



#### **TITLE OF POLICY**

Leave of Absence Policy

#### **PURPOSE AND SCOPE**

To establish the conditions and student responsibilities associated with leaves of absence, including specifications for different types of leaves of absence.

#### **RESPONSIBLE PARTY AND REVIEW CYCLE**

Education Committee will review and approve it in odd-numbered years or as needed.

#### **LCME REFERENCE(S):** N/A

#### **HISTORY OF APPROVALS AND UPDATES**

Approved by Education Committee October 2016

Approved by Education Committee March 2019

Approved by Education Committee June 2025

#### **DEFINITION(S)**

N/A

#### **POLICY**

##### **General Information on Leave of Absence**

A Leave of Absence (LOA) from the UNC School of Medicine (UNC SOM) is defined as not having a registration of at least six credit hours in a semester at the UNC SOM. Reasons for LOA include:

- graduate study,
- personal reasons,
- research,
- administrative reasons,
- medical reasons, and/or
- other.

*Enrollment:* Typically, during an LOA a student is not enrolled and not paying tuition; however, they remain a student on the UNC SOM roster (see one exception in Research LOA).

*North Carolina Residency Status:* North Carolina residency status may be affected by a student's actions during an LOA. Students may be required to submit documentation on return from leave to re-determine residency status.

*University ONYEN:* Students who are not registered at UNC for one semester or longer will need to be reinstated and reactivate their ONYEN.



*Policies:* Students will be expected to comply with University and SOM policies in effect at the time of their return to the curriculum. To begin an academic (graduate study or research) Leave of Absence (LOA), students must pass Step 1 and all Application Phase courses and requirements, including NBME exams, barring extraordinary circumstances. Students in the MD-PhD program are exempt from this requirement, though it is strongly recommended they complete Step 1 prior to starting their graduate work. (See [MD-PhD Program Policy Regarding USMLE Step 1.](#))

It is strongly recommended that all students preparing for graduate or research LOA also complete Step 2 Clinical Knowledge (CK) before beginning their LOA in order to optimize their performance on that exam. Also, LOAs are required to be noted in the Medical Student Performance Evaluation (MSPE).

*Course Registration:* Students may be unable to re-enroll as they had planned if course schedules have already been finalized or if a class is at full capacity.

*Graduation Requirements:* Students will be expected to comply with the graduation requirements in effect for their intended year of graduation when they return to the curriculum.

*Failure to Comply:* A student who fails to comply with the provisions stated in the LOA letter will be 1) placed on administrative leave, 2) withdrawn from medical school, or 3) reviewed by the Student Progress Committee for dismissal, depending on the terms stated in the LOA letter.

*Limit on LOA:* Students may take up to a total of two years of personal, medical, or administrative leave during their time at UNC SOM. This limit does not include research or graduate LOAs. Students who are unable to complete the curriculum after two years of personal, medical, or administrative leave will be administratively withdrawn from UNC SOM.

*Distinction of different types of LOA:* Personal and medical LOA cannot be substituted for administrative LOA.

*Pending Student Progress Committee (SPC) Review:* Students on any type of LOA who have an incomplete or pending SPC review must be reviewed before returning from LOA

### **Student Responsibilities**

#### **Specifications for Types of Leaves of Absence**

*Graduate Studies (see also Policy on Combined and Additional Degree Programs):*

- Students applying for Graduate LOA must provide documentation from their graduate program (including length of study) before initiation of the leave and must obtain permission from the School of Medicine Office for Student Affairs prior to committing to the graduate program.
- The length of Graduate LOA is variable depending on the graduate program. Students may request to extend this leave by submitting documentation of satisfactory progress from the graduate program to the SOM Registrar.



- Student responsibilities for graduate leave and research leave at UNC and include maintaining full compliance with [Health and Safety requirements at SOM](#).

*Personal LOA:*

- Students applying for Personal LOA must obtain permission from the Office for Student Affairs.
- Personal LOA is typically granted for one year and is renewable for a maximum of one additional year with the approval of the Office for Student Affairs.
- Written request to extend personal leave must be submitted to the UNC SOM Registrar's office and approved by the Office for Student Affairs.
- Personal LOA is restricted to a total maximum of 2 years during their course of study at UNC SOM except in extraordinary circumstances.

*Research LOA:*

- Students applying for Research LOA must notify the Office for Student Affairs of their intent to begin a research LOA.
- Students must have a research preceptor provide a letter with a brief description of the research to be pursued during the LOA, or complete a research elective form which includes the preceptor's signature.
- Research LOA is typically granted for one year and is renewable for one additional year with the approval of the Office for Student Affairs.
- Written request to extend research leave must include a letter of support from the student's research mentor submitted to the UNC SOM Registrar's office and be approved by the SOM Office for Student Affairs.
- Research LOA is restricted to a total maximum of 2 years, except in extraordinary circumstances.
- Student responsibilities for graduate leave and research leave at UNC and include maintaining full compliance with [Health and Safety requirements at SOM](#).

*Administrative LOA:*

- Students may be placed on Administrative LOA and removed from Administrative LOA according to University and UNC SOM policies.
- An appeal of an Administrative LOA initiated by the University must be handled according to University policies.
- The Student Progress Committee (SPC) may place a student on administrative leave based on



the [Policy on Student Progress Committee Functions](#).

- Administrative LOA may be initiated by the Office for Student Affairs for the following reasons:
  - Failure to meet UNC published deadlines for payment of tuition and fees.
  - Failure to file a request by UNC published deadlines for deferring payment of tuition and fees if financial aid is not yet available.
  - Failure to meet the University's listed health and safety requirements, or any other University requirement, by the stated deadline.
  - Failure to meet the School of Medicine's listed health and safety requirements, or any other SOM requirement, by the stated deadline.
  - Failure to repay an outstanding debt owed to the UNC SOM (e.g. emergency loan) or failure to pay a debt owed to UNC (parking fine, library fine), following a written warning
  - Failure to comply with the School of Medicine USMLE exam requirements.
- Students are typically placed on Administrative LOA for one year.
- Written request to extend administrative leave must be approved by the Office for Student Affairs.
- Administrative LOA is restricted to a total maximum of 2 years except in extraordinary circumstances. After 2 years, if the student still has not met requirements, they will be withdrawn from UNC SOM.
- A student may be placed on an Administrative LOA for up to 14 days if the student fails to meet the Technical Standards or standards for professional conduct (see also Policy on Technical Standards for Medical Students). The SPC may extend this period as deemed appropriate, and may establish requirements for returning to the curriculum.
- Students may appeal an Administrative LOA initiated by the SPC or the Office for Student Affairs using the procedures outlined in Policy on Student Appeals.

*Medical LOA:*

- The Office for Student Affairs may request that a student be evaluated by Campus Health Services, Taking Care of our Own, or the Emergency Evaluation and Action Committee for Medical LOA or Administrative LOA if the student is jeopardizing the health and safety of self, patients, or others. Failure to comply with this request will result in the student being placed on Administrative LOA until the student undergoes the requested assessment.
- Medical LOA is typically granted for one year and is renewable for one additional year with the approval of the Office for Student Affairs.
- Medical LOA is restricted to a total maximum of 2 years except in extraordinary circumstances.



- Written request to extend Medical LOA must be approved by the SOM Office for Student Affairs.
- If it is not feasible to meet with Student Affairs personnel to document terms of the LOA, the Office for Student Affairs will provide written documentation of the LOA terms.
- Campus Health Services/Counseling and Psychological Services/Taking Care of Our Own must evaluate and approve all requests for return from Medical LOA.

**PROCEDURE(S):** N/A