

# Authorized Leave of Absence Procedure (For International Students)

This procedure is governed by its parent policy.  
Questions regarding this procedure are to be  
directed to the identified Procedure Administrator.

Functional category	Academic
Parent policy	Program Management and Advisory Committee Policy
Approval date	November 16, 2022
Effective date	November 16, 2022
Procedure owner	Vice President, Academic
Procedure administrator	Manager, Registrar

## Overview

This procedure describes how an international student may request and be approved for an authorized leave of absence due to exceptional or unforeseen situations that adversely affect their academic progress. By having a leave of absence authorized under this procedure, an international student may satisfy Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada (IRCC) requirements for students who are taking a break from studies.

All records related to a request for an authorized leave of absence for enrolled students will be kept by the Office of the Registrar.

The Authorized Leave of Absence Procedure complements provisions outlined in the [Program Management and Academic Operations Policy](#) and [Withdrawal Policy](#).

Authority to establish this procedure is derived from the [NorQuest College Board of Governors Policy No. 5](#), which delegates authority to the President and CEO to establish policies and procedures for the college's management and operation.

## Procedure

Authorized leaves of absence shall be considered for any exceptional circumstances that hinder a student's ability to study or to remain compliant with IRCC requirements.

Sole responsibility shall lie with the student to present a case and supporting documentation, in order to assist in their request for an Authorized Leave of Absence.

Only students who have completed at least one academic term and who are active in the program are eligible to request an authorized leave of absence. Leaves of absence will not be granted for newly admitted students.

### **Steps to Request an Authorized Leave of Absence for a One-Term Break**

1. The student shall notify an International Student Advisor and provide evidence of exceptional circumstances to support their request for a break in studies.

(Depending upon the duration of a student's absence from studies, an International Student Advisor, upon consultation with a Student Navigator,

shall determine whether it would be feasible for the student to complete their coursework without an authorized leave of absence from their studies.)

2. With the assistance of a Student Navigator, the student shall develop a Return-to-Studies Plan.
3. The student shall meet with the Program Chair (or designate) to seek approval for their: (i) Request for Authorized Leave of Absence, and (ii) Return-to-Studies Plan.
4. Upon approval of a student's Request for Authorized Leave of Absence by their Program Chair (or designate), the student shall submit the following to an International Student Advisor:
  - a. The approved Request for Authorized Leave of Absence form, and
  - b. Evidence of exceptional circumstances to support their request for a break in their studies.
5. Approval of the Request for Authorized Leave will be recorded on the student's electronic record and retained for immigration and mandatory reporting purposes.
  - a. An Authorized Leave of Absence Letter shall be provided to the student by an International Student Advisor, for the purpose of immigration compliance.
  - b. The Office of the Registrar shall be responsible for reporting all changes to an international student's status, to the IRCC (i.e., Designated Learning Institution (DLI) compliance reporting).
6. In extenuating cases whenever a student's emergency (or exceptional circumstance) occurs after the 10% point of the class and before the end date of the course:

- a. The program area shall grant the student a grade of incomplete (INC) in accordance with the [Assessment and Grading for Credit Courses Procedure](#).
  - b. Whenever a student's exceptional circumstance precludes completion of the course(s), the student should follow the [Withdrawal Procedure](#) and the [Tuition and Related Fees Refund Procedure](#).
  - c. Students can submit a completed Request for Financial Appeal to the Office of the Registrar within 30 days of the end of term, date of drop, or withdrawal, whichever is first.
7. Should the college initiate a withdrawal or suspension of students for one term while keeping their program status active and allowing to resume enrolment in the subsequent term, then these students would be exempt from completing the above steps to request an Authorized Leave of Absence and to seek approval. The Program Chairs' decision to suspend students for one term will consequently signify that the college must also officially confirm the leave by granting the Authorized Leave of Absence. Once the withdrawals/suspensions lists are finalized in the end of every term, Program Chairs will share this information with NorQuest International to complete the Authorized Leave procedure accordingly.

Eligible reasons for an Authorized Leave of Absence include, but are not limited to:

- Serious health, personal or family issues
- Pregnancy or Parental
- Military service
- Financial issues (e.g. family/student/government unable to pay fees)
- Changes in program of study within the same institution, outside of a regularly scheduled break
- Postponed program start date (deferred enrolment)
- Forced break (courses not offered/available in student's program)
- Dismissals or suspensions (dependent on degree of severity)
- Forces majeures

Students requiring more than one term authorized leave of absence will be withdrawn from their academic program due to inactivity. Students must re-apply to the program and will need to meet current admission requirements.

## Definitions

**Authorized Leave of Absence:** a college-approved one-term period of time during which students may suspend (and later resume) enrolment and academic activities within their program of study.

**International Student:** a foreign national, who is legally authorized to study in Canada on a temporary basis.

**Study Permit:** a written authorization, issued by an IRCC officer, permitting a foreign national to engage in academic, professional, vocational, or other education- or training-related activities in Canada.

## Related information

### NorQuest College

- [Assessment and Grading for Credit Courses Procedure](#)
- [Program Management and Academic Operations Policy](#)
- [Tuition and Related Fees Refund Procedure](#)
- [Withdrawal Policy](#)
- [Withdrawal Procedure](#)

## External

With an Authorized Leave from a study program, for up to 150 days, a student is deemed compliant with their study permit conditions and may still be eligible for a Post-Graduation Work Permit.<sup>1</sup>

**Immigration Rules and NorQuest College Policy and Procedures:** According to the *Immigration and Refugee Protection Regulations, SOR/2002-227(IRPR)*, international students must remain enrolled, and be actively pursuing studies at a DLI, until completion of said studies is attained. On January 7, 2019, instructions<sup>2</sup> issued by the IRCC permitted DLIs to grant students authorized leaves for a period up to 150 days, in certain cases. Examples of such authorized leaves now include changes in program of study within the same DLI, outside of a regularly scheduled break. “A student on leave, who begins or resumes their studies **within 150 days from the date their leave commenced** (that is, the date their leave was granted by the institution), is considered to be actively pursuing studies during their leave.”

**Important Note:** By obtaining documentation explaining the college’s policies for students seeking authorized leaves from their studies, students by no means become exempt from their obligations to comply with IRCC policies and requirements. The college cannot (and does not) make immigration decisions. Any documentation issued by the college to students shall serve the exclusive purpose of highlighting that NorQuest College authorizes any such student to take a break from their studies. Such documentation shall also highlight the college’s requirement that students prepare a *Return-to-Studies Plan*, in consultation with their Program Area.

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<sup>1</sup> Post-Graduation Work Permit Eligibility Requirements, online: Government of Canada, Immigration, Refugees, and Citizenship Canada (IRCC).

<sup>2</sup> Program Delivery Update: New Instructions on Assessing Study Permit Conditions, online: Government of Canada, Immigration, Refugees, and Citizenship Canada (IRCC).

## Next review date

September 2024

## Revision history

Date	Version Number	Action
September 2020	V1	New.
April 2021	V2 (published as V1)	Retired Program Management and Academic Operations Committee Policy and replaced with Program Management and Advisory Committee Policy, updated this procedure accordingly.
October 2022	V3 (published as V2)	Revised eligibility criteria.
February 2024	V4	Information, Risk & Compliance template & reorganization update.