

Language requirements

Many degree programs require proven proficiency in one or more languages other than English. These requirements vary considerably across institutions, but the study of many aspects of religion makes the use of a variety of languages necessary. Check on your institution's requirements and consider learning the languages early in your program so you can make use of them in your work. Computer programs aid considerably in the translation process, but they are no substitute for being able to read a text in the original and "feeling" what it means. Likewise, the increasing globalization of the field makes conversation with colleagues in other than hegemonic English a desirable ability.

Leaves of absence (see also Benefits, leaves)

A leave of absence can be granted or taken for a variety of reasons. Health-related issues are common. However, a leave can also be used as a placeholder, a way to save your space in an institution while you are trying out another one. Some faculty take leaves of several years to work in government service or in NGOs related to their field. Each institution has limits on such leaves, so investigate this before you commit. Unpaid leaves can also be taken when one has won a fellowship at a time other than a regularly scheduled sabbatical, or just as a refresher after a windfall.

Depending on the type of leave, you may be able to take benefits with you on leave, especially if a fellowship will pay your award to your institution, which allows you to stay on their payroll. If you win a fellowship, check to see if this is possible. In all cases, it is important for women especially to calculate the full cost of a leave, for example, lost benefits, lost Social Security credits, and the like. While it may seem a good idea in the short run, be sure it also makes long-term sense or risk lower benefits down the road.