

## **Financial Aid Leave of Absence Policy Non-Traditional Student**

### **Purpose**

A leave of absence is a process designed to allow students to interrupt their academic program for a limited period of time without requiring them to reapply for admission to the University. During the period of the leave, the student is considered to be on active status with the University awaiting their return to study. A leave of absence is intended for future courses, but may be requested while a class is in session. However, a leave of absence is not the same as a request to withdraw from a single class. Students should not use the leave of absence policy to request a withdrawal from the class in which they are currently enrolled if the intent is to remain registered in the following course of the non-traditional program. The University's course withdrawal policy, which allows a student to withdraw from a course prior to 80% completion of the course, should be pursued in that instance.

### **Required Documentation**

Students requesting a leave of absence must complete and sign an official Leave of Absence form and submit it to the Financial Aid Office to be processed no later than the student's last day of attendance in the course immediately preceding the leave. Students may request a Leave of Absence form by contacting their academic advisor. Upon completion, forms may be sent to the Financial Aid Office by mail, fax or delivered in person. When completing the Leave of Absence form, students should identify the future class(es) from which they request to be withdrawn. As a general matter of policy, students may not use the leave of absence policy to request a withdrawal from classes that are in process or have already ended.

Once the Financial Aid Office has received the Leave of Absence form, the request will be processed and notification will be sent to, the student, Benedictine Central, Accounting Department and the student's academic advisor. Benedictine Central will withdraw the student from any future courses identified on the form.

If unforeseen, emergency circumstances prevent a student from providing a request for a leave of absence on or before the last date of class attendance as outlined above, the Financial Aid Office, at its discretion, may approve the LOA retroactively. If not approved, the student may submit a written, signed and dated request to his/her academic advisor with appropriate documentation that substantiates the unforeseen circumstance that prevented the student from providing a leave of absence request on or before the last day of attendance. Unforeseen circumstances may include medical and family emergencies, unexpected business travel, and natural disasters. The academic advisor will submit the student's request to the Appeals Committee for approval. If approved, the student will be granted a leave of absence retroactive to the student's last date of attendance, the student will be notified by Financial Aid and the student's academic record will be adjusted accordingly. Further, if the Appeals Committee approves the student's request, no additional fees will be imposed when the student retakes the course.

## **Length of Approved Leave**

The Financial Aid Office may grant a qualifying student a leave of absence of up to 180 days in any 12-month period during which the student is considered on active status and no Title IV Return of Funds calculation is required. Time in excess of 180 days will not be approved.

As a matter of policy, the leave of absence period will be calculated from the student's last date of attendance. The count will be based on the number of days between the last date of attendance (LDA) and the re-entry date. The initial LDA is used when determining the start date for the 12-month period referred to above.

## **Request for Multiple Leaves of Absence**

The Financial Aid Office may grant multiple leaves at different times as long as all of the leaves added together do not exceed 180 days in a 12-month period. If students request a leave of absence that would exceed this time period, they will be contacted by the Financial Aid Office and advised that either the request is denied or the student will need to officially withdraw from the program. Students who withdraw from the non-traditional program may reapply for admission to the University at a later date.

## **Completion of Coursework Upon Return**

Title IV regulations indicate that upon the student's return from a leave of absence, the student can begin a new course. Therefore, Benedictine University extends to all students the ability to begin a new course within their academic plan.

## **LOA Returns Prior to the Scheduled End Date**

Students, upon notification to their academic advisor, may return early from an approved leave of absence prior to the LOA end date as long as they are able to begin a new course within their program. The LOA will be shortened according to the student's return date and the 180-day limitation will be credited accordingly.

## **Failure to Return**

If a student does not return from an approved leave of absence on the expected return date, the student will be considered as withdrawn from the University and a Return of Title IV Funds calculation will be processed.

## **Return of Title IV Funds**

Title IV funds are awarded to a student under the assumption that the student will attend school for the entire period for which the assistance is awarded. When a student withdraws prior to completing 60% of the payment period, the student may no longer be eligible for the full amount of Title IV funds that the student was originally scheduled to receive.

If a recipient of Title IV grant or loan funds withdraws from the University after beginning attendance, the amount of Title IV grant or loan assistance earned by the student must be determined. If the amount disbursed to the student is greater than the amount the student earned, unearned funds must be returned. If the amount disbursed to the student is less than the amount the student earned, and for which the student is otherwise eligible, he or she is eligible to receive a post-withdrawal disbursement of the earned aid that was not received.

- The amount of financial aid earned by the student is determined by calculating the number of days attended divided by the number of days in the payment period.
- Institutional breaks of five or more consecutive days, excluding LOA's, are excluded from the calculation for purposes of determining the amount of Title IV Aid earned by the student.
- Unearned aid percentage is calculated by subtracting the earned aid percentage from 100%.
- Institutional charges include tuition and school contracted room and board charges. .

The procedures followed when a Title IV recipient withdraws from school or requires an LOA that exceeds Federal requirements are:

- Return of Title IV funds is calculated
- Lender is notified of student's status change
- Post-Withdrawal Disbursements are identified (if applicable)
- Excess funds earned are offered to student (if applicable)
- Refunds and balance due are identified (funds must be returned no later than 30 days from the date Benedictine University determined the student withdrew).
- Exit Interview is conducted (by mail if necessary)
- Refunds are applied according to the order of Return of Title IV Funds:

1. Unsubsidized Stafford	5. Federal Pell Grant
2. Subsidized Stafford	6. Federal SEOG
3. Federal Perkins Loans	7. Other Title IV Programs
4. Federal PLUS	