

Student Leave of Absence Policy

The purpose of this policy is to confirm that Coastal Alabama Community College (CA) is in compliance with federal regulations, 34 CFR 668.22 (d), regarding the process for students requesting a leave of absence.

A leave of absence (LOA) is a temporary interruption in a student's program of study. A LOA cannot exceed 180 days in any 12 month period and may have a serious impact on a student's financial aid. Any student considering requesting a LOA that received financial aid, should consult with the Financial Aid Office to determine how their financial aid will be affected.

According to federal regulations, 34 CFR 668.22 (d), the following criteria outlines the requirements to process an approved LOA:

- The student must request the leave of absence in advance in writing to their Dean for approval. The letter should state the reason(s) for the request. LOA can be granted after for unforeseen circumstances.
- A LOA cannot be granted for academic reasons (i.e. to keep a student from failing).
- There must be reasonable expectation that the student will return from LOA.
- A student returning from a LOA must resume training at the same point in the academic program that he or she began the LOA.
- Upon return from LOA, the institution may **not** assess the student any additional institutional charges. Therefore, the student is **not** eligible for any additional federal student aid (Title IV funds).
- If a student is a Title IV recipient, the institution must explain the requirements and regulations of his/her financial aid status (grace period, repayment, etc.) prior to granting the LOA. The information that will be provided will include the financial consequences if the student fails to return from LOA.

A student granted a LOA is not to be considered withdrawn and no return of Title IV calculation is required. If a student does not meet the LOA criteria, the student is considered to have ceased attendance from the institution and a Title IV return of funds calculation is required if the student received federal aid.

When CA grants a student LOA, it will report a status of 'A' (approved leave of absence in NSLDS Enrollment Reporting. If the student fails to return CA must report the student as withdrawn. CA will use the LOA begin date as the withdrawal date.

Impact of a Leave of Absence on Financial Aid

A Leave of Absence (LOA) is granted by the College in which the student is enrolled. A LOA is a temporary interruption in a student's program of study during which the student is considered to be enrolled. An LOA cannot exceed 180 days in any 12 month period and may have a serious impact on a student's financial aid. Any student considering requesting a leave of absence should consult with the Financial Aid Office to determine how their financial aid will be affected. Schools may neither credit a student's account nor deliver loan proceeds to the student borrower while the student is on an approved leave of absence.

CA will not disburse loan funds to a student on LOA.

A student who is approved for a leave of absence after receiving financial aid for the semester may be required to return a portion of the aid previously received. Federal educational loan regulations state that when a student borrower ceases to be enrolled at least half-time for 180 days (6 months) in any 12-month period, the borrower will be considered as withdrawn from school for loan repayment purposes. At that point, the school is required to calculate the amount of financial aid the student earned and the amount of financial aid that must be returned. These calculations are based on the time the student was enrolled. The percentage of the semester the student completed is the percentage of aid the student can keep. The percentage of the semester the student did not complete is the percentage of aid that must be returned. Once a student completes more than 60% of the semester, the student has earned 100% of the aid they received for that semester.

Student borrowers are given a six month grace period on most types of federal loans starting at the date enrollment ceases. During this time, lenders will treat the borrower's loans as if the borrower were still enrolled in school full-time. Once a grace period is used on a specific loan, it will not be given again. At the end of this six month grace period, the student will be required to enter repayment on their federal educational loans until they return to school; however, deferment or forbearance options are available if the student makes a request to their lender.

Federal Policy for Returning Federal Student Financial Aid

Students who are granted a leave of absence (that is expected to last 180 days or more) after paying for the semester's tuition will be treated as withdrawn. The following federal policies will apply:

If a student received federal student aid before withdrawing, being dismissed, or being granted a leave of absence, any tuition refund calculated will be returned to the federal aid programs first. Federal regulations mandate that the percentage of the semester the student did not complete will be the percentage of available federal aid the student did not earn. If the student received more federal student aid than they earned, the school must return the unearned funds to the student's lender in a specified order. Once the student has completed more than 60% of the semester, the student has earned 100% of their aid, and no federal refund is required. When a refund is required, the amount of the student's aid that the school is required to return to the student's lender is determined by multiplying the amount of the student's tuition and fees by the percentage of the semester the student did not complete. Once institutional and federal refunds are complete, the student will be required to pay any remaining balance due the school within 30 days.