

PROPOSED POLICIES

GSH Section 11 - Benefits for Graduate Associates, Fellows, and Trainees

Time Off - 11.2

Graduate associates, fellows and trainees (i.e. appointees) are graduate students who receive a stipend for part-time service or scholarship (usually 0.25 or 0.5 FTE) and do not accrue vacation or sick time. However, they are eligible to take time away from their duties for certain events during which their appointment, stipend, and benefits are not impacted. Time off refers to short, intermittent absences during university breaks and university observed holidays, and time away for reasons of sickness, bereavement, personal and professional development. Time off is different than longer periods of absence such as medical or parental leave* (Section 11.3), military leave (Section 11.4), pre-candidacy academic leave (Section 3.1), or post-candidacy leave of absence (Section 7.7).

**Note: For purposes of these guidelines, absences for birth or adoptive events will be considered Parental Leave. Under the University [Paid Time Off Policy \(opens in new window\)](#) for Faculty and Staff, absences for childbirth or adoptive events are considered Parental Time Off.*

This policy establishes the minimum time off benefit provided to each appointee. Appointing units may provide additional time off allowance and must communicate those additional time off allowances to their GAs, fellows, and trainees. Violations of the time off policy are subject to formal grievances and review, as described in the [Graduate Student Handbook Appendix D](#).

University Breaks and Observed Holidays. Appointees are not required, under most circumstances, to work on their appointment duties during semester or term breaks (i.e., when classes are not in session) or on university observed holidays noted in the [University Holiday Policy \(opens in new window\)](#), provided their appointment period spans the break or holiday. If the work duties of an appointment require work during holidays and/or university breaks (e.g., time sensitive experiments, academic or

research deadlines or care of living organisms), the student must be given an alternate day(s) off from their appointment duties. Supervisors and advisors are responsible for communicating their overall expectations of appointment work schedule, as well as any necessary requirements for appointment work during university breaks and legal holidays to their appointees well in advance of the break or holiday. Appointees are responsible for notifying their supervisors and advisors in advance of planned time off from appointment duties during university breaks and legal holidays.

Time off from appointment duties during breaks and holidays does not relieve graduate students from their responsibilities of making academic progress. Appointees enrolled in research, thesis, and dissertation credits are expected to fulfill the effort requirements of those credits, which may require effort by appointees during university breaks and legal holidays.

The time off allowances provided below are based on a 0.5 FTE appointment. Time off is prorated accordingly for appointees with different FTE appointments.

Sick and Bereavement Time Off. Appointees are eligible to use up to 16 hours of sick time for medical appointments, illness or injury, or to care for a family member who is ill each spring or autumn semester. Sick time is allowed to carry over across semesters. Appointees on nine-month appointments are not eligible for sick time during the summer term. Appointees working in 12-month appointments are allowed up to 16 hours off during the summer term. Appointees may use up to 20 hours of sick time for bereavement due to death of a family member. An additional 20 hours may be available for the death of a spouse/partner, parent or child, subject to approval based on work needs. Eight hours of bereavement time may be taken to attend funeral or services for a non-family member. Appointees must notify their supervisors and advisors as soon as possible of their need for sick time and in advance of using bereavement time off.

Personal Time Off. While appointees are expected to utilize university breaks and holidays for personal time off, circumstances may require the use of personal time off when classes are in session. Appointees who are in good academic standing and making reasonable progress toward their degrees may take, with approval from their supervisors and advisors, up to 24 hours of personal time off per semester or summer term for vacation and/or personal reasons. Personal time off is allowed to carry over between semesters. Supervisors and advisors are responsible for communicating their overall expectations of appointment work schedule and timely progress toward degree completion to appointees. Appointees are responsible for submitting requests to their supervisors and advisors for their planned personal time off well in advance when taken outside of university breaks and OSU observed holidays.

Professional Development Time Off. Up to 16 hours per semester or summer term is allotted for professional development activities outside the scope of the appointment

such as attending workshops or attending and presenting scholarly work at national and international meetings. If the professional development activity is related to the appointment (e.g. attending a research conference in which the student is presenting results of work done as a GRA or attending a teaching workshop to prepare for GTA responsibilities), the GA does not need to take time off to participate.

Medical and Parental Leaves of Absence - 11.3

For purposes of this policy, a Medical or Parental **Leave of Absence** is defined as an approved, extended absence from work for qualifying reasons as specified herein. Medical and parental leaves of absence are unpaid leaves that protect the student's appointment, although local units have the option to provide stipend pay during the leave. When permitted or required by law and policy, medical leave or parental leave of absence may run concurrently with paid personal or sick time off, unpaid time off or with other applicable leaves of absence.

Medical Leave of Absence. Leaves of absence due to medical reasons may be granted for eligible appointees ([Appendix F \(opens in new window\)](#)). The length of leave will vary based on circumstances of the student and the appointment unit, and thus each request is managed on a case-by-case basis. Supervisors and advisors should be as flexible as possible with the length of leave granted for medical reasons, in consultation with [Integrated Absence Management and Vocational Services \(IAMVS\) \(opens in a new window\)](#). Generally, medical leave should be less than one semester in duration. If leave for an entire semester or more is required, the appointee should pursue the academic leave of absence (Section 3.1, for master's and pre-candidacy doctoral students) or the post-candidacy leave of absence (Section 7.7).

Parental Leave of Absence. Up to six weeks of leave for birth or adoptive events may be provided to birthing and non-birthing parents who are eligible appointees. One suggested allocation would be to use sick, personal, and professional time off, followed by parental leave for up to six weeks as applicable. Appointing units may provide additional time for parental or medical Leave and must communicate those additional time off allowances to their appointees. Parental leave should be discussed and planned with the advisor and local unit and in coordination with [IAMVS \(opens in new window\)](#) when applicable. Parental leave runs concurrently with FML for FML eligible appointees.

A leave of absence for childbirth or adoption for an eligible appointee should generally commence immediately following the birth or adoption of a child and not be used intermittently. In some instances, parental leave may commence prior to the event

when deemed medically necessary or when requisite to fulfill the legal requirements for an adoption.

If both parents are funded graduate students, parental leave can be taken consecutively but is not intended to be used intermittently.

A leave of absence for childbirth or adoption is available for each funded graduate student, for each birth or adoptive event. The number of children involved does not increase the length of a leave of absence granted for that event.

**Note: For purposes of these guidelines, absences for birth or adoptive events will be considered Parental Leave. Under the University [Paid Time Off Policy \(opens in new window\)](#) for Faculty and Staff, absences for childbirth or adoptive events are considered Parental Time Off.*

Requesting Medical or Parental Leave. Details related to the process by which an appointee requests leave, eligibility requirements and processes to be used by academic and administrative units at Ohio State to support appointees during instances of medical or parental leave can be found in [Appendix F \(opens in new window\)](#). Appointees should note that each situation will be individually addressed according to the specific research, teaching, or administrative context and the individual's reason for requesting the leave.

In certain circumstances, a graduate appointment may qualify for a federally mandated type of medical leave called **Family and Medical Leave (FML)**. FML is a form of unpaid, job-protected leave provided in accordance with the federal Family and Medical Leave Act (FMLA) and The Ohio State University [Family and Medical Leave Policy 6.05 \(opens in new window\)](#). FML may be granted for qualifying events as defined by applicable federal law and University policy, including the appointee's own serious health condition, care of a qualifying family member with a serious health condition, and qualifying birth, adoptive and fostering events.

Federal law requires all employee medical leave requests for a qualifying event named above be reviewed for FML eligibility. At Ohio State, leave requests associated with a graduate appointee's own serious health condition, the care of a qualifying family member with a serious health condition, and qualifying birth, adoptive and fostering events are reviewed by IAMVS to determine whether the appointee is eligible for FML. To be eligible for Family and Medical Leave, an appointee must have been employed by The Ohio State University for at least twelve (12) months and must have worked a minimum of 1,250 hours during the twelve (12) months immediately preceding the start of the requested leave. Part-time appointees, including those typically appointed

at 0.25 or 0.50 FTE (as many appointees are) generally do not meet the eligibility requirements for Family and Medical Leave.

Appointees will be notified through Workday if they are eligible or ineligible for FML. Appointees who are ineligible for FML but require leave due to a serious health condition or for recovery from childbirth will have their request converted to non-FML Medical Leave. Non-FML Medical Leave will then be administered at the local unit level, in coordination with IAMVS and the appointee's supervisor and advisor.

Pay Implications: All continuous leaves of absence, when entered In Workday, may impact pay. Appointees using paid time off or stipend protected leave in conjunction with FML, non-FML Medical or Parental Leave must notify their assigned [FML Administrator \(opens in new window\)](#) of the paid time off to be used to avoid disruptions in pay.

Military Leave - 11.4

Military Leave. Graduate associates, fellows and trainees (i.e., appointees) who are members of the Ohio National Guard or any other reserve component of the United States Armed Forces or who are ordered involuntarily to extended United States military service are granted leave without pay in accordance with the Ohio State [Military Call for Active Duty \(opens in new window\)](#), the [Military Leave and Reemployment Rights policy \(opens in new window\)](#) and the Uniformed Services Employment and Reemployment Act (USERRA). Under USERRA, employees cannot be required to submit written documentation prior to approval of leave for Military Service, but it can be requested, and it can be required upon return from leave.

Graduate students on military leave are encouraged to withdraw from all Ohio State courses and have no expectation of making progress toward their graduate degree during the time of leave. However, the graduate program and the college/regional campus office may exercise professional judgement on a case-by-case basis. Depending on the time of the term, course workload, percentage of work completed or other relevant factors, an appointee on military leave may be allowed to remain in one or more courses.

All returning appointees, regardless of FTE may be eligible for reemployment upon return from an approved military leave. The position a returning individual fills is based on the length of the intervening military leave. 1. If the intervening military leave was fewer than 91 days, the individual is to be promptly returned to the position that the employee left. If the intervening military leave was for 91 or more days, the individual will have the same right to return to a university position as persons with a shorter term

of military leave, except that the university will have the additional option of providing employment in a position of like seniority, pay, and status for which they are qualified.

GSH APPENDIX F - Guidelines for Medical and Parental Leaves of Absence for Graduate Students Appointed as GAs, Fellows, and Trainees

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Introduction - F.1

These guidelines formalize a set of expectations, strongly encouraged by the Graduate School, to be used by academic and administrative units at Ohio State to support graduate associates (GAAs, GRAs, and GTAs, collectively referred to hereafter as GAs), fellows and trainees seeking medical or parental leave. The specific details and expectations can be found in [Section 11.2](#).

It is impossible to list every life circumstance and every academic situation that an individual graduate student might face. It is also impossible to list every situation that a faculty or administrative supervisor might face in a teaching, research, or administrative setting. These guidelines recognize that it is important for faculty and administrative supervisors to retain flexibility in working with individual students to determine the most fitting response to a particular student's situation. At the same time, Section 11.3 sets out guidelines that are intended to provide more consistency across the university in managing leaves of absence for funded graduate students. Nothing in

these guidelines should be read to require the alteration or diminution of policies presently in place in programs that go beyond what is presented here.

Whenever possible and academically appropriate, these guidelines aim to preserve student status and the student's means of financial support (including stipend, fee authorization, health care subsidy, and other appointment benefits).

All requests for medical or parental leave must be evaluated in accordance with the Family Medical Leave Act (FMLA), the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), the Pregnant Workers Fairness Act (PWFA), the Uniformed Services Employment and Reemployment Rights Act (USERRA) and other applicable local, state, or federal laws. Please work with **Integrated Absence Management and Vocational Services (IAMVS)** for all medical and parental leaves of absence to ensure compliance.

Types of Leaves of Absence - F.2

This section applies to FML, non-FML medical leave and parental leave for GAs, fellows and trainees (i.e., appointees) (see Section 11.3 for details). This section does not apply to military leave (Section 11.4), pre-candidacy academic leave (Section 3.1), or post-candidacy leave of absence (Section 7.7).

Eligibility Criteria - F.3

Ohio State graduate or professional students must:

- Be on fellowship, traineeship (**Section 10**) or associateship (**Section 9**) appointments paid through the Ohio State payroll system (hereafter collectively referred to as “funded graduate students”). In the case of multiple appointments, different appointing units should work together with the student (and their enrolling unit, where appropriate) to create a coherent plan for the leave of absence.
- Fellows and trainees funded by external agencies are also subject to the guidelines established by the funding agency.
- Be enrolled at the level required to hold the appointment (Sections 9 and 10) Requirements for full-time enrollment may be reduced with the approval of the appropriate Graduate Studies Committee, the Graduate School, and other relevant entities (such as a funding agency, Office of International Affairs, etc.).

Procedures and Guidelines for Leaves of Absence - F.4

Unexpected absences are usually the most difficult to manage, since they require careful balancing of the student's personal needs with academic and administrative policies, the student's academic standing and degree progress, unit or principal

investigator needs, and funding realities. Appropriately addressing these challenging life situations, which can also jeopardize degree progress or degree completion, typically involves not only the graduate student and their supervisor but also the student's advisor, Graduate Studies Committee Chair, and often the department head. Leave situations for medical (FML, non-FML medical leave, recovery from childbirth) and parental leaves require input from and coordination with IAMVS. Some situations may require additional expertise (from the Graduate School, the Office of International Affairs, the Office of Human Resources, the Office of Student Financial Aid, the Office of the Ombuds, or other areas).

Academic and administrative units are expected to approach leave related decisions in a manner that is equitable, consistent, and compliant with university policy and applicable law, while maintaining flexibility to address individual circumstances of each appointee.

Notification and Documentation. To be granted a leave of absence, appointees must notify their supervisors and advisors, in writing (via e-mail), as soon as possible. A completed [GA request for leave form](#) should be attached to the appointee's e-mail. All requests for medical or parental leave must be approved by the graduate advisor and/or the appointment unit, as applicable.

In addition, appointees who experience a qualifying event for FML, including the appointee's own serious health condition, the care of a qualifying family member with a serious health condition, and qualifying birth or adoptive events, should be directed their supervisor to request their leave of absence in Workday and contact IAMVS within the [Office of Human Resources](#). IAMVS serves as the administering authority for leave related determinations requiring medical or statutory review. Furthermore, in order to maintain confidentiality, supporting medical documentation is requested by and maintained solely within IAMVS.

Approval Process. In coordination with IAMVS, the academic and/or administrative supervisor should consult with the appointees' advisor and chair of the Graduate Studies Committee in the appointee's program of study. IAMVS may recommend that the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) Coordinators Office be involved as well, if the appointee is eligible for leave or accommodation under the ADA. The appointing unit may designate additional individuals who must approve requests for leaves of absence. In some cases, it may be necessary for the supervisor and/or appointee to consult with other entities (such as a funding agency, the Office of International Affairs, etc.). For students on a Graduate School fellowship appointment, the appointee's program of study must notify the Office of Fellowship Services of the appointee's leave of absence.

Denial. A request for medical or parental leave may be denied by IAMVS due to factors including ineligibility, inadequate documentation or exhaustion of available leave balances.

Leaves of absence that do not fall under the statutory or medical review may be denied by the advisor, graduate committee, supervisor of the unit, and/or repeated requests for leaves of absence; documented unsatisfactory performance; and/or incompatibility with funding agency or other institutional guidelines (such as requirements applying to international students).

Appeal Process. For disputes related to leaves of absence where an appointee experiences an FML-qualifying event shall be reviewed by IAMVS. In cases where the event may qualify for an accommodation, the appeal shall be reviewed by the ADA Coordinators Office. If a dispute over a request that does not relate to an FML-qualifying event arises, the appointee should follow the appointing unit's appeal guidelines. Such guidelines often begin with an informal discussion with an advisor, Graduate Studies Committee Chair, department chair, college dean, and/or unit director. Such discussions will often lead to a successful resolution. In cases where a successful resolution cannot be reached at the local level, the Graduate School is available to offer guidance and, in certain situations, to provide a formal hearing and adjudication. The Office of Human Resources and the Office of the Ombuds can also provide information and consultation.

Appointment and Stipend Protection. Whenever possible and academically appropriate, the funded graduate student's appointment and stipend (including fee authorization, health care subsidy, etc.) may be protected and may extend as long as is necessary by proper documentation, or until the end of the academic semester or summer term, whichever comes first. An appointee who has been appointed for more than one year at or above 1,250 hours/year may be eligible for FML. However, leave consideration is not contingent upon FML eligibility.

Extension of Leave of Absence. In some cases, it may be appropriate to extend a non-FML medical or parental leave into a new, contiguous appointment. Leaves of absence that need to be extended beyond the initial appointment may be stipend-protected (in whole or in part) for reasons stated in [Section F.5](#) and Section F.6. Extensions of leave for FML-qualifying events must be evaluated in coordination with IAMVS. Extensions of leave for events that qualify for an accommodation must be evaluated in coordination with the ADA Coordinators Office.

Registration Requirements. Appointees on stipend-protected leaves of absence must meet the minimum Graduate School registration requirements to hold an appointment (Sections 9 and 10). Appointees on an approved medical or parental leave may request a reduced course load during their absence period. The appointee may also discuss

with their advisor the possibility of registering for courses with more flexibility such as research credits or courses offered online.

Coverage of Responsibilities. Appointing units may use a variety of practices to manage workload associated with leaves of absences. Approaches include temporary assignment of responsibilities to another funded graduate student, accompanied by a temporary increase in that graduate student's appointment percentage (e.g., from 0.5 to 0.75 FTE) or a special payment to that graduate student to compensate for additional effort over a period of time. However, appointing units must be sensitive to the load of other graduate students.

In some situations, it is not necessary to cover the duties, and the assignments can be held until the appointee returns from a leave of absence. In some cases, a graduate student who is not funded is placed on a new appointment to cover the duties. Graduate students may not serve as "volunteer GAs" for the duration of a leave of absence; that is, graduate students may not serve without a stipend, at a stipend not commensurate with the expected load, or without appropriate payment of tuition and fees. Circumstances that may warrant an exception must be approved in advance by the Graduate School.

Funding for Leaves of Absence - F.5

Appointing units at Ohio State currently manage the financial aspects of FML, non-FML medical or parental leaves within their departmental budgets and may seek assistance from their colleges.

As current practices are formalized, it is not intended that appointing units would experience financial hardship in managing leaves of absence. It is also recognized that principal investigators with externally funded research grants may have issue with the requirements of particular grants, where flexibility may be limited. If such concerns arise, appointing units should contact their college offices or the Office of Sponsored Programs (for PIs). The Graduate School will also be available to help with problem-solving.

In many cases, the costs associated with appointee leaves of absence are fairly modest, such as the cost of temporarily increasing a funded graduate student's appointment percentage (e.g., from 50 percent to 75 percent) or making a special payment to that graduate student to compensate for additional effort over a period of time. In some cases, it is not necessary to cover the duties, and the assignments can be held without harm until the appointee returns from a leave of absence.

There are cases where a person who is not currently on a university appointment has to be placed on a new appointment to cover the duties; this person would most often be

another graduate student but, especially in the case of the performance arts, could be an instructor or lecturer with special skills. In such situations, costs could potentially include a stipend or salary and any benefits associated with the appointment, such as coverage of tuition and fees.

Selected Definitions for Medical Conditions - F.6

Serious Health Condition. An illness, injury, impairment, or physical/mental condition that meets either one of the following:

- Involves inpatient care in a hospital, hospice, or residential medical care facility, including any period of incapacity or any subsequent treatment in connection with such inpatient care.
- Continuing treatment by a health care provider which consists of a period of incapacity for more than 3 consecutive days plus either multiple treatments (two or more in a 30-day period) by a health care provider or treatment at least once by a health care provider that results in a regimen of continuing treatment and continuing incapacity.
- Chronic conditions, which require visits to a health care provider at least twice per year and continue over an extended period of time. Chronic conditions may cause episodic incapacity (e.g., diabetes, epilepsy, etc.), and include permanent/long-term conditions (e.g., Alzheimer's, cancer, etc.) or conditions which require multiple treatments (e.g., chemotherapy, dialysis, etc.).

Relevant Selected Definitions for Parental Leave of Absence - F.7

Definitions.

- **Birth parent**, an individual who gives birth to a child
- **Non-birth parent**, a parent who is legally responsible for child rearing as the spouse or domestic partner of the birth parent
- **Domestic partner**, a same- or opposite-sex adult partner who has met the requirements of and has a completed Affidavit of Domestic Partnership for Funded Graduate Students' Leaves of Absence on file with the Graduate School
- **Adoptive parent**, a parent who has taken a child into one's family, through legal means, to raise as one's own child.