



### **Policy Title**

Leave of Absence and Withdrawal

### **Identifier**

USCSOMG – ACAF – 4.02

<b>Prepared by:</b> Office for Academic Affairs	
<b>Reviewed by:</b> Student Evaluation and Promotion Committee	<b>Review Date:</b> 02/26/2025
<b>Reviewed by:</b> Curriculum Committee	<b>Review Date:</b> 07/10/2025
<b>Approved by:</b> USCSOMG Policy Committee	<b>Approval Date:</b> 07/10/2025
	<b>Effective Date:</b> 07/11/2025

### **LCME Reference**

11.1

### **Scope**

University of South Carolina (USC) School of Medicine Greenville faculty, staff and students

### **Policy Statement**

A Leave of Absence (LOA) is defined as more than four consecutive weeks away from scheduled learning activities (modules, clerkships, rotations).

#### **Student-Initiated Leave of Absence**

A Student-Initiated Leave of Absence (LOA) refers to a period away from the medical education program that is requested by the student. This leave may be sought for personal, medical, academic, or other reasons that require the student to temporarily step away from their scheduled educational activities.

#### **Administrative Leave of Absence**

The Associate Dean for Medical Education or Associate Dean for Student Affairs, with approval of the Senior Associate Dean and/or Dean, has the authority to place a student on a leave of absence. In special situations, this leave will be imposed immediately.

Examples of reasons for a student to be placed on a leave of absence include but are not limited to:

- Unsatisfactory academic performance within the medical education curriculum
- Not meeting deadline requirements for USMLE Step 1 or 2

- Receiving a failing score on USMLE Step 1 or 2
- Unsatisfactory professional behavior
- Being deemed a threat to oneself or to others, including engaging in behaviors that interfere with or disrupt the delivery of medical education, clinical care, or support services.

### **Student-Initiated Withdrawal**

A student can voluntarily withdraw from the medical education program at any time. Withdrawal appears on the official permanent student record and is not subject to appeal. A student who withdraws from the USC School of Medicine Greenville and subsequently wishes to return to school must reapply to the school as a new applicant.

### **Reason for Policy**

A medical school provides effective academic support and advice to all medical students to assist them in achieving their career goals and the school's medical education program objectives. This policy is designed to outline the procedures that allow for the continuation of a student's medical education following a leave of absence. This policy also outlines procedures to initiate withdrawal.

### **Definitions**

A leave of absence, whether initiated by the student or by administration, is categorized in the following ways.

- Academic Enrichment: a student wishes to enroll in a formal degree-granting program, or NIH or other externally funded fellowship/ research program. Support documentation indicating acceptance into the external educational program must be submitted.
- Academic Difficulty: a student is not making satisfactory progress and/or not meeting competencies in the medical education curriculum or is required to repeat a course/academic year Honor and Professionalism: A student has not exhibited the ethical and professional standards paramount to a student preparing for the profession of medicine
- Study for USMLE: has not met the posted deadlines for USMLE Step 1 or Step 2CK or has received a failing score on USMLE Step 1 or Step 2CK.
- Medical: this includes maternity/paternity leave, or a student with documented health concerns limiting their ability to meet the medical education [Technical Standards](#). Documentation will be requested by the Office for Student Affairs from a licensed healthcare professional certified to treat the specific medical condition.
- Financial: a student is unable to pay tuition and fees as required by university policies.
- Personal: used in extenuating circumstances to address issues of a personal nature, including, but not limited to, the death or serious illness of a family member.

### **Procedures**

#### **Requesting a Student- Initiated Leave of Absence**

Students must fill out this [Request to Change Student Enrollment Status](#) form to make a Leave of Absence request, if there are no extenuating circumstances. In the case of extenuating circumstances, if the student is unable to complete the form, a student affairs staff member will enter the form on their behalf. Students must meet with the Associate Dean for Student Affairs to discuss the circumstances of their request. The Associate Dean for Student Affairs confers with the Associate Dean for Medical Education, Assistant Dean for Pre-Clerkship Education or Assistant Dean for Clerkship and Post-Clerkship Education to understand the impact of the leave on their medical education. It is recommended that students also reach out to the Manager of Financial Aid to understand the financial implications of their leave.

### **Initiating an Administrative Leave of Absence**

A Student Affairs staff member enters information on the [Request to Change Student Enrollment Status](#) form on behalf of the student, for record keeping purposes. Communication with the student is handled by the Associate Dean for Student Affairs or the Associate Dean for Medical Education.

### **Considerations for Leave of Absence**

1. Except under extraordinary circumstances, a leave of absence will not be granted for more than 12 consecutive months.
2. Per the Student Evaluation, Remediation, Requirements for Promotion, [Student Evaluation, Remediation, Requirements for Promotion, and Appeal](#) policy, students enrolled in the USC School of Medicine Greenville have six (6) years from the date of matriculation to complete their degree for Doctor of Medicine. A leave of absence is included in the maximum time frame calculation when determining Satisfactory Academic Progress (SAP) for Title IV financial aid eligibility purposes.
3. The Leave of Absence is part of the student's official record. The leave type (as defined above), start, and end date are entered into the student information system, AAMC Student Records System, and in the Medical Student Performance Evaluation (MSPE).
4. Any student granted a leave of absence is assigned a grade of W in courses or clerkships that were not completed. Students are dropped from courses or clerkships that have not yet started and these are removed from the transcript.
5. Students are not assessed tuition and are not eligible for financial aid during a Leave of Absence. See [Tuition Refund](#) policy if an LOA begins during an academic semester.
6. Students beginning an LOA during a semester can keep their insurance for the rest of the semester; however, they are not eligible for student insurance in subsequent semesters until they return to classes at the end of the LOA.
7. A student who is in good standing at the time the LOA was approved will be in good standing when they return and is not considered to be repeating a course or academic year. A student who is not in good standing at the time the LOA begins is still considered not to be in good standing upon return and must regain good standing, as described in the Good Standing policy.
8. While on leave, students are not permitted to participate as class officers or participate in the election process, hold leadership roles in student organizations, or sit on medical school committees. While on leave, except under specific circumstances such as unprofessional behavior, students will retain their identification badge, the school-issued iPad, their USC e-mail account, access to student support, access to Life Center/Path membership.
9. In some circumstances, students on leave are permitted to audit courses, and have access to course lectures but will not have access to formative or summative assessments.

### **Approval, Documentation, and Communication of Leave of Absence**

1. Student initiated requests for Leave of Absence are approved by the Associate Dean for Student Affairs.
2. An Administrative Leave of Absence is approved by the Associate Dean for Student Affairs or the Associate Dean for Medical Education. SEPC is informed of all administrative approved Leave of Absences for reasons of academic difficulty or unprofessional behavior.
3. If the Leave of Absence request is approved, students receive a formal letter from the approver of the LOA or their designee, delivered to their school-issued email address documenting the start and end dates of the LOA, a point of contact during the LOA, the type of LOA (as defined above) as it appears in the student record system, the MSPE, and in adherence with AAMC and LCME reporting requirements.
4. To ensure student success upon return, the school reserves the right to set requirements prior to the

student's return from Leave of Absence. These requirements and associated deadlines are clearly articulated in the student's formal LOA letter.

- a. In some cases, the school will require a student to undergo an independent medical and/or psychiatric evaluation to assess the student's ability to resume the rigors of medical education prior to the student's return from a leave of absence to full-time student status. This evaluation is completed by a physician mutually agreeable to the student and the USC School of Medicine Greenville and is at the expense of USC School of Medicine Greenville.
5. Approved LOA letters are part of the student's official record, uploaded to the student information system, and communicated to staff members as appropriate. The approver of the LOA (or their designee) communicates the formal letter by email to the student with a copy sent to the Manager of Student Affairs, Manager of Financial Aid, Associate Dean for Medical Education, Manager of Pre-clerkship Education or Manager of Clerkship and Post-Clerkship Education, Senior Associate Dean for Academic Affairs, and Registrar.

### **Return from a Leave of Absence**

1. Students must communicate with the point of contact within the timeframe designated in the LOA letter prior to their planned return date to indicate their intent to return.
2. Students must provide documentation that they have completed requirements if outlined in the formal LOA letter to support their return to full-time student status. The information presented is reviewed by the Associate Dean for Student Affairs or their designee to determine the student's readiness to return to medical education.
3. Prior to a student's return from a LOA, the Associate Dean for Student Affairs or their designee reserves the right to require a meeting with the student to document the ability to resume full-time student status at the USC SOMG.
4. If a student is unable to meet the requirements of return by the specified deadline, they must request an extension from the Associate Dean for Student Affairs, who in specific circumstances may discuss with SEPC.

### **Withdrawal**

1. Students who wish to withdraw must provide a written request using [Request to Change Student Enrollment Status](#) including a brief reason for the request to the Associate Dean for Student Affairs.
2. The student must meet with the Associate Dean for Student Affairs and the Manager of Student Affairs to initiate the process. The Office for Student Affairs advises the student about the process and required forms. It is the student's responsibility to meet with the Manager of Financial Aid to ensure they understand the financial implications prior to withdrawing.
3. After the meeting, a letter is issued from the Associate Dean for Student Affairs to the student approving the student's withdrawal request.
4. Upon approval, withdrawal documentation is submitted to the Registrar responsible for updating the USC Student Record and to the Manager of Financial Aid responsible for scheduling tuition refunds as appropriate.
5. The Office for Student Affairs is responsible for notifying the appropriate parties.
6. The student is required to return their parking pass, health system badge, and school issued iPad to the Manager of Student Affairs within 15 business days. Students in the clerkship and post-clerkship phase also must return keys.

### **Sanctions**

1. Failure to request a LOA will result in a student being referred to Honor and Professionalism Committee

(HPC) for unexcused or excessive absences.

2. Failure to adhere to the requirements and deadlines described in the LOA letter will require the student to appear before the SEPC for review.
3. Students who do not return from leave and have not communicated to the point of contact to request an extension by their documented return date are presented to SEPC for dismissal from medical school.

### **Additional Contacts**

Office for Student Affairs

Office for Medical Education

Office for Institutional Data, Evaluation, Accreditation and Strategic Planning

Manager of Financial Aid

Registrar

University of South Carolina Registrar

### **Related Information**

USCSOMG – FINA – 2.00 Tuition Refund

USCSOMG – ACAF – 4.00 Student Evaluation, Remediation, Requirements for Promotion, and Appeal

### **History**

<b>Date of Change</b>	<b>Change</b>
March 2025	Strengthened language in response to policy audit.
August 2024	USC SOMG does not have approved dual degree programs. Removed exclusion of dual degree programs from the six-year graduation calculation.
July 2024	Provided definitions for types of LOA, based on LCME and AAMC reporting requirements, added sanctions for students that fail to adhere to this policy or to the requirements of their LOA letter. Added Registrar to notifications.
August 2021	Link to form has been updated for administrative purposes. Formal approval not required.
July 2019	Clarified approval and notification process, added a form to make a request. Removed Administrative Leave language. Removed language that students are limited to one LOA. Added language that students must graduate in 6 years. Editorial changes made due to branding updates and titles
July 2018	Policy formalized into standardized template, LCME CQI