



Policy Title:

Leave of Absence, Administrative Leave, and Withdrawal

Policy Identifier:

USCSOMC – STA – 1.09

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Category: Student Affairs	

LCME Standards

11.1 – Academic Advising and Academic Counseling

Scope

University of South Carolina (USC) School of Medicine Columbia students in the undergraduate medical education program

Policy Statement

This policy describes the procedures for personal leaves of absence, administrative leaves of absence, provisional administrative leaves of absence, and withdrawals. For a variety of reasons, a student’s ability to continue their medical education may become significantly impaired, medically inadvisable, or impossible. Also, there are times due to academic regulations (including the USMLE Step 1 and Step 2 policy), the [Academic Review Policy \(STA 1.07\)](#), and the [M1/M2 Remediation Policy \(UME 1.10\)](#), when a student may be put on administrative leave until such time that they can resume their medical education. A provisional administrative leave of absence may occur because an immediate leave of absence is necessary. Finally, a student may also withdraw from the undergraduate medical education program without intending to return. This policy also describes the opportunity to appeal a personal leave of absence decision.

Reason for Policy

Understanding that circumstances happen that interfere and may interrupt a student’s progress, the policy is designed to outline the procedures that would allow leaves of absence and the continuation of a student’s medical education after the leave. This policy provides a fair and formal process to determine leaves of absence, including the timing and nature of the process. For personal leaves of absence, the Leaves of Absence Committee conducts a review.

Procedures

All types of leaves of absence and withdrawals must be documented in writing to the student and involved



faculty and administrators. In addition, all written documentation of approved leaves of absence will include start dates, expected end dates, and conditions for continuation in the undergraduate medical education program.

Personal Leaves of Absence

For a variety of reasons, a student's ability to continue their medical education may become significantly impaired, medically inadvisable, or impossible. It is appropriate under such circumstances that the student submit a petition for a Leave of Absence by presenting all relevant information and details regarding their particular situation to the Associate Dean for Student Affairs who shall review the petition with the student to ensure its completeness within three business days of receipt. Documentation may also include current academic standing in courses in which the student is currently enrolled or completed. Upon ensuring the completeness of the petition, the Associate Dean for Student Affairs shall submit the petition to the Leave of Absence Committee to evaluate and who shall meet to review the petition within five business days of receiving the petition from the Associate Dean of Student Affairs.

The Leave of Absence Committee is composed of School of Medicine faculty members (or their faculty designee) and the Associate Dean for Student Affairs who serves, without vote, as secretary to the committee.

A student requesting a personal leave of absence has the opportunity to meet with the Leave of Absence Committee to discuss his or her individual circumstances. If the student declines to meet, they must do so in writing no later than 24 hours before the scheduled meeting. If a student chooses not to exercise their right to meet with the Leave of Absence Committee in person, that fact will not be used against them in the committee discussion. Students may bring a support person to the Leave of Absence Committee meeting. If the student chooses to bring a support person, the Associate Dean of Student Affairs must be notified within 24 hours of the meeting of the name of the individual and their relationship to the student. The student may consult with the support person at any time during the meeting, but the support person is not allowed to address the committee. Given the confidential nature of this committee, the committee meeting and its deliberations are closed to nonmembers. Only the student appearing before the committee and their support person will be allowed to attend. They will be excused during the deliberation of the committee.

The Leave of Absence Committee is composed of School of Medicine faculty members (or their faculty designee) and the Associate Dean for Student Affairs who serves, without vote, as secretary to the committee.

Upon review of all documentation, the Leave of Absence Committee will make recommendations concerning whether a leave of absence should be granted. Considering that the leave of absence relieves the student of usual academic responsibilities in the School of Medicine, the Leave of Absence Committee reserves the right to recommend to the associate dean that a leave of absence be granted with stated conditions, stipulations, and/or contingencies that, in the opinion of the committee, are in the best interest of the student, will serve to document the student's ability to return to full-time student status at the conclusion of the leave of absence, and/or will preserve the integrity of the School of Medicine curriculum.



According to School of Medicine regulations, a student will be considered as being in good academic standing if they passed all classes at the conclusion of the prior semester and had passing grades in all courses in the current semester at the time of the request for a leave of absence. A student who leaves the school in good academic standing and returns will not be considered as repeating the semester or year. A student who leaves the school not in good academic standing and returns will be considered as repeating the semester or year. Any student granted a leave of absence (after the designated drop/add date) is assigned a grade of W, WF or I in all courses or clerkships in which they were enrolled in accordance with their performance in the course and time of withdrawal.

Except under extraordinary circumstances, no leave of absence will be granted for a period exceeding 12 consecutive months. Any student taking a leave of absence must complete all required courses and clerkships upon a return to full-time student status.

Except under extraordinary circumstances, the School of Medicine will grant only one leave of absence to any student during their medical education.

Prior to their return from a leave of absence, a student must submit all required documentation to the Associate Dean for Student Affairs who may require a meeting with the student or to have the student meet with the Leave of Absence Committee. Prior to any meeting, the student may submit additional statements and/or professional opinions. The School of Medicine reserves the right to require a student to undergo an independent evaluation, at the School of Medicine's expense, by an approved, licensed provider prior to the student's return from a leave of absence to full-time student status.

Following the meeting, a recommendation to the Associate Dean for Undergraduate Medical Education, if applicable, will be submitted.

The decision to grant a leave and approve return from leave is ultimately decided by the Associate Dean for Undergraduate Medical Education or his/her designee. Both decisions (granting a leave and return) are provided in writing to the student from the Associate Dean of Undergraduate Medical Education with the letter cc'd to the Associate Dean of Student Affairs, the Chair of the Leave of Absence Committee, the Registrar, Assistant Dean for Pre-clerkship Curriculum or the Assistant Dean for Clinical Education and Assessment as appropriate, and any course/block/clerkship director who may need to assign a grade if the leave was granted prior to the end of a course/block/clerkship. The written letter should not contain the specific reason for the granting of a personal leave of absence.

Administrative Leave

During the course of a student's medical education, it may become necessary for the student to be placed on an administrative leave of absence. A student may be placed on administrative leave due to academic and/or professional reasons. The Associate Dean for Undergraduate Medical Education, in consultation with the Chair of the Leave of Absence Committee and the Dean of



Student Affairs, may place a student on administrative leave of absence. Reasons for an administrative leave of absence include (but are not limited to) those described in USMLE Step 1 and Step 2 Policy, the [Academic Review Policy \(STA 1.07\)](#), and the [M1/M2 Remediation Policy \(UME 1.10\)](#).

The decision to grant a leave and approve return from administrative leave of absence is decided by the Associate Dean for Undergraduate Medical Education or his/her designee. Both decisions (granting a leave and return) are provided in writing to the student from the Associate Dean of Undergraduate Education with the letter cc'd to the Associate Dean of Student Affairs, the Chair of the Leave of Absence Committee, the Registrar, Assistant Dean for Pre-clerkship Curriculum or the Assistant Dean for Clinical Education and Assessment as appropriate.

Provisional Administrative Leave

Notwithstanding the foregoing, under the following exceptional circumstances in which it may be necessary to take immediate action to protect core interests of the School, University, or the academic community, the Dean in their sole discretion may place a student on immediate provisional administrative leave and remove the student from campus pending the outcome of any Administrative Leave processes, appeals, and/or criminal investigations. Specifically, Provisional Administrative Leave shall be appropriate if a student presents a reasonable threat or risk to:

1. the safety, welfare, or wellbeing of one or more students, faculty members, administrators, or staff members;
2. the physical property or facilities of the University of South Carolina; or
3. the normal an orderly function of the medical school or the University of South Carolina.

The student may also be placed on Provisional Administrative Leave if the student has likely engaged in conduct or is likely to engage in conduct that would result in irreparable harm or appears likely to cause significant disrepute to the School of Medicine or the University of South Carolina's reputation. This includes, but is not limited to:

1. engaging in heinous or dangerous conduct toward animals or others;
2. committing or being charged with a felony;
3. improperly using or exploiting their association with the School or University to cause harm, etc.

Right to Appeal

A student who has been refused a personal leave of absence or has been put on administrative leave of absence has the right to appeal to the Dean of the School of Medicine Columbia. The student must appeal within five business days after the decision of the Associative Dean of Undergraduate Medical Education has been sent to the student. All documents reviewed by the Leave of Absence Committee for a personal leave of absence will be forwarded by the Associate Dean of Student Affairs to the Dean. The Associate Dean of Undergraduate Medical Education will provide the documentation relevant to an administrative leave of absence to the Dean. At his/her discretion, the dean may form a 2-to-5-member ad hoc



committee consisting of faculty and administrators who were not part of the initial review. The student requesting an appeal will be invited to meet with the dean and any ad hoc committee that is formed to discuss his or her individual circumstances. Appeals by the student will be heard within ten business days of the appeal request. The appeal decision made by the dean is final and will be communicated within one business day of the appeal meeting.

Withdrawal

Occasionally a student may decide to withdraw from the School of Medicine without an approved leave of absence. The student should send in writing the decision to withdraw to the Registrar and the Registrar will notify the Associate Dean of the Undergraduate Medical Education, the Associate Dean of Student Affairs, and any faculty who were currently instructing the student of the date of withdrawal. All withdrawals will be made in accordance with University of South Carolina policies if the student is to receive a tuition refund and have the proper grades recorded on the transcript. The School of Medicine uses the University schedule for refunds for any student who is dismissed or who withdraws.

A student who withdraws from the School of Medicine and who subsequently wishes to return to school must make an application through the Admissions Committee as a new applicant.

Contacts

Associate Dean of Student Affairs
Associate Dean of Undergraduate Medical Education
The Registrar

History

Date of Change	Change
3-19-24	Drafted in new policy template
10-17-24	Changes made to be consistent with other policies