

Graduate Student Leaves: Policies and Practices

UCLA Linguistics Department

July 2019

The goal of this document is to help you determine whether you should take a leave, and if so, what sort of leave you should take. Depending on the type of leave, it is governed by University policy or departmental practice. Where University policy is concerned, more details are to be found [here](#), in the UCLA/UAW contract document titled “Article 17: Leaves”. The acronym “ASE” stands for “Academic Student Employee,” and applies only to TAs, not Graduate Student Researchers (in our department, RAs or first-years). You should plan on taking a leave if you anticipate needing to miss more than a week of consecutive coursework and/or instruction. Students who miss coursework or employment expectations without taking official leaves run the risk of failing those courses and having their employment terminated.

1. Types of leave

Several types of leave are available to TAs, as ensured by the UAW contract, including:

- military leave for military obligations: “paid to the extent required by applicable law”
- pregnancy disability leave: “ASEs are entitled to unpaid leave for up to four months per pregnancy”
- bereavement leave: up to three days paid bereavement
- jury duty leave: paid leave when summoned
- miscellaneous leave: granted with or without pay at the University’s discretion
- medical or family-related leave: the most common, to be discussed below

2. Medical or family-related leave: an overview

Medical leave is leave due to “personal illness and/or disability”. Family leave is leave due to i) “birth, adoption, or care of a child or family member” or ii) family emergencies; or iii) “appointments and/or hearings scheduled by federal immigration officials... with respect to immigration or citizenship status of the ASE” or family member.

The term “family member” is explicitly defined (in Article 17H) as a parent, sibling, parent-in-law, spouse, domestic partner, parent of domestic partner, grandparent, grandchild, or child (including step- or foster- or of a domestic partner).

For every event that might prompt a student to take a leave of absence (LOA), there are two types of leave to consider: 1) an Academic LOA, which pertains to the ASE’s coursework and/or research; and 2) a Payroll LOA, which pertains to the ASE’s employment (as a Teaching Assistant or Research Assistant). While the reasons for each are the same, they can in some circumstances be considered independently, and dealt with independently.

3. Short-term medical or family-related LOAs

The department may offer short-term *paid* medical or family-related leave for to graduate students, depending on the circumstances. Short-term leaves are four weeks or less, at the department’s discretion. Once the leave is requested the department will submit a notification to the student approving the leave

and for how long. In practice, for the purposes of Payroll LOAs, the department differentiates between Teaching Assistants (TAs) and Research Assistants (RAs).

3.1 Short-term Academic LOAs

Pending approval from the Director of Graduate Studies (DGS) and their individual instructors, a student can take an Academic Leave for up to four weeks without academic penalty. This means that a student can work with the DGS and their instructors to come up with ways to make up the course requirements for those four weeks, usually by taking an Incomplete for the course. Other options include dropping the class or modifying the student's enrollment in the class from four credits to two (for Proseminars).

3.2 Short-term TA Payroll LOAs

Pending approval from the DGS, TAs may be granted up to four weeks' paid Payroll Leave. This means that the ASE will continue to get compensated for the course of their paid leave; the department will find and fund a temporary replacement for the ASE's teaching duties; and the ASE will remain officially in charge of the sections or course (for the purposes of evaluations, etc.).

To take a short-term TA Payroll LOA, the ASE must have a discussion with the DGS and get prior approval. The department might also request that the ASE grant access to their course material and help with any necessary administrative forms.

3.3 Short-term RA Payroll LOAs

Pending approval from the DGS and their principle advisor, RAs may be granted up to four weeks' paid Payroll Leave. This means that the ASE will continue to get compensated for the research they were hired to do for the course of their paid leave. The DGS and principle advisor will work together to determine which components of the research assignment will be waived and which will be postponed and completed later, on a new timeline (e.g. over the following break).

4. Long-term LOAs

The University does not offer long-term LOA protection to GSRs, or RAs. If a TA needs more than four weeks' leave, for whatever reason, they must first meet with the DGS to discuss the circumstances of their LOA and to ensure they understand the terms of it. The TA must then work with the Graduate Student Affairs Officer (GSAO) to complete the various University LOA Forms. This must happen as soon as the ASE decides to take an LOA.

4.1 Long-term Academic LOAs

The Academic LOA Form will un-enroll the TA from their classes that quarter. If the department has paid the TA's fees for that quarter, the student will be billed for them (prorated to the date that the Academic LOA form was submitted). While Academic LOAs do not interrupt the TA's time-to-degree calculation for the University's purposes, the department tends to take these things into account when determining conformity to internal deadlines (i.e. the DYF application requirement).

4.2 Long-term Payroll LOAs

The Payroll LOA Form will terminate the TA from their appointment. Termination of this appointment means the student will not stop receiving a payroll salary from the department for the applicable quarter. The department will find and fund a replacement for them.