

Faculty of Medicine Guidelines on Graduate Student Personal Time Off

Within the Faculty of Medicine, it is recognized that many graduate students conduct their research almost exclusively within a laboratory setting, where they may or may not have control over their hours and the flow of the research program. Students are not employees and therefore have no rights to employee benefits, including paid vacation entitlement. However, it is recognized that in order for a graduate student to reach their full potential and achieve academic excellence and maintain a healthy work life balance, they benefit from some personal time off or 'vacation'. There are SGS policies and procedures in place for students who require a leave of absence for parental, personal or medical reasons. However, there are no University or SGS policies regarding graduate student personal time off / 'vacation'. The following guidelines for faculty and graduate students¹ provide a framework for reasonable expectations. As a general rule, students might reasonably expect up to three weeks (15 working days) per year in personal time off, plus statutory holidays, under the following conditions:

- Time off provisions should be negotiated, in a clear and transparent manner, between the supervisor and the graduate student.
- Time off should not compromise the research program and/or the student's graduate studies. Students must ensure that laboratory work, experimentation and other time sensitive activities are either completed, or arrangements made for others to continue ongoing work.
- Consideration should be given to when the building or lab is closed (i.e. winter holidays) when taking time off.
- Time sensitive deadlines (i.e. award applications, abstract submissions) must be taken into consideration.
- Time off cannot be carried forward from year to year.
- Time off should be requested as far in advance as possible.
- The student and supervisor should be able to maintain contact as appropriate if the student is away for an extended period.
- Given that students receive remuneration as a stipend, not salary, the stipend continues, unaffected by this personal time off.
- Attendance at social activities within the academic community (departmental picnic etc.) or scientific meetings do not fall under the category of personal time off.
- Sick leaves or absences for health reasons must be documented and do not fall under category of personal time off.

1 Adapted from the Institute of Medical Science guidelines on time off for students.

This guideline was developed by a sub-committee of the TAHSN Research Training Centres Committee and the Office of the Vice Dean, Graduate Affairs. It was approved by the Medicine Graduate Curriculum Committee, March 11, 2010.