

STUDENT INVOLUNTARY LEAVE OF ABSENCE

POLICY SUMMARY

Northern Arizona University is committed to the safety, health, and well-being of all Students and members of the University community. The University recognizes that Students may experience situations that significantly inhibit their ability to function successfully or safely in their role as Students. When such circumstances arise, the University encourages Students to voluntarily withdraw for a period of time so that they may address any outstanding issues. When a Student chooses not to do so and the best available objective evidence indicates that they pose a serious risk to themselves or the health and safety of the University community, or where the Student's behavior severely disrupts the University environment or its customary functions, the University may require the Student to take an involuntary leave of absence.

REASON FOR THIS POLICY

In rare cases, requiring a Student to take a leave of absence may be necessary when a serious risk to the Student's health or safety, the health or safety of others arises, or when a Student's behavior severely disrupts the University environment and no reasonable accommodations can adequately reduce such risk or disruption.

ENTITIES AFFECTED BY THIS POLICY

- Counseling Services
- Disability Resources
- Office of Scholarships and Financial Aid
- Office of the Dean of Students
- Office of the Registrar
- Student and Departmental Account Services

WHO SHOULD KNOW THIS POLICY

- Academic leaders
- Assistant Vice President for Student Health and Wellness
- Dean of Students
- Director, Counseling Services
- Director, Disability Resources
- Faculty
- Registrar
- Vice President for Student Affairs

DEFINITIONS

Process Facilitator: a University official separate from the decision-making process but with the knowledge necessary to serve as a neutral resource available to help guide, counsel, and support a Student involved in the involuntary leave process from initial referral through the Student's potential return to the University.

Student: for purposes of this policy, any person who is enrolled, who has been promoted or accepted for enrollment, or who intends to enroll at or be promoted to the University within the next twelve calendar months.

POLICY

Section I. – Involuntary Leave of Absence

A. General

1. The University may place a Student on involuntary leave when the Vice President for Student Affairs determines, after the Involuntary Leave Review Committee conducts an individualized assessment and provides its recommendation, that the best available objective evidence provides a reasonable basis to believe that i) the Student's continued presence in the University community poses a serious risk to the physical safety of the Student or any other person or property; or ii) the Student has engaged, or threatened to engage, in conduct that has caused, or is likely to cause, serious disruption to the University environment or its customary functions, including by impeding the rightful activities of others; or iii) the Student is unable to function as a Student; and iv) no reasonable accommodations can adequately reduce the risks, threats, or disruption.
2. An involuntary leave of absence is not a disciplinary sanction and may not be intended or interpreted as punitive in nature. The University will make no distinction on a Student's transcript between a voluntary and an involuntary leave of absence. An involuntary leave of absence is intended to permit a Student to take a break from their studies to address the issues that led to the need for the leave of absence, so that they may later return to the University with an enhanced opportunity to achieve their educational goals. At any time prior to the decision to place a Student on involuntary leave, the Student may choose to voluntarily withdraw from the University for a period of time.
3. Faculty, academic leaders, advisors, residence hall staff, coaches, administrators, or any other person should transmit information regarding a Student who may meet the criteria for involuntary leave to the Dean of Students. When the Dean determines that doing so is appropriate, the Dean will initiate the Involuntary Leave Review Committee process to assess whether the Student should be recommended for involuntary leave. The three possible outcomes of this process are the Committee recommends that the Student i) may remain at the University without conditions; ii) may remain at the University with conditions to be described in writing, which if violated would cause a re-evaluation of the Student's status; or iii) should be placed on involuntary leave if the student does not elect to take voluntary leave.
4. The Dean of Students will inform a Student under consideration for involuntary leave in writing of the Student's option to consult with, and the contact information for, the University's involuntary leave Process Facilitator, who will support the Student by serving as a neutral resource available to answer the Student's questions regarding the process from referral through return to the University.
5. Unless otherwise authorized in writing by the Dean of Students, a Student placed on involuntary leave must promptly vacate University housing and leave University property within the allotted time, may not continue to participate in-person in Student activities or use University facilities, and may not re-enroll or return to University property or participate in University activities until authorized in writing to do so.

B. Involuntary Leave Review Committee

1. Led by the Dean of Students, the Involuntary Leave Review Committee is responsible for conducting individualized assessments of Students who may meet the criteria outlined in Section I(A)(1) for being placed involuntary leave. The Committee is advisory to the Vice President for Student Affairs, who will make the final decision. Its standing members include the Dean, the Director for Disability Resources, and the Director for Counseling Services. In consultation with the Vice President for Student Affairs, the Dean may appoint other University officials to join the Committee on a temporary *ad hoc* basis as circumstances may warrant. The Committee will convene at the Dean's direction. All members of the University community shall respond immediately to the Committee's requests for information and will otherwise cooperate fully in a timely fashion with its work.
2. As outlined in the *Placing a Student on Involuntary Leave Procedure* that accompanies this policy, when conducting an individualized assessment regarding a Student's status, the Involuntary Leave Review Committee will review all available germane information including, but not limited to, information

provided in a timely manner by the Student. The Committee's assessment will also typically include making reasonable attempts for an appropriate representative to meet with the Student. Additionally, the Committee will consult with Disability Resources as appropriate to determine if there are reasonable accommodations that may permit the Student to remain on campus. The Committee will not pursue its assessment or base its recommendations on mere speculation, stereotypes, or generalizations regarding the risk or threat that a Student, or a Student's disability or medical condition, may pose.

3. When appropriate, the Committee may ask the Student to execute a health records release to authorize direct communication between and among the Dean of Students (or designee) and the Student's health care provider(s) regarding issues relevant and appropriate to the consideration of an involuntary leave of absence. If a Student declines to provide requested information and/or authorizations, the Committee will make its determination after considering the available information.

C. Coursework While on Leave

The University may allow NAU online course credit or academic transfer credit from a qualifying institution for equivalent coursework completed by Students while on involuntary leave in a manner consistent with its established requirements. Students should consult with the academic leaders of their college, school, or department and their academic advisor should they have questions in this regard or wish to develop an academic plan for continuing their studies while on involuntary leave.

D. Notification

At any time during the involuntary leave process, the Dean of Students may notify a Student's parent, guardian, emergency contact, or other individual, in a manner consistent with applicable law and policy, when the Dean determines that such notification is appropriate.

E. Refunds

Students who qualify for involuntary leave and elect to take voluntary leave and Students who are placed on involuntary leave will be entitled to refunds of tuition, fees, and room and board charges as appropriate given the timing of the required leave. Generally, when the University mandates a leave of absence, for the purpose of determining the Student's financial obligations to the University, such leave will be retroactive to the beginning of the semester or term, as determined by the Vice President for Student Affairs.

F. Application of Other Policies

This policy supplements but does not supersede the application of other University policies including, but not limited to, the following:

1. Nondiscrimination. The University prohibits unlawful discrimination based on mental disability (and all other characteristics protected by law) in the administration of its programs and activities.
2. Student Conduct. An involuntary leave of absence does not preclude the application of University discipline resulting from a violation of the *Student Code of Conduct* or other applicable policy. A Student will not be permitted to return from an involuntary leave of absence until any pending conduct matters are resolved in accordance with established policy and procedures.

Section II. – Rejoining the University Community

A. Involuntary Leave Effective Dates

An involuntary leave of absence will remain in effect until the Vice President for Student Affairs determines, following an individualized assessment conducted by the Involuntary Leave Review Committee based on the best available objective evidence, that the Student is i) able to return in person to the University with or without reasonable accommodations; ii) has complied with any University requirements applicable to all Students returning from time away from the University; and iii) has complied with any special conditions or limitations mandated by the Vice President for Student Affairs in writing.

B. Requesting Permission to Return

1. A Student placed on involuntary leave must submit a written request to the Dean of Students to return in person to the University. Generally, a Student will not be allowed to return until at least one full semester (or other term as may be appropriate) has elapsed. A Student's involuntary leave notification will specify any minimum term of the leave that is mandated and any conditions or requirements that must be satisfied by the Student before the Student's return in person to the University.
2. When a Student requests permission to return from involuntary leave, the Involuntary Leave Review Committee will conduct an individualized assessment and provide its recommendation to the Vice President for Student Affairs, who will make the final determination. Students seeking to return from involuntary leave must submit required documentation related to the factors that led to the involuntary leave decision as part of the Committee's assessment. Disability Resources will work with the Student to provide reasonable accommodations as part of the return process as necessary or appropriate.
3. The Dean of Students may require the Student to provide evidence that the Student, with or without reasonable accommodations, has sufficiently addressed the issues that previously established the criteria for imposing an involuntary leave of absence as set forth in Section I(A)(1) above. The Involuntary Leave Review Committee may also ask, confer with, or seek information from others to assist in making its recommendation. This information may include, but is not limited to, the following:
 - a. At the Student's discretion, documentation of the Student's effort to address the issues that led to the need for the involuntary leave of absence;
 - b. With appropriate authorization, release of treatment information to the extent necessary to determine if the Student has sufficiently reduced the risk or disruption that led to the need for the involuntary leave.
4. All Students returning from an involuntary leave of absence, or a voluntary leave of absence taken at the Student's option, must meet the essential eligibility requirements and any technical standards of the University and, if applicable, the relevant college, school, or department, with or without reasonable accommodations. If the Vice President of Student Affairs is not satisfied that the Student is ready to return to the University or places conditions on the Student's return, the Vice President will notify the Student in writing of the reasons for the decision in a timely manner after the Student has submitted a written request to return to the University and all required documentation.
5. A Student denied permission to return to the University from an involuntary leave of absence may ask the Executive Vice President and Chief of Staff to review the decision in the same manner as outlined in Section 14 of the *Placing a Student on Involuntary Leave Procedure*.

RESPONSIBILITIES

Academic Leaders: refer Students who may meet the criteria for involuntary leave to the Dean of Students.

Dean of Students: receives referrals regarding Students who may meet the criteria for involuntary leave; interfaces with such Students as appropriate; determines when to initiate and leads the Involuntary Leave Review Committee process; appoints Involuntary Leave Review Committee temporary ad hoc members as needed; administers Student requests to return to the University from involuntary leave.

Director of Counseling Services: serves on the Involuntary Leave Review Committee as a permanent member and works to ensure the fulfillment of its duties and obligations.

Director of Disability Resources: serves on the Involuntary Leave Review Committee as a permanent member and works to ensure the fulfillment of its duties and obligations; works to ensure that Students placed on involuntary leave are provided with reasonable accommodations in the return process as necessary.

Executive Vice President and Chief of Staff: receives and responds appropriately to Student requests for a review of involuntary leave decisions.

Faculty: refer Students who may meet the criteria for involuntary leave from the University to the Dean of Students.

Involuntary Leave Review Committee: conducts individualized assessments and provides its recommendations regarding Students who may meet the criteria for involuntary leave or who request to return to the University following an involuntary leave of absence.

Office of Scholarships and Financial Aid: appropriately tracks and administers the impact of a Student's placement on involuntary leave that relate to scholarships and financial aid.

Office of the Registrar: appropriately tracks Students placed on involuntary leave; prevents the re-enrollment of Students placed on involuntary leave prior to their approved return to the University.

Process Facilitator: upon request, serves as a Student's informal and neutral resource and source of objective information regarding the involuntary leave process from initial referral to return to the University.

Student and Departmental Account Services: appropriately tracks and bills Students who are placed on involuntary leave.

Vice President for Student Affairs: acts on Involuntary Leave Review Committee recommendations to determine whether a Student will be placed on or allowed to return from involuntary leave and provides appropriate notice thereof; determines tuition and fee refunds in relation to involuntary leaves of absence; consults with the Dean of Students regarding the appointment of Involuntary Leave Review Committee temporary ad hoc members.

PROCEDURES

[Placing a Student on Involuntary Leave](#)

RELATED INFORMATION

Forms or Tools

[Authorization for Use, Disclosure and/or Release of Protected Health Information](#)

Cross-References

[Student Code of Conduct](#)

[Prohibited Discrimination and Harassment](#)

Sources

There are no external sources associated with this policy.

APPENDIX

None.