

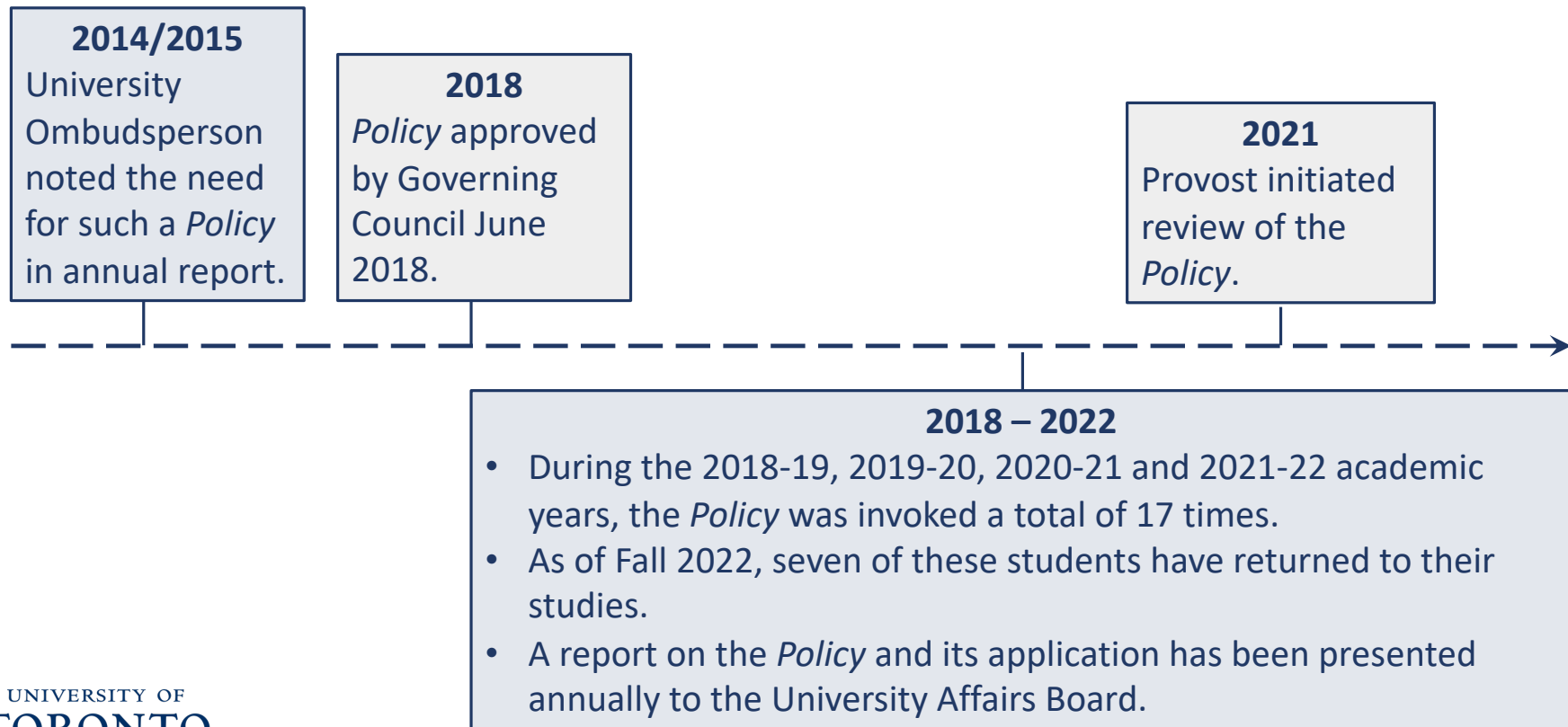


Revisions to the *University-Mandated Leave of Absence Policy*

Cycle 3 – January-February 2023



Background on the *Policy*



Policy Review

Consultations

- Four open town halls
- Meetings with student societies and other student organizations
- Five open student consultations led by the Innovation Hub
- Consultations with staff and faculty across all three campuses
- Consultation with the University Ombudsperson
- Online consultation site open to all members of the University community from March 1, to November 30, 2021

Policy Review

Analysis

- Feedback distilled into major themes.
- Themes and recommendations presented to governance, Fall 2021.
- All recommendations accepted by the University.

Policy Recommendations

- Maintaining a version of the *Policy*, with some revisions;
- Renaming the *Policy* to more accurately reflect its purpose and the options contained within the *Policy*;
- Restricting 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;
- Reinforcing that mere discomfort about a student's behavior resulting from mental illness does not qualify as a psychological harm under the *Policy*; and,
- Conducting a further review of the *Policy* after three years.

Policy Review

External Consultations

- Draft *Policy* revisions shared with two external experts in Human Rights Law and Psychiatry.
- Feedback included:
 - Confirmation that, in their views, the draft *Policy* was largely consistent with and implemented the University's human rights obligations and appropriately addressed issues with respect to students affected by mental illness, including engagement in clinical care.
 - Recommendations for revised language to clarify the University's responsibilities and obligations and ensure language within the *Policy* is aligned with best practices in mental health.
- Feedback from external consultations was incorporated into revised *Policy*.

Policy Revisions

Changes to the *Policy* reflect recommendations from the initial review as well as the external expert consultations, including:

- Renaming the *Policy* to more accurately reflect its purpose and the options contained within the *Policy*.
- Restricting 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.
- Reinforcing the University's obligation to provide necessary accommodations up to the point of undue hardship.
- Clarifying language within the *Policy* to communicate what actions on the part of the University are mandatory versus discretionary.





Policy Resources and Supports

In response to recommendations from the review, the University will:

- Produce a companion guide to the revised *Policy*.
- Explore opportunities to respond to requests from undergraduate students for divisional voluntary leave of absence policies.
- Continue efforts to enhance student mental health resources and accessibility services.
- Consider how additional cultural and/or family supports may be added for students placed on a Leave.
- Provide additional guidance to Division Heads with regard to the *Policy* and its application.
- Track and report on additional data related to the *Policy*, including aggregate demographic data, divisional referrals for consideration under the *Policy*, and timelines for those on leave.

Impact of *Policy* Changes

- Narrowing scope of *Policy* and reinforcement of its applicability to a small number of exceptional circumstances where the safety of members of the University community are at risk and all other accommodative measures have been unsuccessful.
- Better articulation of the Student's rights and the University's responsibilities and obligations.
- Reinforcement of the compassionate intent of the *Policy*.



Governance Path

1. University Affairs Board [for recommendation]
(January 18, 2023)
2. UTM Campus Council [for information]
(January 24, 2023)
3. UTSC Campus Council [for information]
(January 25, 2023)
4. Academic Board [for concurrence with the
recommendation of the University Affairs Board]
(January 26, 2023)
5. Executive Committee [for endorsement and forwarding]
(February 7, 2023)
6. Governing Council [for approval]
(February 15, 2023)