



Simon Fraser University
Maggie Benston Centre 1100
8888 University Drive
Burnaby, BC V5A 1S6

TEL 778.782.3042
FAX 778.782.3080

gradstudies@sfu.ca
www.sfu.ca/grad

MEMORANDUM

ATTENTION Senate

DATE **JUNE 21, 2023**

FROM Jeff Derksen,
Chair of Senate Graduate Studies Committee (SGSC)
RE: Graduate General Regulation 1.4.5 Leave of Absence
Graduate General Regulation 1.10.2 Classification of Thesis

For Approval: At its meeting on May 30, 2023 SGSC reviewed and approved the revision Graduate General Regulation **1.4.5 Leave of Absence** and **1.10.2 Classification of Thesis**. This gives rise to the following motions, effective **SPRING 2024**:

~~**Motion 1: (Withdrawn at Senate July 10, 2023 - referred back to SGSC)**~~

~~That Senate approve the revisions to Graduate General Regulation **Graduate General Regulation 1.4.5 Leave of Absence**~~

Motion 2:

That Senate approve the revisions to Graduate General Regulation **Graduate General Regulation 1.10.2 Classification of Thesis**

Calendar Entry Change for Graduate General Regulations 1.4.5 Leave of Absence

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| <p>Summary of change: Graduate General Regulations 1.4.5; Proposing to change the wording from “documentation is required” to “documentation may be required”.</p> |
| <p>Rationale for change: To lower barriers for student access and to lessen medical community labour. Also, alignment with other Universities’ policies.</p> |
| <p>Effective term and year: SPRING 2024</p> |
| <p>Will this change impact current students? If yes, what is the plan for current students? Yes, it positively impacts them</p> |

| FROM | TO |
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| <p>[...]</p> <p>From time to time, students find it necessary to interrupt their studies. In this case, they must apply for a leave of absence. Typically, a leave of absence begins on the first day of an academic term and approval for the leave is obtained before the term begins. Students in their first term should apply for an admission deferral rather than a leave of absence. A retroactive request for a leave of absence normally will not be allowed. During a leave of absence, students normally should not use any of the university's facilities or resources, or undertake academic or research work related to the program from which they have taken a leave of absence.</p> <p>Awards for which the terms and conditions are established by SFU will be interrupted at the onset of the leave of absence and will resume at the termination of the leave period, provided the student returns to full-time study at that time. The duration of the award</p> | <p>[...]</p> <p>If a situation presents itself that a student needs to interrupt their studies, a student must apply for a leave of absence. Students should review the categories of leave and select the most appropriate form of leave for the subsequent term(s). Students in their first term can apply for an admission deferral rather than a leave of absence. Ideally, a leave of absence begins on the first day of an academic term and approval for the leave is obtained before the term begins. However, if a situation requiring a leave occurs later in the term, a student should consider applying to Withdraw under extenuating circumstances (WE). Consultation on leaves is available within Graduate Studies and through International Services for Students.</p> <p>During a leave of absence, students would not be expected to make academic progress nor have access to normal supervisory support. However, students on leave are encouraged to maintain academic relations with their program and supervisor in order to facilitate a return to the program.</p> <p>Awards for which the terms and conditions are established by SFU will be interrupted at the onset of the leave of absence and will resume at the termination of the leave period, provided the student returns to full-time study at that time. The duration of the award will not be changed</p> |

will not be changed from the time the award was initiated. Awards for which the terms and conditions are not established by SFU will be paid according to the terms and conditions established by the donor or granting agency.

~~There are four types of leave:~~

Personal Leave
Parental Leave
Medical ~~or~~ compassionate Leave
Academic Break

~~The time taken for a personal leave will be counted towards the maximum time allowed for program completion.~~

The time taken for ~~an academic break, parental, medical, compassionate~~ leave will be counted towards the maximum time allowed for program completion. The maximum time limit will be adjusted accordingly but all other program requirements and academic unit expectations will remain the same.

From the time the award was initiated. Awards for which the terms and conditions are not established by SFU will be paid according to the terms and conditions established by the donor or granting agency.

Leave Classifications:

1. Personal
2. Parental
3. Medical
- 4. Compassionate**
- 5. Professional**
6. Academic Break

The time taken for leaves will **not** be counted towards the maximum time allowed for program completion. The maximum time limit will be adjusted accordingly but all other program requirements and academic unit expectations will remain the same.

Justifiable rationale provided by the student is required for all leave requests. For personal, medical, or compassionate leaves, documentation from professionals, such as a medical doctor, is not required, but may be provided or may be requested by SFU or other external organizations (for visa or financial reasons). Documentation is required for all leave requests extending beyond one year, with exception of parental leave. Documentation is required for all professional leave requests.

In requesting a leave, students acknowledge that the responsibility for factual accuracy in the request resides with the student. SFU policy S10 is applicable. International students also acknowledge that matters external to SFU, such as study visa, may have different requirements and that they have consulted International Services for Students (ISS) prior to submitting the leave request.

In returning from a leave, it is the student's responsibility to ensure appropriate validation steps are taken to ensure that the return to full time enrolment is successful.

Personal Leave

~~A personal leave may be taken for any reason, other than those defined below. The maximum number of terms that are permitted for a personal leave is three throughout the length of the student's credential.~~

Parental Leave

~~A student may take up to three terms for each childbirth or adoption (including multiple births). Students are required to submit supporting documentation.~~

Medical or Compassionate Leave

~~A student may take up to three terms per personal medical condition or compassionate reason (including but not limited to legal matter, family care, illness of relative, or bereavement). Students are~~

~~required to submit supporting documentation~~

~~In some cases, a student may be asked to provide documentation from their clinician to confirm that they have recovered sufficiently to return to their course of study. If medical documentation is submitted for reasons related to a physical or mental disability, the student has a legal entitlement to disability accommodation.~~

~~If a student will require more than three terms for a medical condition, it is recommended that students discuss with their supervisor/faculty advisor whether it is in their best interest to temporarily discontinue their program and then apply for readmission when their circumstances have been resolved.~~

~~Students completing the requirements for their program past the normal completion time, as the result of having taken three or more medical leaves, may be required to repeat courses/comprehensive examinations or complete additional courses at the discretion of their graduate program committee. Responsibility for approving these additional degree requirements rests with the dean of graduate studies and the chair of the student's graduate program committee.~~

Academic Break

An academic break (or scheduled break) can be taken when no courses are offered for a student's program within a particular term, or there is a scheduled break within a program (e.g. Summer term). Students in a thesis program are not eligible for an academic break. The maximum number of terms that are permitted for an academic break is one term per year with no consecutive academic breaks.

[...]

Academic Break

An academic break (or scheduled break) can be taken when no courses are offered for a student's program within a particular term, or there is a scheduled break within a program (e.g. Summer term). Students in a thesis program are not eligible for an academic break. The maximum number of terms that are permitted for an academic break is one term per year with no consecutive academic breaks.

[...]

GGR 1.10.2 Edits: Classification of the Thesis

Problem Statement:

Under the current graduate general regulations, a student will fail their defence in the event that the examining committee cannot come to a majority vote to pass the thesis. Additionally, there are no means to appeal the failure at this stage. Rather, the student would be required to withdraw the university, and then could appeal the withdrawal.

Recommendation:

Following the recommendations of the BC ombudsperson, and in an effort to strengthen the routes to re-examination, we propose edits to GGR 1.10.2. These edits intend to clarify the classification of thesis, and to have a streamlined route to re-examination/appeals following the failure of a thesis.

Calendar Entry Change for Graduate General Regulation 1.10.2 Classification of the Thesis

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| Summary of change: Clarifying the process of re-examination. Making a re-examination mandatory if the examining committee cannot come to majority vote on a pass classification or adjournment. Previously the thesis would fail: this change alters that to a re-examination. |
| Rationale for change: After review of this GGR in relations to GPS Cases and ombudsperson. This change is in place to strengthen routes to re-examination. |
| Effective term and year: Spring 2024 |
| Will this change impact current students? If yes, what is the plan for current students? Yes, positively. Student will have access to thesis re-examination. |

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| 1.10.2 Classification of the Thesis | 1.10.2 Classification of the Thesis The decision of the examining committee is by simple majority vote. A decision to pass the thesis may not be |

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| <p>There are four possible levels of classification of thesis examination.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. the thesis may be passed as submitted 2. the thesis may be passed on the condition that revisions be completed to the satisfaction of the supervisor 3. the examining committee may defer making judgment if it judges that the thesis could pass after additional work by the candidate. The examining committee for the re-examination must remain the same, must set an end date for completion and may not defer judgment a second time. The examining committee may <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a) reach its decision by individual examination of the revised thesis or b) formal re-examination under section 1.10.1. The preparation for the re-examination does not follow 1.9.5. A date and time for the re-examination is set by the examination committee and may not be postponed once set. The revised thesis is distributed to the examining committee including the external examiner by the chair of the graduate program committee or designate. No pre-defence report will be required from the external examiner. If the revised thesis is failed, follow the steps for the category 4 outcome (see below). 4. the thesis may be failed. In this case, the candidate has to receive a written report from | <p>reached on a tie vote of the examining committee. If a majority vote to pass the thesis cannot be reached the student is entitled to a re-examination.</p> <p>Upon a successful completion, the thesis must be submitted to the library no later than the end of the subsequent term.</p> <p>There are four possible levels of classification of thesis examination.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. the thesis may be passed as submitted 2. the thesis may be passed on the condition that revisions be completed to the satisfaction of the supervisor on behalf of the examining committee. The committee will set a time for completion. 3. the examining committee may adjourn if it judges that the thesis could pass after additional work by the candidate. In the event of adjournment, the examining committee must remain the same for the re-examination, must schedule the re-examination and may not adjourn a second time. At the re-examination, the examining committee may <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a) reach its decision by individual examination of the revised thesis or b) hold a formal re-examination under section 1.10.1. The preparation for the re-examination does not follow 1.9.5. The re-examination schedule cannot be changed. The revised thesis is distributed to the examining committee including the external examiner by the chair of the graduate program committee or designate. No pre-defence report will be required from the external examiner. If the revised thesis is failed, follow the steps for the category 4 outcome (see below). 4. the thesis may be failed. In this case, the candidate has to receive a written report from |
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the examining committee. The student will then be required to withdraw from the university.

~~The decision of the examining committee is by simple majority vote. However, in the cases of doctoral students or students enrolled in Individualized Interdisciplinary Studies master's program, the classification may not be at a higher level than that recommended by the external examiner. A decision to pass the thesis or to defer making judgment may not be reached on a tie vote of the examining committee. If at first a majority vote to pass the thesis cannot be reached, and subsequently, if a majority vote to defer judgment cannot be reached, the thesis will be failed.~~

~~Upon a successful completion, the thesis must be submitted to the library no later than the end of the subsequent term.~~

the examining committee **detailing the reasons for the failure. To appeal the thesis failure decision, the student can follow 1.16.2 Progress Evaluations. If there is no appeal, the** student will then be required to withdraw from the university.