This page tells you all about program leave, and the rules, procedures and policies that apply.

You apply for program leave if you want to:

- Discontinue your current enrolment for up to 2 semesters during your program,
- Ensure that you maintain standing in your program, and
- Come back to your studies after taking leave.

If you want to discontinue your studies completely, and not resume them at a later date, see Program Discontinuation.

Who can take program leave?

Program leave is for enrolled domestic undergraduate or postgraduate students. It is not usually available to international students.

Domestic students

A domestic undergraduate or postgraduate student enrolled in their second or later semester of a program may apply for program leave. (A new student enrolled in their first semester would apply for a deferment, no later than the relevant census date.)

You can apply for program leave no later than the relevant census date. For Semester 1 leave this is 31 March; for Semester 2 leave, 31 August. Program leave sought after census date will be subject to UNSW’s rules for course withdrawal and may result in failures being listed on your academic record.

Postgrads: If you are on a scholarship (e.g. APA), check that it is deferrable. Also, check that your chosen supervisor is available during your return semester.

International students

International students on student visas can apply for program leave; however, certain conditions may apply. Please get advice from Student Development - International before applying for course discontinuation or program leave.

Important advice for student visa holders

DIBP notification of program leave/cancellation

Under Commonwealth Legislation, the University is required to notify the Department of Immigration and Border Patrol...
(DIBP) of changes in the enrolment of student visa holders. Cancellation and leave of absence (program leave) will in most cases lead to the cancellation of your student visa, and you will be required to depart Australia, or transfer to another visa type. Provided that you report to DIBP as required, your visa cancellation should be ‘without prejudice’, and should not prevent you from reapplying in the future.

Granting of program leave to student visa holders

As required by Commonwealth Law, student visa holders will be granted Leave by UNSW, conditional on complying with immigration requirements. In all but exceptional circumstances (e.g. Serious personal/health problems requiring you to remain in Australia), student visa holders granted leave will be required to depart Australia for the duration of their leave. If you believe your circumstances are exceptional, please provide documentation to support this claim. In all cases, student visa holders granted leave by the University must report to Immigration authorities to clarify their visa status.

Reapplying for your student visa

You may find it easier to apply for a new student visa before leaving Australia. Whether you choose to apply in Australia or overseas, you need to fill in a New Confirmation of Enrolment Request.

How long can I take program leave for?

Program leave is generally restricted to no more than 2 semesters of your enrolment in a program. Applications for leave of more than 2 semesters will be approved only in exceptional circumstances, at the discretion of the Program Authority.

How to apply

Lodge your leave request through Online Services in myUNSW.

Sign on to myUNSW and go to Program Leave/Discontinuation (My Student Profile tab > My Student Services > Online Services > Program Leave/Discontinuation).

Once your request has been processed you’ll be notified of the outcome by email to your UNSW email account. You’ll also be able to view and print your approved leave letter online.

Re-admission and cross-institutional study

Program leave and re-admission

- If you aren’t enrolled at the relevant census date, and you haven’t applied for and been granted approved program leave for that semester, you will be discontinued from your program. You’ll have to formally apply for re-enrolment if you want to enrol in a future semester.
- If you withdraw from courses with or without failure after the census date, you retain an enrolment record for that semester and are subject to the rules of re-enrolment.
- If your application for leave is rejected, or you don’t resume study at the end of the approved leave period, you must formally apply for re-admission to the program.

Cross-institutional study

If you want to undertake study at another institution while you’re on program leave from UNSW, before you commence your studies at the other institution you must obtain permission from your UNSW Program Authority.