

5.1 The Responsibilities of the Student

In order that IOB may best support students making an application for a leave of absence from their programme of study, the student must:

5.1.1 Seek advice and support as soon as possible where they think they may need to take some time off from their programme of study

5.1.2 Inform the IOB Programme Office as soon as is possible and normally in advance of any period of time off

5.1.3 Make sure they understand the possible implications of taking a leave of absence

5.1.4 Complete the official application form and submit it to the IOB Programme Office normally in advance of the requested period of leave of absence (see Figure 1 – Applying for a leave of absence)

5.1.5 Inform their sponsor/employer of their need for a leave of absence, where relevant

At the end of their leave of absence period, a student must:

5.1.6 Check their IOB MyInstitute prior to their return to gain information on returning to their programme and to IOB

5.1.7 Inform the IOB Programme Office as soon as possible and before the end of their leave of absence period of their intention to return to the programme or apply for further leave of absence (such applications follow the same process as outlined in Figure 1)

5.1.8 Be aware of the implications of their return

5.1.9 Confirm their re-registration to IOB at the end of the leave of absence period.

5.2 The Responsibilities of the School (incorporating the Programme Director)

The Programme Director, in consultation with the relevant Module Co-ordinator(s), shall:

5.2.1 Inform a student of the implications of taking a leave of absence (a) for core modules and pre-requisites, and (b) on outstanding IA, IM, or IX grade(s) (e.g. where another solution cannot be arranged, a student may be required to complete these outstanding IA, IM, or IX grade(s) when they return from the leave of absence);

5.2.2 Explore how best to enable students to complete outstanding IA, IM, or IX grade(s) before the start of a leave of absence period.

5.3 The Responsibilities of the IOB Programme Office

The student's first point of contact shall:

5.3.1 Ensure that the student is informed of the possible implications of a leave of absence

5.3.2 Explore possible alternatives to a leave of absence with the student

5.3.3 Provide information to a student on additional support systems within IOB

5.3.4 Advise students to discuss their application with a member of the academic staff of their programme e.g. Programme Director

5.3.5 Take receipt of the completed official application form

5.3.6 Submit the application for the consideration of the IOB Programme Board

5.3.7 Inform the student (and all relevant personnel within a School) of the outcome of their application (i.e. IOB Programme Board's decision) in writing/by email

5.3.8 Inform IOB Registry of the decision of the Board via existing delegated authority mechanisms.

5.4 The Responsibilities of the Governing Board

The Governing Board shall:

5.4.1 Decide the most appropriate course of action for a student who may request a leave of absence from the programme

5.4.2 Recommend an alternative leave of absence period or an alternative arrangement for a student where the Board refuses a leave of absence request

5.4.3 Consider retrospective applications where (a) the student has extenuating circumstances, (b) there is no other available solution for the student given their circumstances and (c) the student has not been engaged in any programme activity for the period of the leave of absence they are requesting

5.4.4 In cases where a retrospective leave of absence application is approved and where required, instruct IOB Registry in writing (via existing delegate authority mechanisms) to remove a student's academic history relating to the approved retrospective leave of absence period from their student record

5.4.5 Submit an annual report documenting all retrospective leave of absence applications it approved during the previous academic session to Academic Council or its relevant committee

5.4.6 Decide on the feasibility of a leave of absence period(s) for their programme(s). Where it is not possible to offer a leave of absence, publicise this information and communicate it clearly to students.

5.5 The Responsibilities of IOB Registry

IOB Registry shall:

5.5.1 Update and amend individual student records according to the delegated authority decisions received from the IOB Programme Office

5.5.2 Email students who are on a leave of absence before they are due to return to inform them of the re-registration process and the implications of not re- registering

5.5.3 Email students one week into the start of the academic session to remind them to confirm their re-registration and advise them of the implications of their registration being cancelled

5.5.4 Email students to inform them that their registration will be cancelled where (a) they have not confirmed their re-registration as required and (b) have not contacted IOB Programme Office to apply for further leave of absence or to notify their withdrawal from their programme. Information on applying for re- admission (including registration cancellation implications) will also be provided.

5.5.5 Provide information on the implications of taking a leave of absence, in particular the fees implications

5.5.6 Inform IoB Programme Board of the submission date in each academic session for receipt of the annual report documenting all retrospective leave of absence applications (as per item 4.1.6 above).

Related documents - Fig. 1 – Applying for Leave of Absence

```
┌─────────────────────────────────────────────────────────────────────┐
│                         Support & advice                              │
└─────────────────────────────────────────────────────────────────────┘
                                  │
┌─────────────────────────────────────────────────────────────────────┐
│ A Student completes the LOA application form and submits it to the    │
│ IOB Programme Office                                                  │
└─────────────────────────────────────────────────────────────────────┘
                                  │
┌─────────────────────────────────────────────────────────────────────┐
│ IOB Programme Office will inform the student in writing of the        │
│ decision of the IOB Programme Board                                   │
└─────────────────────────────────────────────────────────────────────┘

        ┌─────────────────────┐         ┌─────────────────────┐
        │     OUTCOME 1       │         │     OUTCOME 2       │
        │ Application granted │         │ Application refused │
        └─────────────────────┘         └─────────────────────┘
                 │                                │
   ┌──────────────────────────┐      ┌──────────────────────────┐
   │ IOB provides a student   │      │ The IOB Programme Board   │
   │ with information on      │      │ will recommend alternative│
   │ re-enrolment             │      │ LOA period or arrangement │
   │                          │      │ to support the student    │
   └──────────────────────────┘      └──────────────────────────┘
                 │                                │
         ┌──────────────┐          ┌──────────────────────────┐
         │   Student    │ ───────▶ │ A student must confirm    │
         │ re-enrolment │          │ his/her re-enrolment      │
         └──────────────┘          │ within the required       │
                 │                 │ timeframe and inform the  │
                 │                 │ IOB Programme Office       │
                 │                 │ before the end of the     │
                 │                 │ Leave of Absence period.  │
                 │                 └──────────────────────────┘
                 │                                │
   ┌──────────────────────────┐        ┌──────────────┐
   │ Student's enrolment       │ ◀─No─  │   Student    │
   │ cancelled                 │        │   returns    │
   └──────────────────────────┘        └──────────────┘
                 │                                │ yes
   ┌──────────────────────────┐        ┌──────────────────────────┐
   │ If third LOA required,    │        │   Programme Activity      │
   │ student may withdraw &    │        └──────────────────────────┘
   │ apply for re-entry        │
   └──────────────────────────┘
                 │
   ┌──────────────────────────┐
   │ A student must contact    │
   │ the IOB Programme Office  │
   │ if s/he is withdrawing    │
   └──────────────────────────┘
```