

University-Mandated Leave of Absence Policy 2021 Review

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UNIVERSITY OF
TORONTO

Background & Context

**Before
2018**

Successful Accommodations in all but
a handful of cases
Code of Student Conduct

**2013/2014
2014/2015**

Recommendations in Ombudsperson
Reports

**Officially
Approved
2018**

University-Mandated Leave of Absence
Policy



Consultations & Research

Hosted 4 town halls

Innovation Hub
hosted 6 student
focus groups

Secured a web
presence to solicit
online feedback

Secured consults with
tri-campus Students
Unions / Clubs /
Societies / Committees

Hosted consultations with
campus administrative
committees, which included
representation from First Nations
House / EDI
Offices / Ombudsperson / SST / H&
W / AccessAbility Services / CSO,
and more

Reviewed reports,
attended sponsored
webinars



Key Themes from Student Consultations

Policy be rescinded, though rejection of return to use of Code of Student Conduct

Failure to fully respect the autonomy of those students to whom the *Policy* is applied

The inclusion of self-harm led some students to avoid seeking help and support

Impact on international students

Potential financial impact

Inclusion of cases of possible self-harm in Scenario 1 of the *Policy* is too broad

Unsure about the circumstances in which Scenario 2 of the *Policy* would apply

Accepted the need for the *Policy* in cases where there are possible harm to others

Transparency on the application of the *Policy* on marginalized students

Greater clarity about the possibility of voluntary leaves within the *Policy*

Greater access to voluntary leaves at the divisional level

On-going periodic review of the *Policy*

A companion guide

Ensure that the *Policy* is used as a last resort



Key Themes from Faculty and Staff Consultations

Appreciated that the *Policy* exists to support students in crisis

Appreciated the care and concern shown to students when the *Policy* is used

Many were unsure about the circumstances in which Scenario 2 of the *Policy* would apply.

Suggested that some timelines within the *Policy* require clarification

A companion guide

Greater clarity on the role of Equity Officers on a Student Support Team (SST).



Preliminary Recommendations

Maintain a version of the *Policy*, with some revisions.

Restrict mandated leaves only to those cases where a student is posing a harm to others or actively interfering with the educational experience of fellow students, and all other options for reasonable accommodations have been exhausted.

Clarify that mere discomfort about a student's behavior resulting from mental illness does not qualify as a psychological harm under the *Policy*.

Scenario 1

The Student's behaviour poses a risk of harm to self or others, including but not limited to a risk of imminent or serious physical or psychological harm, or harm that involves substantial impairment of the educational experience of fellow students.

(<https://governingcouncil.utoronto.ca/secretariat/policies/university-mandated-leave-absence-policy-june-27-2018>)



Scenario 2

While not posing a risk of harm to self or others as described in Scenario 1, the Student is unable to engage in the essential activities required to pursue an education at the University notwithstanding Accommodations or supportive resources that have been deployed or offered to the Student but where the Student has not participated or cooperated with what has been offered and/or deployed. For clarity, this scenario is not intended to apply to situations where a Student is academically unsuccessful and the normal consequences of failing to meet academic standards should apply, but rather to situations involving serious behavioural problems that may be related to mental health or other similar issues, which result in the Student's inability to fulfill the essential activities required to pursue their program and where a leave may provide an opportunity for the Student to seek assistance to focus on whatever underlying issue may be causing the serious behavioural problems, without incurring normal academic consequences.

(<https://governingcouncil.utoronto.ca/secretariat/policies/university-mandated-leave-absence-policy-june-27-2018>)



Preliminary Recommendations

Rename the *Policy* to more accurately reflect its purpose and the options contained within the *Policy*.

Establish divisional voluntary leave policies (where they do not already exist), with support available from the Office of the Vice-Provost, Students as needed.

Provide additional student supports in situations where a divisional voluntary leave has been unsuccessful and/or a student may benefit from a higher level of institutionally coordinated resources, but does not meet the threshold for the *Policy*. Establish guidelines about when such additional supports would be available.

Publish a companion guide to the *Policy* by Fall 2022.

Track and report on additional data related to the *Policy*, including demographic data, divisional referrals for consideration under the *Policy*, and timelines for those on leave.

Conduct a further review of the *Policy* after three years. This review should consider whether there is a need for on-going periodic review of the *Policy* moving forward.



Next Steps

Consultation site remains open until November 30

Review Team is presenting at Governance forums

Revised Policy for consideration in later cycles



Thank You

Any questions or comments related to the review process can be submitted to the **consultation website** or forwarded to vp.students@utoronto.ca