

The Center for Student Advising

COLUMBIA COLLEGE | COLUMBIA ENGINEERING

Taking a Voluntary Leave of Absence: FAQs

How long can I be on leave?

CC students can take a Voluntary Leave for as little as a single semester or a maximum of two years. SEAS students can only take a Voluntary Leave for exactly one year (two terms) and do not have a one term option.

Why do students take a voluntary leave?

For many reasons! To travel, to work, to take on a full-time internship, to figure out what to do with life, to look after a family member.

Am I allowed to take a leave even if I don't know what I want to do?

Yes. You can take a Voluntary Leave even if you don't know what you'll be doing during your time away.

I am on academic probation. Can I still take a leave?

If you are a CC student, yes. If you leave on academic probation, you'll return on academic probation. If you leave in good academic standing, you'll return in good standing. If you are a SEAS student, you may not take a VLOA unless you are in good academic standing.

Are my parents notified that I have taken a leave?

If you are a dependent student, then your parents are notified. We encourage you to discuss the option of taking a leave with your parents early on in your decision-making process so they are not surprised.

Does the VLOA appear on my transcript?

No.

If I leave during a semester, is there a refund?

There is. You can see the prorated schedule of tuition refunds here: <http://registrar.columbia.edu/content/refund-rate-withdrawals>. There is also the possibility of a refund for housing and dining: <http://housingservices.columbia.edu/content/proration-schedule>

If I leave during a semester, what happens to my classes?

If you take a leave before the CC Pass/D/Fail and SEAS drop date (the 10th week of the term), your current schedule of classes is erased from your record. If you leave after the 10th week of the term, you will likely receive the grade of W (withdrawal) for all of your classes.



When do I have to move out of housing?

Once you've made the final decision to take a leave, you normally have 48 hours to move out of your room.

Can I take classes for credit while on voluntary leave?

No, you cannot take classes for credit.

Can I access my Columbia e-mail while on voluntary leave?

Yes, you can access your Columbia email. We encourage it, in fact, as email is the primary way that we will communicate with you about readmission deadlines and other important information.

Am I still covered by Columbia's health insurance while on voluntary leave?

If you take a leave during a semester, you will continue to be covered under Columbia Student Medical Insurance for the remainder of that semester only. Students should contact the Health Insurance Office by calling 212-854-3286 or by emailing hs-enrollment@columbia.edu to determine the type of coverage they will qualify for while on leave.

Can I access Lionshare and other CCE resources while on leave?

Yes.

Do I have to reapply for admission?

You will need to contact your advising dean and submit a statement of intent to return by the posted deadline.

If I have been on leave during the spring, can I return and take classes during the summer term?

Yes.

When I return, will I still get financial aid?

Students on financial aid are eligible for 8 semesters of aid from Columbia. You do not lose your eligibility for aid as a result of taking a leave and will go through the same process to apply for aid upon your return. However, if you take a leave after the 10th week of the term, you will lose one term of financial aid. Please consult the financial aid office for more info.

When I return, will I still get housing?

If you take a Voluntary Leave as a first-year student, you are still guaranteed housing. Otherwise, you are not guaranteed housing when you return.

Can I walk with my class at graduation?

You can still walk with your original class if you are within one semester of graduating. Talk to your advising dean about this.

