

LC Concussion Leave—Guidelines for Faculty

LEAVE

Loomis Chaffee is committed to supporting students who have sustained diagnosed concussions and who, with consultation of medical professionals, need to separate themselves from the school for a period of time in order to focus on their health and recovery. As a school, we have adopted the following procedures to keep the best interests of the student in mind while providing for a medical leave specific to a diagnosed concussion.

A student placed on Concussion Leave is protected from having to meet the day-to-day academic expectations of the school, and is required to make an incremental resumption of academic work prior to being cleared to return to campus. Once the dean of students or Health Center enacts a Concussion Leave, the director of studies works with the student's advisor and teachers to initiate a plan for amended academic expectations, and for providing assignments that the student can begin once cleared to do so.

RETURN TO ACADEMIC WORK

Prior to the conclusion of the leave, the student will be cleared by our school physician to resume academic work. At that time, return-to-work protocols are put in place at home. These protocols involve monitored periods of work time as follows:

Students who have been on Concussion Leave for two weeks or less must follow a two-day return-to-work monitored protocol; for each additional week of leave one day is added to the protocol. Beginning with 20 minute work periods and equal break time, on the first day the student should not exceed 60 minutes of reading time. On the second day the student may begin completing other assignments in addition to readings, for no more than 30 minutes at a time, with equally long breaks between work periods, to a maximum of 90 minutes. Days 3-4, when required, add 30 minutes of work time per day.

RETURN TO SCHOOL

The student remains on leave until the dean of students, in consultation with the director of studies, parents and medical professionals, determines that the student may be cleared to return. This will be communicated to advisors and teachers by the student dean.

Upon return the student must meet with each teacher after/before each first class to plan for an evenly paced approach to accomplishing necessary make-up work. The student is also required to meet, during the first week back from leave and then at least twice more in the three weeks following, with a member of the counseling department in order to address other aspects of their return. The director of studies will also work with the faculty involved to assess and support the student's resumption of full academic responsibilities.

Students must be excused from completing major evaluative exercises (tests, larger papers) until a week after their return, and having passed the ImPACT test.

EXPECTATIONS OF THE TEACHER

Because the student is not responsible for every assignment that classmates are doing, only for doing enough work to generally stay abreast of what the class is learning, the faculty member must identify the work requirements necessary and support the student in following an evenly-paced schedule for catching up. This can be a complex task, especially in sequential courses like math, science and modern/classical language, but it has been done before with success. As is the case with the student, communication is key to both supporting the student and enacting a plan that is manageable, and that fits each student's unique situation. The director of studies can be a coordinating resource in this dynamic process. Tutors may be employed if you feel it is necessary, and Lena Sadowitz, Director of Learning Access and Student Achievement, is an excellent resource in determining and arranging this.

Until the time of the leave the student should be evaluated as a regular student. Concussion/Medical leave offers the opportunity to finish the marking period in a way that releases both teacher and student from deadlines (other than the close of school) and from doing the identical quantity or type of work as those attending class throughout. In the case of a leave that extends to the close of the marking period, enough work must be done and evaluated to create a fair grade for the student. Questions should be resolved with the director of studies and the department head.

If the student exhibits a return of concussion symptoms in class (headaches, nausea, light sensitivity, etc.) the teacher should send the student to the Health Center. Likewise, if the student requests extensions or a lessening of work expectations upon return to school, the teacher should refer the student to the director of studies or director of learning support.

Concussion symptoms and leaves vary greatly. It is always appropriate to consult with the director of studies, director of LASA and the health center in order to best address the specific needs of the student.

BEST PRACTICES AND APPROACHES FOR TEACHERS, FROM TEACHERS

- Concussed students have traumatic brain injuries. Accept that they will not be their best in a traditional testing situation for weeks to come, even after being cleared by the ImPACT test.
- If you teach a traditional classroom-based class then strongly consider moving to an open note and take home test format for that concussed student. Rewrite the test(s) to remove the “non-essential” material (see policy above).
- Give the test on an open-ended timeframe. Your student will be managing a return to full academic life in five classes (in most cases). If you can remove time pressure (and the resultant stress on the brain such an event generates) you will allow them to succeed academically and recover from their brain injury. A true win-win.
- Speak to the student personally. Explain that you will not allow them to take a test or quiz until you hear from the director of studies/Health Center that they have passed the ImPACT test. In theory they have heard this from other sources, but your words will be a huge de-stressor.
- Check in with the student before or after each class about the use of technology in class. Can they sit through a short movie or animated clip? Can they look at a monitor for homework assignments? Would dimming the lights help in class?

- Be aware that many concussed students have delayed processing rates. Many, too, find the process of simply looking up and down from board to notes to be dizzying.
- Combat stigmatization of concussed students—concussions are ongoing injuries that cannot be seen. Students will often work to please and not take care of themselves during recovery. These concussed students need faculty advocates seeing them through the challenges of not being able to work to ability for a time.