

## Leave of Absence

Our goal is to help graduate students complete their degrees in a timely manner. But students sometimes face major physical, mental, financial, and personal challenges that require a [leave of absence](#) (LOA). [Graduate academic counselor](#) Simone Warrick-Bell can help you decide if you should seek a leave of absence and help you navigate the process.

Students can be reluctant to take a leave of absence even when they need one. One reason is [health insurance](#). Students cannot hold a graduate assistantship while on LOA and may lose their State employee health insurance. But these students can use the [qualifying life event](#) process to purchase a Student Health Insurance Plan (SHIP), which provides equivalent benefits. Students who are already enrolled in SHIP for a period that includes the LOA will retain coverage during LOA. Other students can find affordable health insurance plans through Maryland Health Connection (Maryland residents) or [ehealthinsurance.com](#) (non-residents), and may be eligible for Medicaid. Students may also be eligible for dependent coverage under a parent's plan (if 26 years old or younger) or a spouse's plan. Simone or Robyn Kotzker can work with you to ensure you have health insurance and access to services during a leave of absence.

Another reason is academic progress. The time taken on an approved leave of absence is not included in the time limitations for degree completion and advancement to candidacy, and all program deadlines and time limits are suspended, but students may worry that their faculty advisor will not support a LOA. Faculty are committed to the health, well-being, and academic success of our students. If you would like confidential help or advice in speaking with your advisor or other faculty about LOA, see Simone or the [Graduate Ombuds Officer](#), Prof. Mark Shayman.

Another reason is financial. Because students cannot hold a graduate assistantship while on LOA, they may lose the stipend they need to pay living expenses. Please contact the [Office of Student Financial Aid](#) to see what options may exist while you are on LOA. In most cases, assistantships and fellowships can be deferred until you return to campus after the LOA.

Finally, students with F-1 or J-1 visa status may be concerned about their ability to remain in the United States during a leave of absence. Please see the webpage [here](#) and ask to meet with [Aviana Symon](#), Senior International Student Advisor. If you are being treated in the United States by a physician or psychologist for a physical or mental illness, you may be able to remain in the United States if your physician or psychologist recommends a leave of absence.

The Graduate School is committed to the health and well-being of all students and will help facilitate a leave of absence when needed.