# **Postdoctoral Fellow Leave of Absence Policy**

The Johns Hopkins University

Krieger School of Arts and Sciences/Whiting School of Engineering

1. **SCOPE**

The following policy applies to all postdoctoral fellows in the Krieger School of Arts and Sciences (‘KSAS’) and the Whiting School of Engineering (‘WSE’).

1. **POSTDOCTORAL FELLOW RESOURCES**

**Emotional Support**

* Homewood postdoctoral fellows who need emotional support throughout this process are encouraged to consult [My Support](https://hr.jhu.edu/benefits-worklife/support-programs/).

**Policy Guidance and Additional Case Management Support**

* The Homewood KSAS and WSE offices of graduate and postdoctoral academic affairs may be [consulted](https://homewoodgrad.jhu.edu/student-services/who-can-help-me-and-how/) to help Homewood postdoctoral fellows understand this policy and their rights and responsibilities. The services of the Homewood KSAS and WSE offices of graduate and postdoctoral academic affairs are mostly confidential except when reporting is required by policy or law (for contact information and to review the *Privac****y Policy for ASEN Graduate and Postdoctoral Affairs Advising,* please visit**<http://homewoodgrad.jhu.edu)>**.**

**III. POLICY**

Postdoctoral fellows are entitled to petition for a leave of absence (LOA) from their appointment for up to one year or to the end of their postdoctoral appointment (whichever comes first) for the following reasons:

* **Medical (mental or physical)**
* **Compulsory military service**
* **Personal or family hardship**
* **Bereavement**
* **EAD-Gap LOA** *(Gap in Employment Authorization Documentation due to USCIS Delay)*
* **Internship/Professional Development** *(not related to appointment)*

The intent of this policy is to pause and protect a postdoctoral fellow’s appointment while they take an approved leave from duties. As such, every effort will be made to reinstate a postdoctoral fellow to their position upon their return from LOA, and this policy acts in good faith. That said, if there are critical/dire changes to the PI/advisor’s funding or research/advising capacity during the postdoctoral fellow’s period of leave, it may affect appointment terms upon their return from leave.

**Process:**

**Initial Request for a Leave of Absence**

To request leave, a postdoctoral fellow must provide their respective Dean’s Office representative (see addendum for contacts) with the following documentation and information. Note that emails are accepted as ‘written’ documentation.

1. **A cover letter/email noting:**
	1. their department/institute/center, their PI/advisor’s name, and appointment start and end date;
	2. a brief summary of the reason for the leave and the amount of time they are requesting leave;
2. **Written support/acknowledgment from the postdoctoral fellow’s PI/advisor/their department/institute/center;**
3. **Written verification of OIS consultation** *(if an international postdoctoral fellow)*
4. **Required support documentation** *(must be sent directly to the Dean’s office administrator):*
	* Medical (mental or physical)
		+ - Written verification from a relevant treating medical provider (this may be from the Student Health and Wellness Center or MySupport).
	* Compulsory military service
		+ - Written verification from the Armed Services
	* Personal or family hardship
		+ - Written explanation from Postdoctoral Fellow detailing need (can be incorporated into the cover letter/email)
	* Bereavement
		+ - Letter/email from Postdoctoral Fellow detailing need
	* EAD-Gap LOA (Gap in Employment Authorization Documentation due to USCIS Delay)
		+ - Written verification of filed paperwork and USCIS delay from OIS
			- Written confirmation of intent of continued appointment from sponsoring program
	* Internship/Professional Development*(not related to appointment)*
		+ - Written documentation from Postdoctoral Fellow detailing opportunity

**Decision and Notifications:**

The Dean’s office representative will (1) review the petition and supporting materials, (2) consult as needed with the postdoctoral fellow, OIS, dept, advisor, and/or HR for any clarifications or additional documentation, (3) make the final decision, and will then (4) notify the postdoctoral fellow via email, cc-ing the postdoctoral fellow’s PI/advisor, OIS, the department/institute/center, and HR/Student Employment (University Experiential Learning Office) as appropriate.

**Returning from LOA:**

At least 10 business days before returning from a LOA, the postdoctoral fellow needs to send an email to the notification list above (including the Dean’s office administrator) citing their readiness to return with a projected return date.

**Special supporting documentation to return from LOA:**

* Medical LOA returns require supporting documentation from the treating medical provider indicating readiness to return *(must be sent directly to the Dean’s office administrator)*
* EAD-Gap LOA returns require written approval from OIS and HR once the proper EAD is on file.

**Extensions of LOA:**

Leave of absence extensions may be subject to anticipated funding/research availability and the support of the principal investigator or advisor. Since an initial leave of absence extends for no more than a year, a new LOA petition needs to be completed for any extension beyond.

**Rights and Privileges While on Leave:**

While on leave of absence, postdoctoral fellows do not have campus privileges or access to university services and facilities; and are typically removed from student employment (payroll). However, postdoctoral fellows on LOA (except for EAD-Gap LOAs) are eligible for employment through the University’s Human Resources Office.

All postdoctoral fellows seeking a leave are encouraged to contact HR benefits prior to their leave to understand the ramifications to their health insurance coverage and other benefits. With the exception of those postdoctoral fellows on EAD-Gap LOA (who can retain their insurance coverage but it cannot be paid for by the university), postdoctoral fellows on LOA may be eligible to retain their funded health insurance coverage.

International postdoctoral fellows must consult with OIS prior to taking an approved leave as there may be visa ramifications.

**Special notes regarding Medical and EAD-GAP LOAs**:

**Medical LOAs:**

Postdoctoral fellows approved for a medical LOA may be eligible/wish to file for short-term disability (STD) to help maintain a percentage of pay during their leave. All postdoctoral fellows are automatically enrolled in the university’s STD plan but will need to contact their department/institute/ center administrator and HR to activate the benefit. Medical LOAs are able to maintain their health insurance coverage while on leave.

**EAD-GAP LOAs**:

This LOA status is limited to those ***cases*** where there is a ***pending H1-b application for hire at JHU that is imminent or an OPT EAD from a F-1 visa which is en route but not yet received*** (i.e. the visa/EAD card is expected to come within the 60 days) and there is a reason why the person cannot remain in their J or other category.

After 60 days, EAD-Gap LOAs must be terminated in SAP and can be rehired only once the new EAD is approved and in hand.  If the postdoctoral fellow will be departing employment at JHU adjacent to the end of a requested EAD-Gap LOA period, they would not be eligible for the EAD-Gap LOA and would instead need to be terminated in SAP. EAD-Gap LOAs are placed on leave without pay, but LOA HR will keep their benefits active for the 60 days.

While a Postdoctoral Fellow is on an EAD-GAP LOA status, they may remain enrolled in their health insurance, but the university cannot pay the premimum for them.  When the updated EAD is in place the postdoctoral fellow will be placed back on payroll, and their benefits will revert back to how postdoctoral fellow's fringe is usually paid.

1. **CONFIDENTIALITY AND RECORDS**

This policy and associated procedures are subject to university compliance with FERPA (<https://studentaffairs.jhu.edu/registrar/students/student-privacy-ferpa/>)

1. **ANTI-DISCRIMATION AND RETALIATION**

Johns Hopkins University prohibits discrimination and harassment based on any protected characteristic, which includes sex, gender, marital status, pregnancy, race, color, ethnicity, national origin, age, disability, religion, sexual orientation, gender identity or expression, veteran status or other legally protected characteristic. OIE will investigate any allegations of discrimination in the application of this policy; and involved parties will be protected from retaliation.

CK WSE 9.28.20