



Policy Title: Leave of Absence and Return/Re-Admission

Accountable Dean(s), Director(s), or Office(s):

Associate Dean for Admissions and Student Affairs

Approval Body:

Professionalism & Promotions Committee

POLICY STATEMENT AND PURPOSE:

Tulane's MD curriculum is designed to be completed in 4 years; however, students may pursue additional educational opportunities or experience circumstances that may prevent completion within this timeframe. This policy outlines processes and procedures for requesting a Leave of Absence and the requirements for return or re-admission to the medical school.

LEAVES OF ABSENCE:

A **Leave of Absence (LOA)** is defined as an interruption in the customary 4-year course of study that leads to the MD degree. The LOA is a period of non-enrollment during which a student is either in a state of remediation of degree requirement(s) or not working on requirements toward completion of the MD degree. An LOA excludes brief, voluntary periods of non-enrollment that are customarily deemed "discretionary time."

Leaves of absence fall into four categories:

- a. **Academic Enrichment:** A *voluntary* leave of absence to pursue a dual degree, research, or other career advancing activity.
- b. **Personal Leave of Absence:** A *voluntary* leave of absence to address personal circumstances interfering with academic progress, including military leaves of absence.
- c. **Medical Leave of Absence:** A *voluntary or involuntary* leave of absence to address health-related circumstances, including physical or mental health issues, interfering with academic progress.
- d. **Administrative Leave of Absence:** An *involuntary* school-mandated leave to address academic, professional, or technical deficiencies.

APPLICATION AND APPROVAL PROCESS

To request a leave of absence, all students must submit the [Leave of Absence form](#) 30 days in advance of the proposed start date or as soon as reasonably possible in the case of medical or military leave.

I. Academic Enrichment

- a. Leaves of absence for academic enrichment are reviewed/approved by the Dean of Admissions & Student Affairs. The Dean of Admissions & Student Affairs will also notify the registrar, financial aid, and the PPC.

- b. MD/PhD student leaves of absence also require approval from the MD/PhD Program Director and the student's mentor, including the University Interdivisional Transfer form (IDT).
- c. MD/MPH and MD/MBA student leaves of absence require approval from their respective Tulane divisions, including an IDT.

II. **Personal Leave**

- a. The Dean of Admissions & Student Affairs will consider the request and grant the approval.
- b. If granted, the approval will be communicated in writing to the student along with any conditions that must be met during the leave and upon return. The Dean of Admissions & Student Affairs will also notify the registrar, financial aid, and the PPC.

III. **Medical Leave**

- a. Students must follow [Tulane University's process](#) for requesting and returning from a Medical Leave of Absence. This request requires supporting documentation and a recommendation from the student's healthcare provider.
- b. The Dean of Admissions & Student Affairs will also notify the registrar, financial aid, and the PPC.

IV. **Administrative Leave**

- a. This involuntary leave of absence may be imposed under circumstances such as:
 - i. Unsatisfactory academic performance as outlined in the [Academic Deficiencies & Student Progress policy](#)
 - ii. Unprofessional behavior
 - iii. Noncompliance with immunization requirements, university financial obligations, and/or other annual paperwork/attestation requirements.
 - iv. Required by Tulane University Office of Student Affairs or the Office of Student Conduct
- b. The Dean of Admissions & Student Affairs will notify the registrar, financial aid, and the PPC of any administrative leaves.

GENERAL GUIDELINES:

- Students should consider the impact of a LOA on their financial aid eligibility and career goals.
- LOAs are granted for one (1) year; total time limits are outlined in the [policy on Single Set of Core Standards for Promotion & Graduation](#). Requests for an extension beyond 1 year or a second request for a LOA will follow the same protocol as the original leave request and will be evaluated on a case-by-case basis. See the section below on requests to extend leave time for additional details.
- During the LOA (excluding academic enrichment), students will not be registered for coursework or clinical rotations and cannot engage in clinical activities, officially or unofficially.
- While on LOA, students may not complete longitudinal work and may not occupy a leadership role in student-run activities.

- LOAs will be noted in the MSPE.

IMPACT ON GRADING AND TRANSCRIPTS:

Upon the initiation of a leave of absence, a designation of Withdrawal (W), Incomplete (I), or Fail (F) will be noted on the transcript for any in-progress course or rotation.

- Withdrawal (W)
 - To receive a designation of ‘W’ in the preclinical curriculum, there must be a minimum time remaining in the course (at least 1 module plus the Shelf exam, as defined by the course director). Should a student withdraw from a course, they must withdraw from *all* courses within the phase.
 - To receive a designation of ‘W’ in the clinical curriculum, there must be a minimum of 30% of clerkship requirements remaining, as defined by the Clerkship Director, for consideration of the withdrawal.
- Incomplete (I)
 - An Incomplete (I) is appropriate when there is a delay in the completion of a minor portion of course requirements due to an emergency situation or illness. See the [Grading Criteria policy](#) for preclinical and clinical definitions of an incomplete and timelines for resolution.
 - Incompletes must be resolved prior to the student’s advancement to the next level of training.
- If a Withdrawal (W) or Fail (F) is awarded in a required course or rotation, the student must repeat that course to be eligible for advancement or graduation. The grade of W or F remains on the transcript along with any grade subsequently achieved.

IMPACT ON TUITION, FEES, & FINANCIAL AID

See the [Tuition Refund policy](#) for impact on tuition and fees.

- Students on LOA are not eligible for federal financial aid and must meet with their financial aid counselor for appropriate financial guidance.
- Note that the University and the National Student Clearinghouse (NSC), for the purposes of Federal Financial Aid, employ the terms “leave of absence” and “withdrawal” differently than defined in this policy.
- If Title IV financial aid funds have already been disbursed, the Financial Aid Office may be required to perform a federal aid refund calculation ([Return to Title IV](#)) to determine the amount of aid earned based on the last date of attendance. Students may be required to return financial aid funds for the part of the semester they are on leave. Students *may* avoid this return of financial aid funds if their leave is considered “temporary” by NSC standards (*i.e.*, their total cumulative LOA does not exceed 180 days in any 12-month period), and by
 - following SOM’s LOA policy,
 - completing required paperwork, and
 - meeting with their financial aid counselor to understand the effects that failure to return from a LOA may have on the student’s loan repayment terms, including the exhaustion of some or all of the student’s grace period.
- LOAs may reduce a student’s loan repayment grace period.

REQUESTS TO EXTEND LEAVE TIME:

Given that the field of Medicine is an ever-changing science, delays in a course of study could result in the attrition of knowledge and skills and/or the failure to keep abreast of new developments. As such, the [policy on Single Set of Core Standards for Promotion & Graduation](#) stipulates that students must finish their degree requirements and graduate within 6 years.

Any student wishing to extend their leave time must submit a new [LOA request form](#) to the Office of Student Affairs at least 30 days in advance of the original date of return. The approval process for an extension will follow the same protocol as the original leave request and will be evaluated on a case-by-case basis.

In limited circumstances, the School of Medicine will consider granting an extension to the six-year requirement. Such extensions, however, will require the student to undertake a specific remediation plan developed through an interactive process by the School of Medicine and the Professionalism and Promotions Committee. If an extension is not granted, a student on a leave of absence may have their matriculation terminated.

REQUIREMENTS FOR RETURNING FROM A LEAVE OF ABSENCE

- A student who has satisfied all conditions of their leave, including remediating academic deficiencies, may request a return to the School of Medicine by submitting [Part B of the LOA form](#) to the Dean of Admissions and Student Affairs and the Registrar at least 30 days prior to the requested return date.
- A student who has failed to comply with the conditions of their leave or who does not submit a return request form to the School of Medicine by the deadline stipulated in the original leave approval documentation will be administratively dismissed. Any request for re-admission must be determined by a vote of the PPC.
- A student placed on LOA for professionalism reasons must be reviewed and approved to return by the PPC. Students whose request for re-admission is denied by the PPC will have the right to appeal per the policy on Adverse Actions, Due Process, and Appeals.
- The School of Medicine reserves the right to impose additional conditions on a student seeking readmission after a LOA. Further, the SOM reserves the right to deny readmission in accordance with the policy governing time limits from matriculation to graduation (see policy on [Single Set of Core Standard for Promotion and Graduation](#)).
- Returns from medical leave will follow Tulane University procedures, including providing written documentation from a healthcare professional that medical clearance has been obtained, and the student is ready and able to continue their medical studies. The student must re-attest to their ability to meet the [SOM's Technical Standards](#) with or without reasonable accommodation.
- Students returning from military leave should submit a return request form and must provide verification that they performed military service. They will be readmitted with the same academic status as when they last attended so long as:
 - There is no disqualifying event, such as a dishonorable or bad conduct discharge, and
 - The cumulative length of absence and all previous absences for military service (service time only) does not exceed the established time period for such leave (generally two (2) years).

- Veterans with extenuating circumstances, such as recovering from a service-related illness or injury, may appeal the time limit to the PPC, who may establish criteria for refreshing knowledge and skills.
- All returning students are held accountable to current policies.

NOTE: In emergency situations, the Dean of Admissions & Student Affairs or the Dean's designee, in the exercise of reasonable judgment, may bypass some or all of the above steps and considerations in order to ensure campus or clinical safety and/or the safety of the student, other students, or patients, and may place a student on LOA pending formal consideration of the relevant issues by the PPC. Nothing in this or other policies shall be construed to prevent the School of Medicine from requiring students at all times to meet the School of Medicine essential eligibility requirements and technical standards.

LAST REVIEW DATE/APPROVAL:

Professionalism and Promotions Committee: 06/03/25

REVIEW CYCLE:

Every 2 years