



RCSI

Leave of Absence Policy

RCSI DEVELOPING HEALTHCARE LEADERS WHO MAKE A DIFFERENCE WORLDWIDE

Contents

1. Introduction.....	2
1.1 Duration of Leave	2
2. Voluntary Leave.....	2
2.1 Definition	3
2.2 Basis for Leave.....	3
2.4 Return from Voluntary Leave	3
2.5 Request for an Extension of a Leave of Absence.....	4
3. Involuntary Leave	4
3.1 Definition	4
3.2 Procedures:	5
3.3 Return from Involuntary Leave.....	6
4. Confidentiality	6
5. Financial and Visa Implications.....	7
6. Leave of Absence Form.....	7



RCSI

1. Introduction

RCSI University of Medicine and Health Sciences (RCSI) expects all registered students to maintain continuous registration (consecutive years) in an academic programme with the exception of allocated vacation time. However, it is sometimes necessary or desirable for a student to take leave, or interrupt their studies for a period of time.

The policy allows for an agreed way for the student to take a break from their studies until they are able to return to study.

A Leave of Absence relates to circumstances where a student is currently registered on a programme of study but must, due to unforeseen, documented circumstances, leave a programme with the intention of returning and recommencing studies. Such leave may be voluntary or involuntary and will be managed in accordance with this RCSI Student Leave of Absence Policy.

Students who interrupt their studies by taking a leave of absence should be aware that their current academic programme cannot be guaranteed to resume following re-admission as if no interruption had occurred and that it is their responsibility to make themselves familiar with any changes in assessment policy or practice in the programme of study that may have taken place during their absence.

Students who interrupt their study by taking a leave of absence are no longer an enrolled student of the University whilst on leave.

RCSI is required to notify the Irish Department of Justice about any student who withdraws or interrupts their studies.

1.1 Duration of Leave

- Leave is not usually granted for more than one academic year.
- An extension will only be considered in exceptional circumstances, taking into account if the overall programme learning outcomes remain coherent¹.
- Where the length of interruption of study is extensive (more than one year), students must be aware that there is a maximum length allowed for programmes.

2. Voluntary Leave

RCSI recognises that situations may arise when a student may want to voluntarily interrupt their academic studies. RCSI is committed to handling reasonable requests for leave in a responsive manner. A student who is granted voluntary leave while on academic and/or disciplinary status will return to the same status that they had prior to such voluntary leave.

¹ In reaching a decision, consideration will be given to the impact the extension would have on the overall integrity of the programme, including considerations of contiguous and contemporaneous learning.



RCSI

2.1 Definition

Voluntary leave is defined as a student's request to interrupt their studies and absent themselves from an RCSI programme for a temporary period.

2.2 Basis for Leave

Voluntary leave may be requested for personal illness, or other personal reasons such as familial or financial difficulties.

Part-time Postgraduate students may request a leave of absence due to work-related challenges. Applications should be made prior to a student absenting themselves.

Documentation should be submitted to support the request for a Leave of Absence.

2.3 Procedures:

- i. Undergraduate students should discuss a Leave of Absence request with an appropriate member of RCSI staff, e.g. Personal Tutor, Year Lead, Programme Director.
- ii. Postgraduate students should discuss a Leave of Absence request with their Programme Director/Head of School as appropriate.
- iii. All research students must discuss a Leave of Absence with their Supervisor.
- iv. Support is available to all students through the CoMPPAS team by contacting or a member of the CoMPPAS team sw@rcsi.com.
- v. The student must complete the relevant "Leave of Absence Request" (see Appendix A, B or C as appropriate).
 - a Undergraduate students must submit the form to registry@rcsi.ie.
 - b Postgraduate students should submit the form to their Head of School/Programme Director or nominee.

The Head of Registry Services (or nominee) or Head of School/Programme Director (and/or nominee) as appropriate, will review the request and supporting documentation.

- Students will be notified by email of their decision.
- Where approved, any requirements or conditions of the leave will be set out in the approval notification.
- The relevant RCSI staff will be informed of the approved period of leave so that the appropriate amendments can be made to the student's record.

2.4 Return from Voluntary Leave

Undergraduate students must apply for reinstatement to their programme of study by notifying registry@rcsi.ie by the date specified in their letter of approval.

Postgraduate students should contact their Head of School/Programme Director.

- i. Where the voluntary leave was due to a health condition, the student may be required to submit a report(s) which indicates that they are fit to resume their studies.



- ii. RCSI reserves the right to request an independent assessment by an appropriate medical professional nominated by RCSI.
- iii. The student will be notified via email of the outcome of their application to return. If their application is accepted, they will be advised of the re-enrolment procedures.
- iv. If their application to return is rejected, they will have the right to appeal in accordance with the RCSI Appeal Regulations.²
- v. If a student fails to apply to return or to apply to request an extension of their Leave of Absence by the required deadline, they will be considered withdrawn from RCSI.

2.5 Request for an Extension of a Leave of Absence

- Undergraduate students must submit a request in writing to the Head of Registry Services registry@rcsi.ie for any further extension of the period of the Leave of Absence by the date indicated in the approval letter.
- Postgraduate students should contact their Head of School/Programme Director as appropriate.

If the initial Leave of Absence was granted for health reasons, additional medical evidence may be requested to support the extension. This will be reviewed and an independent assessment may be conducted by an appropriate medical professional nominated by RCSI.

The student will be notified by email of the approval or refusal of the extension request by the Head of Registry Services or Head of School/Programme Director or nominee, as appropriate. The requirements and conditions of the extension of the Leave of Absence will be outlined in the approval letter.

3. Involuntary Leave

3.1 Definition

RCSI may place a student on an involuntary Leave of Absence to address concerns that a student's health or actions are reasonably judged to be:

- disrupting their own studies or the studies of others;
- placing unreasonable demands on staff or other students;
- a threat to their own health and safety;
- a threat to the health and safety of others;
- endangering the environment of the university, including misuse of property.

The decision to place a student on an involuntary leave of absence encompasses all aspects of university life, not just the student's ability to engage with their studies. RCSI seeks to maintain an environment which is safe and conducive to teaching, learning and research and the well-being of all.

² Appeal Regulations are available on the SARA Moodle page



The University has a responsibility to ensure a safe and comfortable environment for staff and students and so in the rare circumstance in which a student is not in a position to identify their own deterioration in health or well-being and to seek a period of voluntary leave, this policy will allow the University to intervene for the wellbeing of the student and the wider University community. This policy is complementary to, but does not replace, the Student Codes of Conduct and Disciplinary rules.

All actions taken will be guided by the following principles:

- To act in a fair and proportionate manner when dealing with vulnerable individuals;
- To consider relevant professional advice and guidance where appropriate;
- To comply with legal duties and responsibilities;
- To safeguard the needs of staff and students affected by inappropriate behaviours;
- To consider the impact of any breaks in study holistically and provide appropriate, advice, information and guidance to those concerned.

3.2 Procedures:

Serious concerns should be communicated to registry@rcsi.ie as soon as possible.

- Following receipt of a concern deemed to be sufficiently serious, including suspension under university disciplinary procedures, the Associate Director for Academic Affairs will discuss the case with relevant professional and faculty staff.
 - This may include options for the student to apply for a voluntary leave of absence.
- In the rare cases where an immediate and / or involuntary leave of absence is required, the student will be informed by email of the interruption to their studies for a period of time.
- Their return may be at the start of a subsequent academic year or, following a fixed-term period within the same academic year.
- CoMPPAS will provide appropriate information, advice and support to the student.
- Students will be informed of the interruption to their studies in writing which will set out the reasons why the University has taken the action.
- A student has the right to appeal against the decision.

During the period of involuntary leave:

- RCSI reserves the right to request a health evaluation or assessment to be undertaken by an RCSI approved Health Professional.
- The student may also provide relevant health information from any health/social care professional that they have attended.
 - Following the review and in consultation with relevant professional and faculty staff, the student will be advised in writing of any variation to the leave and re-enrolment.
- Relevant staff will be notified so appropriate amendments can be made to the student's record.



3.3 Return from Involuntary Leave

It is envisaged that, after whatever time is required and is allowable within the University's Regulations regarding completion of programme, a student covered by this policy will feel ready to return and engage with their studies.

After a period of involuntary leave on health grounds, the decision as to whether or not to permit the student to return to study will be made jointly by the relevant academic faculty and Registry, having taken advice from relevant support and professional services.

- All students must apply for reinstatement to their programme of study by contacting registry@rcsi.ie
- The student must indicate their intention to return by the date specified in the letter approving their leave.
 - If the involuntary leave was as a result of a health condition, the student must submit a full report which indicates that they are fit to resume their studies.
 - They may also be required to be assessed by an appropriate medical professional nominated by RCSI.
- The student will be notified via email of the outcome of their application. If their application is accepted, they will be advised of the re-enrolment procedures.
- If the application is rejected, they will have the right of appeal, in accordance with the RCSI Appeals Regulations.³
- If the student does not apply to return from involuntary leave or fails to request an extension of their Leave of Absence by the required date, they will be considered withdrawn from RCSI.

4. Confidentiality

When the Leave of Absence policy is invoked the University will take account of the rights of the student under relevant legislation.

Staff will act with regard for the expectation of an appropriate level of student confidentiality. Any personal information that is disclosed will be handled and stored as sensitive data.

However, there exist rare occasions when confidentiality may be broken. These include:

- When the student's mental health has deteriorated to the extent of threatening their personal safety;
- When the student is at risk of serious abuse or exploitation;
- When the student's behaviour is adversely affecting the rights and safety of others;
- Where the member of staff would be liable to civil or criminal procedure if the information were not disclosed (e.g. if a crime had been committed);
- Where the student is either under 18 years or a vulnerable adult.

³ Appeal Regulations are available on the SARA Moodle Page



RCSI

Staff should first consult with the Associate Director for Academic Affairs if they believe there is a need to break confidentiality.

5. Financial and Visa Implications

Taking a Leave of Absence may have implications with regards to student supports, funding, tuition fees, student grants, stipends, sponsors, and immigration visas (if applicable).

- The student should make appropriate enquiries to the relevant department (Embassies, Cultural Offices, Funding Agencies, Student Services, Fees office, CoMPPAS, SPGS).
- Students should note that while they are on a leave of absence, they are not enrolled members of the university and may not avail of university services, including healthcare services.

6. Leave of Absence Form

The Leave of Absence form is completed and submitted online, and can be found at the following link: [Leave of Absence Application Form – Fill out form](#)