Undergraduate Handbook for Leave of Absence

USC
UNIVERSITY
OF SOUTHERN
CALIFORNIA
Section 1
General Information ................................................................. 1

Section 2
Filing for a Leave of Absence Prior to the Start of the Semester ........ 3

Section 3
Filing for a Leave of Absence During the Semester ......................... 6

Section 4
Things you should know about financial aid .................................. 9

Section 5
Residency Requirements ............................................................ 12

Section 6
Returning to USC ........................................................................ 15

Section 7
Resources .................................................................................. 16

Available electronically at http://www.usc.edu/loa

Document revised August 2007 per djg

* To assist you with the leave of absence form please refer to Section 2 instructions along with the Guidelines for Withdrawal checklist.
General Information (Please Read First)

What is a leave of absence?

A leave of absence is a temporary leave from the university – a kind of “time out” which may be necessary during your undergraduate career.

Why do students take leaves of absence?

Students may elect to take a leave of absence for a variety of reasons, including:

- Medical emergencies due to accident or illness;
- Family crises or some other personal situation that requires you to be away from school for some period;
- Financial issues which may take time to resolve;
- Academic difficulty which may best be handled by taking some time to refocus on your college work.

How long does a leave of absence last?

Typically, a leave of absence is for 1 semester or 1 academic year. A leave may be extended by contacting your academic unit.

Is it easy to return to USC?

Yes. Especially if you have gone through the steps to file for a leave of absence and you plan ahead for your return. Following these guidelines will help assure catalog rights which apply on your return, ease financial aid processing, and provide you with the support you need to successfully return to USC and finish your undergraduate degree.
I’m thinking about taking a leave of absence. What do I do?

Everything you need to know, and all the steps you need to take are in this handbook.

As a first semester freshman or first semester transfer student at USC, may I take a leave of absence?

No. Students must update their application for admission. They must contact Admissions.

Does a Leave of Absence automatically cancel my classes?

No. Students must first meet with advisors and then proceed to the Registration Office and drop their classes. If they cannot physically reach the USC campus, then they must contact their advisor as soon as possible.

I plan to leave USC, should I file for a leave of absence?

Yes. Students may decide to return to USC in the future.

If I withdraw without taking a leave of absence, am I eligible to purchase health insurance?

No. Students who do not take a leave of absence are ineligible to purchase health insurance.
Filing for a Leave of Absence Prior to the Start of the Semester

Step One – Meet with your advisor

Meet with your academic advisor, review your reasons for taking a leave of absence, and submit the completed Leave of Absence form. Once you have completed your Leave of Absence form (after meeting with advisor), immediately thereafter, go to the Registration Office and cancel your enrollment. If you are on academic probation, be sure to inform your academic review counselor that you are taking a leave of absence.

Step Two – Inform your department

If you have declared a major, meet with your departmental advisor to review remaining degree requirements.

Step Three – International Students

If you are an international student, meet with an advisor in the Office of International Services before finalizing your plans for a leave of absence. U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (CIS) restrictions require all persons on student visas to maintain 12 units per semester to be considered a full-time student. Leaves of absence for reasons other than medical are rarely granted. A student who finds it necessary to take a leave of absence for reasons other than medical will usually be required to return to his/her country of origin until s/he is ready to return to school.
Step Four – Clearing registration

At the Office of Registration (REG 100), drop any courses in which you have enrolled for the upcoming term. You **may not drop all classes by using the web registration system.** You must do this in person. If you are unable to do this in person, then you must contact the office of the Vice President for Student Affairs for assistance. If you have pending “incomplete” grades and are unable to complete them, you must meet with your academic advisor to file for an extension. If not granted, these incompletes will become “IX” grades, which count as an “F”.

Step Five – Housing

If you have a housing contract, you must contact the Housing Office to inform them that you are no longer enrolled in classes. Turn in your keys and inform your R.A. that you are taking a leave of absence. You must also cancel any meal plan. Housing does not automatically do this. You will not be responsible for any charges after the date you turn in your keys.

Step Six – Your fee bill and outstanding charges

Clear your bill with the University. Make sure that you have no outstanding charges or that you have made payment arrangements.

Step Seven – Financial Aid

If you have been receiving scholarships, need-based financial aid, parent and/or student private loans, follow the steps in Section 5 of this handbook. If your leave of absence is prompted by financial concerns, and you have not already done so, contact the Financial Aid Office at [www.usc.edu/contactfao](http://www.usc.edu/contactfao) to see if there are financial aid options available to help you avoid taking a leave of absence.

Step Eight – Parking

If you have purchased a parking permit, return it to Parking Services. The cost of parking permits is pro-rated so you may receive a partial refund. Also clear any outstanding parking fines.
Step Nine – USCard

At the USCard Office, close print or discretionary accounts. Once you have dropped all of your courses, you are eligible for a refund of any remaining balance. Your refund will be credited to your account within 3-4 business days. Once the refund has been credited, you may request a check that can be picked up in Student Account Services.

Step Ten – Student Health Insurance

Check the status of your health insurance. If you have USC Health Insurance you will be dropped from the program and receive a refund if you are not enrolled after the third week of classes. Keep in mind that if you are covered under your parent’s insurance policy, you most likely have to be a full-time student (enrolled in at least 12 units) to qualify for coverage.

Step Eleven – Tuition Refund Insurance

If you withdraw during a semester and you are participating in the Tuition Refund Plan (TRP) and if the reason for your leave of absence is medical, you may file a claim for a TRP credit. Forms for filing a claim are available in Student Account Services and in the Registrar’s Office.

Step Twelve – Library books

Return all library books.

Step Thirteen – Update your address

Update your local address and telephone number by logging into OASIS.
Filing for a Leave of Absence During the Semester

**Step One – Meet with your advisor**

Meet with your academic advisor, review your reasons for taking a leave of absence and submit the completed Leave of Absence form.

**Step Two – Inform your department**

If you have declared a major, meet with your departmental advisor to review remaining degree requirements.

**Step Three – International Students**

If you are an international student, meet with an advisor in the Office of International Services before finalizing your plans for a leave of absence. U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (CIS) restrictions require all persons on student visas to maintain 12 units per semester to be considered a full-time student. Leaves of absence for reasons other than medical are rarely granted. A student who finds it necessary to take a leave of absence for reasons other than medical will usually be required to return to your country of origin until you are ready to return to school.

**Step Four – Dropping courses**

Before the end of the 3rd week of classes – at the Office of Registration (REG 100), drop any courses in which you have enrolled for the upcoming term. This will result in no courses showing on your transcript for the semester, and no tuition charges. You may not drop all classes by using the web registration system. You must do this in person. If you are unable to do this in person, then you must contact the office of the Vice President for Student Affairs for assistance.
**Weeks 4-12 of classes** – follow the procedure above. You will receive a mark of “W” in each of your courses, which means official withdrawal. These courses will appear on your transcript with the mark of W, which has a neutral effect on your grade point average. Full tuition is charged for courses dropped after the third week of classes.

**After the 12th week** – Students who have an unforeseeable and/or unavoidable illness or emergency which occurs after the twelfth week should pursue grades of incomplete by speaking with each professor; otherwise grades will be calculated based on work completed, with a “0” for uncompleted work. If you will be unable to return for the following semester, see Section 2 on filing for a future Leave of Absence.

**Step Five – Housing**

If you have a housing contract, you must contact the Housing Office to inform them that you are no longer enrolled in classes. Turn in your keys and inform your R.A. that you are taking a leave of absence. You must also cancel any meal plan. Housing does not automatically do this. You will not be responsible for any charges after the date you turn in your keys.

**Step Six – Your fee bill and outstanding charges**

Clear your bill with the University. Make sure that you have no outstanding charges or that you have made payment arrangements.

**Step Seven – Financial aid**

If you have been receiving scholarships, need-based financial aid, parent and/or student private loans, follow the steps in Section 5 of this handbook. If your leave of absence is prompted by financial concerns, and you have not already done so, contact the Financial Aid Office to see if there are financial aid options available to help you avoid taking a leave of absence.

**Step Eight – Parking**

If you have purchased a parking permit return it to Parking Services. The cost of parking permits is pro-rated so you may receive a partial refund. Also clear any outstanding parking fines.
Step Nine – USCard

At the USCard Office, close print or discretionary accounts. Once you have dropped all of your courses, you are eligible for a refund of any remaining balance. Your refund will be credited to your account within 3-4 business days. Once the refund has been credited, you may request a check which can be picked up in Student Account Services.

Step Ten – Student Health Insurance

Check the status of your health insurance. If you have USC Health Insurance you will be dropped from the program and receive a refund if you are not enrolled after the third week of classes. If your leave of absence begins after the end of the third week of classes, you will be covered for the remainder of the semester. Keep in mind that if you are covered under your parent’s insurance policy, you most likely have to be a full-time student (enrolled in at least 12 units) to qualify for coverage.

Step Eleven – Tuition Refund Insurance

If you withdraw during a semester and you are participating in the Tuition Refund Plan (TRP) and if the reason for your leave of absence is medical, you may file a claim for a TRP credit. Forms for filing a claim are available in Student Account Services and in the Registrar’s Office.

Step Twelve – Library books and text books

Return all library books. You may also wish to sell back your textbooks at the University Bookstore.

Step Thirteen – Update your address

Update your local address and telephone number by logging into OASIS.
Things you should know about financial aid

Step One – Let us know

Notify the USC Financial Aid Office in writing about your leave of absence, or send the Financial Aid Office a copy of your Leave of Absence form. Specify the reason for the leave of absence as well as its expected duration. Contact the Financial Aid Office at www.usc.edu/contactfao.

Step Two – Withdrawals

If you withdraw by the deadline to receive a tuition refund, all financial aid for the semester will be cancelled and you will be required to repay any funds you received.

If you withdraw after the deadline to receive a tuition refund, there are several important issues that you need to take into consideration:

Tuition Refund Insurance: If you withdraw after the deadline to receive a tuition refund and you are participating in the Tuition Refund Plan (TRP) and the reason for your leave of absence is injury, sickness, psychological / emotional, you may be able to file a claim for a TRP credit. Forms for filing a claim are available in Student Financial Services Office and in the Registrar’s Office (JHH 104). Learn more: www.collegerefund.com/usc.

Return of Title IV Funds: If you withdraw after the deadline to receive a tuition refund and you are a recipient of Title IV federal financial aid (Federal Perkins Loan, Federal Stafford Loan, Federal Parent PLUS Loan, Federal Pell Grant, Federal SEOG Grant) you may need to repay a portion of these funds. Title IV federal financial aid is awarded under the assumption that the student will attend for the entire period for which the assistance is awarded and thereby “earn” the award. When you withdraw before the end of the academic period, you may no longer be eligible for the full amount of federal funds that you were originally scheduled to receive. The federal policy requires the return of “unearned” Title IV federal financial aid to the U.S. Treasury if
recipients withdraw from all classes on or before the 60% point in the
term based on the student’s last date of attendance, even if recipients
are not entitled to a refund of tuition. Contact the Financial Aid Office
at www.usc.edu/contactfao for more information.

Satisfactory Academic Progress: If you withdraw after the third week of
classes, your Satisfactory Academic Progress may be impacted. To be
eligible for federal, state and university aid, students are required by the
U.S. Department of Education and the state of California to maintain
Satisfactory Academic Progress (SAP) toward their degree objectives. In
compliance with prescribed regulations, USC has established guidelines
that are designed to promote timely advancement toward a specific
degree objective. At USC, satisfactory academic progress is defined by
the following three criteria:

• meeting a minimum grade point average requirement
• earning a minimum number of units for credit per semester
  (yearly progress)
• completing the degree objective within a maximum number of
  semesters enrolled and a maximum number of attempted units
  (maximum time allowance).

Contact the Financial Aid Office at www.usc.edu/contactfao for more
information.
Step Three – Student Loans

If you have ever borrowed student loans, notify your lender(s) of your leave of absence. Ask each lender how your leave of absence will affect your grace period and repayment. If you are not already in repayment, expect to enter repayment immediately or after the expiration of the grace period, depending on the loan. If you begin to receive loan billing statements, do not ignore them. Call the lender to inquire about deferment and forbearance possibilities. Keep copies of all correspondence you send to your lenders. Keep a record of all telephone conversations you have with your lenders. Once you re-enroll at least half time, contact your lender to inform them that you have re-enrolled in school and that you are eligible for an in-school deferment.

Federal Stafford Loan, Federal Parent PLUS Loan: Notify your lender or current loan servicer of your leave of absence. If you are not sure who your lender is, call the Financial Aid Office and we can give you that information. This information can also be found online at www.nslds.ed.gov. The Financial Aid Office will determine if you need to complete an exit loan counseling session.

Federal Perkins Loan, Health Professions Student Loan, Loan for Disadvantaged Students or other institutional loans: Notify the USC Student Financial Services Office of your leave of absence at (213) 740-4077. The Financial Services Office will determine if you need to complete an exit loan counseling session.

USC Subsidized Loan or Unsubsidized GATE Loan: Notify American Educational Services of your leave of absence at (800) 645-0750.

Private loan programs (e.g., Nellie Mae Excel, Sallie Mae Signature Loan): Notify your lender of your leave of absence.

Step Four – Work Study

If you have a Work-Study job, you must notify your employer of the date your leave of absence begins. You must stop earning money through the Federal Work-Study program as of the date you drop to below half-time enrollment.
Step Five – Cal Grants

If you are a Cal Grant recipient, you must notify the Cal Grant Program and apply for a Cal Grant Leave of Absence by logging on to Webgrants for Students at https://mygrantinfo.csac.ca.gov. You can also call the Cal Grant Program at (916) 526-7590.

Step Six – USC Scholarships

Upon receiving notice of your leave of absence (Step 1), the Financial Aid Office will put any USC Competitive Scholarships you have been awarded on hold. (The USC Competitive Scholarships include the Associates, Deans, Directors, Leadership, Presidential, Transfer Deans, Trojan, Trustee, and University Scholarships.) Your scholarship will be on hold for the time period your academic department has approved for your leave of absence. You must contact the Financial Aid Office before you return to USC in order to reinstate your scholarship. Please note that all USC Competitive Scholarships are limited to a total of 8 semesters of eligibility (10 semesters for students in the five-year Architecture program).

If you have received scholarships from any other USC organization or academic department, you must contact that organization or department to discuss the status of your award and inquire about reapplication requirements.

Step Seven – Non-USC Scholarships

If you are a recipient of any non-USC outside scholarships, notify the awarding agency in writing about your leave of absence. Include the reason for your leave of absence and your anticipated date of return. Be sure to notify the awarding agency before you return to USC if they agree to reinstate your scholarship. Recipients of the National Merit Scholarship should contact the National Merit Scholarship Corporation at (847) 866-5100 to request a leave of absence form.
Step Eight – Returning in the Spring Semester

If your leave of absence occurs during the fall semester and you plan to return in the spring of the same academic year, you should complete the financial aid application process so that we can process financial aid for you for the spring semester. This includes responding to requests for additional information. If you have already been awarded financial aid for the academic year, and you notified the Financial Aid Office about your planned leave of absence (see Step 1 above), the Financial Aid Office will revise your financial aid eligibility, if needed. You should call the Financial Aid Office at least six weeks prior to your return to ensure that you’ve done everything you need to do to receive your funds.

Step Nine – Returning in a Future Academic Year

If you will not be returning to USC until a future academic year (fall or spring), plan ahead for your return. You must meet all financial aid deadlines for the academic year of your expected return. Financial Aid deadlines are posted online the December proceeding the academic year of your expected return at www.usc.edu/financialaid. You must also continue to satisfy all financial aid general eligibility requirements; for example, you must not default on any student loan while you are on your leave of absence. Contact the Financial Aid Office at www.usc.edu/contactfao if you have questions about returning.
Residency Requirements

What does “residency requirement” mean?

Residency requirements are the university guidelines for courses that must be taken in residence at USC.

What is the policy regarding residency requirements?

For all students beginning their undergraduate studies at USC in fall 1997 or later (or following a catalog for Fall 1997 or later)¹, a minimum of 64 units toward the bachelor’s degree must be earned in residence at USC. A minimum of 80 units toward a bachelor’s degree in Architecture must be earned in residence at USC. For students in Engineering’s “3-2” Program, at least 48 units must be earned in residence at USC.

All upper-division units required for the major and minor must be earned in residence.

On a case-by-case basis, the major or minor department may give credit for upper-division courses taken prior to matriculation and may pre-approve required upper-division courses to be taken out of residence.

Fall/Spring Course Work

Once students matriculate at USC, all courses taken for subject or unit credit in the fall and spring semesters must be taken in residence. Only transfer work that appears on the transfer institution’s transcript for a summer term will be accepted. Undergraduate students who wish to take course work at another institution during the fall or spring must request an exception to residency using the “Request for Exception to Residency” form available in their major department. Students must consult with

¹ Students who began their undergraduate studies at USC prior to fall 1997 must see their advisor regarding residency requirements and transferability of courses as some different rules may apply.
their major department (students in the College), with the Office of College Advising (undeclared/undecided students) or with the Student Affairs office of their academic unit (students in professional schools).

Permission to take courses in the fall or spring requires approval by the dean of the school in which the student is majoring (or the Dean of Academic Programs of the College for undeclared/undecided students). Permission is only granted in rare circumstances. If permission to take courses out of residency is granted, the major (or minor) department must pre-approve use of the courses for the major (or minor), and use of the courses to fulfill electives must be pre-approved by the closest equivalent department at USC. In addition, you must consult the Degree Progress Department before taking course work elsewhere to ensure the work will transfer.

**Summer Course Work**

During your leave of absence, if you wish to take summer course work elsewhere you must obtain appropriate written pre-approval from the Degree Progress Department using the “USC Transfer Course Work Pre-Approval Form”. This form is available on the web, from Degree Progress, and from your department. If you wish to use transfer work to fulfill upper division requirements in your major or minor, you must instead use the “Request for Exception to Residency” form, which must be approved by the major or minor department. Students following the Fall 1997 catalog or later may not use transfer work taken after enrollment at USC to fulfill general education or writing requirements.

When courses are completed elsewhere, you must request that the other institution send an official transcript to USC so that the course work can be evaluated and transferred. After you have earned 64 college-level units, regardless of where they were earned, you may transfer a maximum of 8 units to USC up to the 64-unit transfer limit. Courses past this limitation may earn “subject credit” – they may fulfill university requirements – but they will not earn units toward the total needed for graduation. Units earned in overseas studies programs approved by USC’s Undergraduate Studies Committee and in courses approved by consortia or other institutional agreements are considered to be taken in residence.

2 International students: Please contact the Office of International Services to obtain immigration documents required for your return.
**Residence Requirement for a Second Bachelor’s Degree**

For students with their first bachelor’s degree from USC, 32 units applicable to the degree beyond the number of units required for the first USC bachelor’s degree must be completed in residence.

For students with their first bachelor’s degree from another institution, the second bachelor’s degree requires 64 units applicable to the degree completed in residence, except for the B.Arch. degree which when earned concurrently with the M.Arch. degree requires 32 units applicable to the degree completed in residence.

**Leaves of Absence & Residency Requirements**

Leaves of absence are generally granted in order to give students time to deal with personal, family, financial, and/or medical emergencies. A leave of absence is not a means to circumvent the university’s residency requirements. Students should not plan to take courses at another institution during a leave of absence. In the event that you wish to pursue coursework at another institution during your leave and receive credit upon your return to USC, you must secure the necessary approvals IN ADVANCE. Please contact the Articulation Office for assistance.
Returning to USC

**Step One – Let us know!!**

Before you return, contact your academic department to inform them of your return date.

**Step Two – Contact Financial Aid**

Financial aid application information for the following year is available online at [www.usc.edu/financialaid](http://www.usc.edu/financialaid) beginning in December. For example, application information for Fall 2008 and/or Spring 2008 financial aid will be available in December 2007. It is your responsibility to obtain an application packet and apply on time each year.

**Step Three – Housing**

If you reside on campus or in campus housing, contact the Housing Office to inform them of your return date. Resubmit any necessary forms to reapply for campus housing.

**Step Four – Meet with your advisor**

In order to register, you must first meet with an advisor in your academic unit (e.g. the College Office of Academic Advising, Marshall Student Services, Viterbi School of Engineering Student Affairs Office, etc.) and have the leave of absence holds lifted from your student records.

**Step Five – Register for courses**

Contact Registration and receive a web registration appointment time. Complete the registration process for the upcoming/current semester.
Resources

University Admission & Financial Aid

Office of Admission
Admission Center
(213) 740-1111

Office of Financial Aid
JHH Lobby
www.usc.edu/contactfao

Academic Records & Registrar

Office of the Registrar/Registration
REG Lobby
(213) 740-8500

Articulation Office
REG 208
(213) 740-4628

Degree Progress
JHH 010
(213) 740-7444

Transcripts
JHH 106
(213) 740-7445

Academic Review
JHH 113
(213) 740-7741

Student Affairs

Office of the Vice President For Student Affairs
STU 201
(213) 740-2421

Office of International Services
STU 300
(213) 740-2666

Student Counseling Services
YMCA 100
(213) 740-7711

Career Planning & Placement Center
STU 111
(213) 740-9111
**Student Health Center**

SHC Lobby
(213) 740-5344

**Office for Residential and Greek Life**

STU 200
(213) 740-2080

**Disability Services & Programs**

STU 301
(213) 740-0776

**Housing Office**

PSX First Floor
(213) 740-2546

**Academic Advisement**

**Office of Academic Advisement**
(The College)

CAS 120
(213) 740-2534

**Marshall School of Business**

**Student Services**

BRI 104
(213) 740-0690

**Viterbi School of Engineering**

**Student Affairs**

RTH 110
(213) 740-4530

**Financial Services**

**Student Financial Services**

HSH 102
(213) 740-4077

**Student Account Services**

KOH 200
(213) 740-7471
Undergraduate Leave of Absence Form

(International students must file for a Leave of Absence with OIS)

Date _____________________

**Personal Information**

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<tr>
<th>Email</th>
<th>(Please note: It is YOUR RESPONSIBILITY to cancel your enrollment.)</th>
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**Reason for Leave of Absence**

- [ ] Academic
- [ ] Medical
- [ ] Religious Mission
- [ ] Military Service
- [ ] Financial
- [ ] Personal
- [ ] Family
- [ ] Other

If you are a student with a disability or believe that your reason for requesting a Leave of Absence may qualify you as having a disability, please contact the Office of Students with Disabilities to assist you with the Leave of Absence process. The Office of Students with Disabilities can be contacted by calling (213) 740-0776 or visit the office located in STU301. The website address is http://www.usc.edu/student-affairs/asn/dsp/index.htm.

Scholarship recipients planning to renew their award upon return must contact the department that administers their scholarship.

**Carefully review the Residency Requirements – Section 5 beginning on page 12**

When was the last date on which you attended classes? ________________________________

Expected date of return ________________________________

I have carefully read, understood and followed the steps and guidelines in the Leave of Absence Handbook

__________________________________________________________________    ______________

Student Signature        Date

**Academic Advisor Review and Approval:**

Signature                  Department                  Date

**Academic Dean Review and Approval:**

Signature                  Department/School            Date

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**Please mail or fax to:**

Office for Undergraduate Programs
ATTN: Leave of Absence - GFS 227
University of Southern California
Los Angeles, CA 90089-1695
Tel: 213 740-1741
Fax: 213 740-9757

**Department Use Only**

_____ Date Received   _____ Entered in Student Information System   _____ Sent to Financial Aid

The Leave of Absence home page is located at www.usc.edu/loa