

Leave Of Absence

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1. **Purpose:** It is recognized that at times after matriculation, a University of South Alabama College of Medicine (USACOM) student may be administratively assigned or request a leave of absence. This policy will outline the different types of leave, address timelines and link to the documents which are necessary to complete and file in the Office of Student Records.
2. **Applicability:** This policy applies to all USA COM students in the M.D. degree earning program.
3. **Definitions:**
 - a. **Administrative leave of absence:** A leave of absence assigned to a student by the administration when a student must be removed from the regular academic cycle. This can also be referred to as an academic leave of absence. These scenarios can include but are not limited to the following: failure to take the USMLE licensure examinations (Step 1 and Step 2CK) in the timeframe as defined by the COM Student Handbook, failure of the USMLE Step 1 licensure examination once or twice while currently active in a M3 clinical clerkship, failure to maintain proof of health insurance, failure to adhere to professional responsibilities in a timely manner (ie registration for courses, adherence to immunization requirements).
 - b. **Leave of absence requested by the student.**
 1. **Medical leave of absence:** This is a requested leave of absence by a student wherein the student has documentation from a licensed healthcare provider of an injury, or illness which precludes the student from being able to satisfy the rigors of medical education.
 2. **Personal leave of absence:** This is a requested leave of absence by a student which allows the student time away from the COM to address matters of a personal nature which can include but are not limited to the following: overall holistic health not determined to meet criteria of a medical leave, maternity or paternity leave, caring for a family member or family obligation, military obligation, or pursuing an educational opportunity such as a research year.
4. **Policy Guidelines:**
 - a. A leave of absence is not intended as a mechanism to withdraw from classes in order to preclude failure for a student experiencing academic difficulty. Leaves of absence also do not alter grades which have been recorded as part of the official academic transcript.
 - b. Leaves of absence are granted for finite periods of time, not to exceed twelve calendar months.
 1. Administrative LOA, granted in increments of 4 and 8 weeks only.
 2. Personal and medical, granted up to one calendar year, allowing for re-entry when academic scheduling permits.
 - c. An extension of a requested leave (personal or medical) can be submitted for consideration after discussion with the Associate Dean, Student Affairs.
 - d. All leaves of absence count against the total year limitation for the posting of the M.D. Degree which is six (6) academic years for class of 2026 and after, seven (7) years for class of 2025 and before.
 - e. All leaves of absence are recorded on the student's academic transcript and in the student's Medical Student Performance Evaluation.
5. **Procedures:**
 - a. **Administrative Leave:**
 1. A student is notified by the Associate Deans of Student Affairs and/or Medical Education that they are placed on administrative leave when the student falls within the previously defined parameters.
 2. After consultation among the student and the Associate Deans of Student Affairs and Medical Education, the student signs the Administrative Leave of Absence document which stipulates the timeframe determined. At this time, if the student is a loan borrower, the student must meet with the Associate Director of Financial Aid to sign the LOA financial aid documents.
 3. Seven (7) days prior to the termination of the administrative leave, the student must either notify the Associate Dean, Student Affairs, or designee of their compliance and readiness to return or petition for a

leave conversion. Failure to notify of return or petition will be referred to Student Promotions and Evaluation Committee (SPEC).

4. If the student cannot complete the task which rendered the student's administrative leave within the agreed timeframe, the student must petition the SPEC for approval of a conversion of administrative leave to a requested leave. This petition may take the form of a written communication to the Associate Dean which is then forwarded to the SPEC chair and the LOA subcommittee of SPEC.
 5. If the conversion of the leave is denied by the LOA subcommittee of SPEC, the matter is turned over to the SPEC at large for recommendations for the student which could include dismissal. If the matter is turned over to SPEC for recommendations, the student should return their fob and badge(s) and thus remain on administrative leave pending the outcome of the SPEC meeting.
 6. If the leave is converted, the student must sign the LOA document, return their fob and badge(s), and meet with the Associate Director for Financial Aid for any clarification on the changes to the status of leave.
- b. Medical or Personal leave of absence:
1. Both of these leave types are requested leaves of absence on behalf of the student. These requests are presented to the Chair of the SPEC, on behalf of the student by the Associate Dean, Student Affairs, or designee. The Chair of the SPEC corresponds with the LOA subcommittee of SPEC. Once a decision has been rendered, the Chair notifies the Associate Dean, or designee who in turn notifies the student.
 2. When making the initial request, the student meets with the Associate Dean, or designee to briefly summarize the request. After discussion, the student submits a written request to the Associate Dean, or designee which addresses the reasons for the requested leave, student goals during the leave, and proposed length of time for the leave. The written request can take the form of an email from the student's JagMail account.
 3. If the requested leave is medical, then the written request must be accompanied by documentation from a licensed healthcare provider substantiating the student's request.
 4. If the requested leave is personal and is to pursue research, other professional development or active military duty, any additional documentation substantiating the aforementioned should accompany the written request.
 5. Once a requested leave is approved, the student must complete the LOA document, return their fob and badge(s), and meet with the Associate Director of Financial Aid. If the requested leave is not approved, the student can appeal this decision to the SPEC committee at large.
- c. Return from a leave:
1. Administrative leave: Seven (7) calendar days prior to the termination of the administrative leave, the student must submit a written request to the Associate Dean, Student Affairs, or designee of their compliance and readiness to return or petition for a leave conversion. This correspondence can be in the form of an email to the Associate Dean, or designee from the student's University issued email account which is forwarded to the SPEC Chair and presented to the LOA subcommittee. Failure to notify of return or petition within this timeframe will be referred to SPEC.
 2. For Medical or Personal leaves lasting longer than 30 calendar days, the student must submit a written request to the Associate Dean Student Affairs, or designee at least 30 calendar days prior to the return date. This correspondence can be in the form of an email to the Associate Dean, or designee from the student's University issued email account. The petition and any accompanying documentation will be forwarded to the SPEC Chair for presentation to the LOA Subcommittee of the SPEC for review. Failure to notify of return or petition within this timeframe will be referred to SPEC.
 3. For Medical or Personal leaves shorter than 30 calendar days, seven (7) calendar days prior to the termination of the leave, the student must submit a written request to the Associate Dean, Student Affairs, or designee. This correspondence can be in the form of an email to the Associate Dean, or designee from the student's University issued email account. The petition and any accompanying documentation will be forwarded to the SPEC Chair for presentation to the LOA Subcommittee of the SPEC for review. Failure to notify of return or petition within this timeframe will be referred to SPEC.
- d. Supporting documentation: In both making a request for and returning from a medical leave, a student will be asked to provide documentation from a licensed healthcare provider. Prior to returning, the student on a medical leave should attach to their request, documentation from their provider which addresses the student's readiness to return and reintegrate into the rigors of medical education.
- e. Financial Aid: All students on a leave of absence except those listed as cash payers must meet with the Associate Director of Financial Aid upon completion of the LOA document. At this meeting, if the student is a recipient of Title IV funds, the student will also be required to sign the Financial Aid Leave of Absence document.
6. Enforcement: All infractions of this policy will be referred to the SPEC for recommendations. Once the student is referred to SPEC, the policies and procedures which govern SPEC will be enforced.

7. **Recording of leaves of absence:** All leaves of absences are recorded on the official academic transcript and in the student's Medical Student Performance Evaluation.
8. **Related documents:**
 - [Personal or Medical Leave of Absence Form](#)
 - [Administrative Leave of Absence form](#)