

# 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

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**2013/2014  
2014/2015**

Recommendations in Ombudsperson  
Reports

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**Officially  
Approved  
2018**

University-Mandated Leave of Absence  
Policy

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# Mental Health Task Force Updates

## Planning

- Appoint a Clinical Director to oversee an integrated tri-campus system

## In Progress

- Support student organizations promote health insurance
- Conduct a process redesign of student mental health services
- Adopt one online booking system
- Adopt one electronic records system

## Completed

- Extended 24/7 access My SSP
- Drop in counselling sessions
- Appointed a Mental Health Services Redesign Team
- Same-day counselling services on the St. George Campus
- Way finding for services - NAVI
- Launched one website for mental health services and programming
- Implemented one institutional letter for accessibility services



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*Policy* be rescinded, though rejection of return to use of Code of Student Conduct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

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

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

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

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Suggested that some timelines within the *Policy* require clarification

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A companion guide

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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.

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

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*.

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.



# Preliminary Recommendations

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.

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

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.





# Next Steps

Consultation site remains open until November 30

Review Team is presenting at campus forums

Revised Policy for consideration in Cycle 3



# 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](mailto:vp.students@utoronto.ca)