

GRADUATE SCHOOL POLICY FOR PHD STUDENT VACATION AND LEAVE

The Graduate School at the University of Colorado Anschutz Medical Campus (CU Anschutz) has established the following leave policy for PhD students who receive full-support stipends from CU Anschutz PhD programs (hereafter referred to as “graduate students”). Full-time graduate students (as defined in the [Graduate School Policies and Procedures](#)) in these programs are eligible for campus holidays, vacation, sick leave, and parental leave. Detailed below are the amounts of leave time allowable for students to maintain full-time student status, as well as leave reporting requirements.

LEAVE TYPES AND AMOUNTS

Vacation and Holidays. Graduate students shall receive all CU Anschutz campus holidays and may receive an additional 10 weekdays (excluding weekends) of vacation per academic year, with no year-to-year accrual. Graduate students shall continue to receive stipends during vacations and holidays. Graduate students taking courses are expected to attend all classes and take all exams as scheduled. The times between academic terms and the summers are all considered active parts of the training period and leave must be taken in accordance with this policy. Graduate students supported via extramurally funded projects or training grants must comply with sponsor requirements regarding effort.

Sick Leave. Graduate students may continue to receive stipends for 11 weekdays (excluding weekends and campus holidays) of sick leave per academic year, with no year-to-year accrual. Under exceptional circumstances, additional sick days may be granted following a written request from the student and approval by the student's thesis advisor (if determined) and graduate program director. Sick leave may be used for medical needs related to pregnancy and childbirth. Absences needed to address chronic health conditions and/or disabilities as part of an Office of Disability, Access, and Inclusion (ODAI) formal accommodation plan may be treated separately from sick leave. Graduate students supported via extramurally funded projects or training grants must comply with sponsor requirements regarding effort.

Parental Leave. Graduate students may continue to receive stipends for 8 work weeks (excluding weekends and campus holidays) of parental leave per academic year for the adoption or the birth of a child. Either or both parents are eligible for parental leave. Graduate students must provide advance notification to their thesis advisor (if determined) and graduate program director prior to taking parental leave. Sick leave may supplement parental leave under the circumstances noted above. Graduate students supported via extramurally funded projects or training grants must comply with sponsor requirements regarding effort.

Bereavement Leave. Graduate Students may receive up to five weekdays of paid leave for each death event in accordance with the University bereavement leave policy for faculty and staff.

Unpaid Leave. Individuals requiring more than 11 weekdays (excluding weekends and campus holidays) of sick leave or more than 8 work weeks (excluding weekends and campus holidays) of parental leave per academic year must seek approval from their thesis advisor and their graduate program director for an unpaid leave of absence. A leave of absence must be requested by the student and approved by their thesis advisor (if known) and program in advance of taking the leave of absence. The leave period and conditions must be documented at the times of leave and of re-entry into the program. A copy of this agreement must be submitted to the Graduate School in advance of the leave of absence. Graduate students supported via extramurally funded projects or training grants must comply with sponsor requirements regarding effort.

Unused Leave at Termination. Upon graduation or termination, a graduate student forfeits all unused vacation, sick, and parental leave; there is no payout for remaining leave balances. Remaining leave balances cannot be transferred to other positions within the University of Colorado system.

LEAVE REQUESTS AND REPORTING

Graduate students are required to report leave requests (vacation, sick, and parental leave) in accordance with program-defined reporting processes. Reporting processes may include reporting requests to 1) their thesis advisor, 2) the program in which they reside, and/or 3) their thesis advisor's home department or unit. It is the graduate student's responsibility to identify the process for reporting leave.

Graduate students who have not yet joined a thesis lab (e.g., first-year graduate students) are advised to discuss with potential dissertation advisor expectations regarding vacation and leave. After a graduate student has selected their thesis advisor and joined the advisor's research program, they must request and receive approval for vacation leave from their thesis advisor in advance of taking vacation leave. The graduate student must make all necessary arrangements in advance to cover any responsibilities that the graduate student has for the research program or for maintaining their ongoing experiments and/or resources (e.g., cell lines, animals). In all cases, graduate students supported via extramurally funded projects or training grants must comply with sponsor requirements regarding effort.

LEAVE DISPUTES

All leave disputes between graduate students and their thesis advisor and/or program must be resolved by graduate program leadership and/or the program's home school/college.

This policy was voted on and approved by the Graduate Faculty Council on November 28, 2023
May 21, 2024: Revision for clarification; "per annum" was replaced with "per academic year"
November 12, 2024: Revision for clarification; addition of language regarding ODAI accommodations
June 16, 2025: Addition of GFC approved bereavement leave category