



FOR INFORMATION

PUBLIC

OPEN SESSION

TO: University Affairs Board

SPONSOR: Sandy Welsh, Vice-Provost, Students

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PRESENTER: same as above

CONTACT INFO:

DATE: November 15, 2022 for November 22, 2022

AGENDA ITEM: 6

ITEM IDENTIFICATION:

Report on the University-Mandated Leave of Absence Policy: 2021-22

JURISDICTIONAL INFORMATION:

Section 5.6 of the *Terms of Reference* for the University Affairs Board provides that:

The Board receives, annually from its assessors, reports on matters within its areas of responsibility, (for example, but not limited to, trademark licensing, non-academic discipline, and submission of audited financial statements of student societies) including statements of current issues, opportunities and problems, and recommendations for changes in policies, plans or priorities that would address such issues.

Section 78 of the *University-Mandated Leave of Absence Policy*, provides that:

The Office of the Vice-Provost, Students, shall prepare and submit annually to the University Affairs Board a report consisting of a narrative of the functioning of the Policy over the course of the preceding academic year. The report shall also include statistics in aggregate form, without names or any identifying personal information, of the numbers of Students agreeing to a Voluntary Leave of Absence, or being subject to a University-Mandated Leave of Absence decision under this Policy, and the numbers of any of those Students returning to registered status at the University during the academic year.

GOVERNANCE PATH:

1. University Affairs Board [For Information] (November 22, 2022)

PREVIOUS ACTION TAKEN:

The *Policy* was approved on June 27, 2018. Per section 78 of the *Policy*, a report has been brought to the University Affairs Board (UAB) for Information in cycle 2 each year since (November 13, 2019; November 24, 2020; and November 23, 2021).

HIGHLIGHTS:

In the 2021-22 academic year, the *Policy* was used four times. Three of these cases involved Urgent Situations under the *Policy*. Two of the students placed on Leave during the 2020-21 academic year are in the process of being considered for Return to Studies.

During the 2021-22 academic year there was one request for review by the Provost of the Vice-Provost's decision to place a student on Mandated Leave and no request for appeal to the University Tribunal.

As of August 30, 2022*, there were eleven active Leave cases: 2 Voluntary and 9 University-Mandated.

*Note: In previous years the report captured data from June 30 to July 1. Starting with the 2021-22 report we are shifting the reporting period to be to September 1 – August 30 to capture activity across the full cycle of the academic year.

FINANCIAL AND/OR PLANNING IMPLICATIONS:

There are no financial implications.

RECOMMENDATION:

For Information.

DOCUMENTATION PROVIDED:

Annual Report: Summary of *University-Mandated Leave of Absence Policy* 2021-22.

Summary of Cases Under the *University-Mandated Leave of Absence Policy*: 2021 – 2022

The information presented within this report relates to cases under the *University-Mandated Leave of Absence Policy* for the 2021 – 2022 academic year. The *University-Mandated Leave of Absence Policy* was established on June 27, 2018 by approval of the Governing Council. As per the *Policy*, “the report will consist of a narrative of the functioning of the *Policy* over the course of the preceding academic year. The report shall also include statistics in aggregate form, without names or identifying personal information, of the numbers of Students agreeing to a Voluntary Leave of Absence or being placed on a University-Mandated Leave of Absence, and the numbers of any of those Students returning to registered status at the University during the academic year.”

Statistics

The statistics presented in this report capture activity under the *Policy* from September 1 – August 30 in the preceding academic year¹.

In the 2021 - 2022 academic year, the Vice-Provost, Students received seven requests from division heads to invoke the *Policy*. After careful review of the circumstances of each case the *Policy* was used in four instances and three of these cases involved Urgent Situations (section 46). In the three cases where the *Policy* was not used, the University continues to engage with the individuals offering various supports and resources to help ensure the well-being and safety of the students (e.g., services through Health & Wellness, connection with community care providers, assignment of a University support person, referral to Accessibility Services, academic support, etc.,).

During the 2021-22 academic year, the four cases that went forward under the *Policy*, involved significant concern for the student’s mental health and well-being and safety risks to others, resulting in a direct response from the University.

	2018-19	2019-20	2020-21	2021-22	Total
University-Mandated Leaves of Absence	6	1	4	4	15
Voluntary Leaves of Absence	2	0	0	0	2
TOTALS:	8	1	4	4	17

Urgent Situations	6	0	2	3	8
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Returned to Studies	2	2	2	1	7
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¹ In previous years the report captured data from June 30 to July 1. Starting with the 2021-22 report we are shifting the reporting period to be to September 1 – August 30 to capture activity across the full cycle of the academic year.

As of August 30, 2022, there were ten active Leave cases: 2 Voluntary and 8 University-Mandated.

Of the seventeen cases total for the *Policy*, fifteen are domestic students and two are international students. The cases comprise a mix of undergraduate and graduate students studying in a range of programs across the University.

The two Voluntary Leaves under the *Policy* remain active and at this time, neither individual has expressed an interest to return to studies at U of T. The University continues to support these students and a Student Case Manager remains assigned to them.

Request to Review Decision

During the 2021 - 2022 academic year there was one request for review by the Provost of the Vice-Provost's decision to place a student on a Mandated Leave of Absence as per section V.a. of the *Policy*. After careful and objective consideration, the Provost maintained the decision in this case, recommending that the student remain on leave. The University did not receive any requests for appeal to the University Tribunal.

Note: During the first two years of operation of the *Policy*, the University Ombudsperson reviewed the factual specifics of each of these cases and has not identified any concerns with the application of the *Policy*.

Return to Studies

As of the start of the Fall 2022 term, seven of the seventeen cases, that have proceeded under the *Policy* since 2018, have resulted in the student returning to studies. To date:

- Two students that have returned to studies have gone on to successfully complete their academic requirements and graduate;
- Three additional students in this group are continuing on with their studies and remain in good academic standing;
- One student has chosen to continue their studies at another institution, and;
- One student has chosen not to register for courses during Fall 2022 but remains in touch with their Student Case Manager on a weekly regular basis.

For the student who returned to studies in the 2021 - 2022 academic year (mentioned in the 2020-21 report because they started back in September 2021), conditions for return were similar to previous cases. The types of conditions put in place for return include: remote return to studies for online courses, regular contact with their Student Case Manager, engaging with accessibility plans put in place by Accessibility Services, engaging in recommended treatment plans, reduced course loads, and no-contact orders with those who had been the focus of the safety concern.

Pointing to the four years of data, the track record of students, who have interacted with the University under this *Policy*, resuming their studies and persisting in their academic pursuits strongly suggests that the *Policy* is working as intended. The *Policy* provides students a pathway to take time away from their studies to focus on their health many and then resume may their studies once they are well enough to do so. The University remains steady about the need for this *Policy*, and extremely positive about its implementation to date. We are pleased as we continue to see students who were previously languishing in their mental health and academics being able to thrive with the intervention of the *Policy*.

Functioning of the *Policy*

Terms and Conditions

Some of the terms and conditions put in place under the *Policy* include: a full tuition refund for the courses the student was enrolled in, deferring exams, late withdrawals without academic penalty, providing access to Health and Wellness services during the leave, continuation of student extended health Insurance coverage, arrangements to complete course work off-campus, housing assistance, bursaries and support with OSAP related processes, arrangements for remote and or virtual psychological/psychiatric risk assessments to be conducted, regular contact with the Student Case Manager, and ongoing review of status and progress by the Vice-Provost Students and Student Support Team.

Student Case Manager and the Student Support Team

Each student was provided with a Student Case Manager (SCM) as per Section 31 of the *Policy* who acted as the student's point of contact and helped them navigate resources, understand the *Policy* and the process, and provide support. The SCM was chosen based on factors such as their familiarity with the student, the student's comfort level with the individual, and the position the individual holds at the University. For example, those working in Student Progress & Support were assigned the role of SCM in the seventeen cases to date cases.

Further, in each case, a Student Support Team (SST) was formed as per Section 30 of the *Policy*. The SST was typically made up of the Student Case Manager, the local registrar, a regulated health professional, a representative from campus safety offices, and other parties who were relevant to the case, such as an equity officer and accessibility services advisor. A Medical Professional who was not involved in the student's care was consulted in each case.

The *Policy* has provided the flexibility to put into place a plan that is reflective of the individual needs of the student.

Review of the *Policy*

When the *University-Mandated Leave of Absence Policy* was approved by Governing Council in July 2018, a clause was included which requires that a review of the *Policy* be conducted three years after its implementation and that the Provost report to Governing Council about that review. As noted in the 2020-21 report, the Provost initiated this review in the Winter of 2021 by asking Professor Donald Ainslie, Department of Philosophy in the Faculty of Arts and Science to lead it along with Varsha Patel, Assistant Dean of Student Success and Career Support, University of Toronto Scarborough. Following the internal review, the University has also sought an external review of the *Policy*. The report to Governing Council is expected to be brought forward in Cycle 3.