

Appendix B:

POLICY FOR GRADUATE STUDENT LEAVE AND VOLUNTARY LEAVE OF ABSENCE AT THE SCHOOL OF MEDICINE

The following policy applies to all graduate students enrolled in Ph. D. programs at the School of Medicine, WITH THE EXCEPTION of students who are funded by grants/fellowships that have their own leave policy. In those cases, the students will follow the policy of the granting/fellowship agency.

Vacation (paid leave): 15 days (3 weeks) paid leave per year of enrollment (in addition to 10 official days sanctioned by the University and listed below).

New Year's Day
Martin Luther King
Memorial Day
Independence Day
Labor Day
Thanksgiving Day
Day after Thanksgiving
Day before Christmas
Christmas
Day before New Years

Spring break and Winter break weeks can be taken as paid leave but will count against total days allotted for paid leave. Paid leave is distinct from sick leave (covered below) and sick leave should not be deducted from paid leave. Unused days of paid leave may not be carried over into the following 12-month period and are not payable upon departure.

Notes:

- Graduate students must provide reasonable advance notice of intention to use paid leave and must receive consent from the faculty supervisor.
- Teaching assistants may not use paid leave to diminish or delay any instructional duties.
- Time spent traveling to and attending academic conferences approved by the faculty supervisor is not considered paid leave.
- For this policy, a year refers to September 1 - August 31st.

Sick Leave: 15 days (3 weeks) paid leave per year. Unused days may not be carried over into the following 12-month period and are not payable upon departure. Sick leave may not be subtracted from any paid leave earned through the policy above. At its discretion, the department or advisor may require the student to submit verification of the need for sick leave from their healthcare provider to the University Health Service Center for review. Any documents containing a student's medical information must be kept separate from his/her academic file.

Extended absences (more than two weeks) must be reported by student and/or advisor to program administrator as quickly as possible. If the illness requires an extended absence, the student may apply for a leave of absence, as described below.

Parental Leave: Parental paid leave of 20 days per year (4 work weeks) can be used for the adoption or birth of a child. Parental leave does not carry over from year to year. Sick leave can be applied to pregnancy/childbirth. Sick leave and parental leave can be combined for a 7-week total per event (birth or adoption). Under special circumstances, and in consultation with the faculty advisor, this period may be extended by the program director.

Voluntary Leave of Absence (LoA): A student may request a voluntary leave of absence for reasons including the following and must provide the proper documentation for their given situation, as indicated below:

- medical condition, including mental health conditions: a letter from the treating physician
- military service: a letter or verification from the Armed Forces
- personal or family hardship: a letter from the student applying for leave
- internship (typically 2-3 months): a letter from the entity/organization at which the student will be interning

Notes:

- Leave may not exceed 2 years cumulative.
- A student does not receive a stipend from the University during leave. During an internship, the stipend, if any, is paid by one of the internship sponsors.
- The period of the leave is not included in "time to degree."
- Degree progress may not be made by students while on a leave of absence – including completion or submission of the dissertation. Requests for exceptions to this rule must be submitted by the graduate program to the Associate Dean for Graduate Biomedical Education.

- A student cannot be enrolled in a degree granting program at another institution during a LoA.
- A student who has received federal financial aid, including undergraduate loans, may be subject to additional restrictions and should check with the Financial Aid Office before starting a LoA. The SOM Registrar must report students on LoA to the National Student Clearinghouse as withdrawn from student status. This will impact student loan payments.
- LoA impacts an international student's status. International students should contact the Office of International Services at least thirty (30) days before starting a LoA.
- Continuation of health insurance is required during LoA. For more information including SOM policy on medical insurance, dental insurance, University Health Service, insurance premium payments, waiving benefits, eligibility to defer loans, termination of an LoA and COBRA, communications, and student account activity, refer to *the Masters and PhD Candidates on Leave of Absence* memo from the Registrar's office and the *WAIVER of SCHOOL of MEDICINE BENEFITS for STUDENTS on LOA* form.

Initiating a LoA:

A student requesting a LoA from an academic program should first contact his/her faculty advisor. A letter of intent is then submitted by the student to the director of the program followed by a meeting with the director. Following this meeting, if the request for LOA is approved by the director, the director completes a *Student Change of Status* form signed by the director and by the student. The signed form is immediately submitted to the Registrar's office by the director, with a copy to the Associate Dean for Graduate Biomedical Education.

To be approved for a leave of absence, graduate students must provide the proper documentation for their given situation, as indicated below:

Medical Condition: a letter from a physician (this may be a letter from a doctor at the University Health Services or the University Mental Health Services), the Student Assistance Program, or the Office of Student Disability Services. This letter should be maintained in the strictest confidence by the program only and shall not be shared with other offices.

Military Duty: a letter or verification from the Armed Forces.

Personal or Family Hardship: a letter from the applicant describing the hardship.

Internship: Agreement between mentor and student. A letter from the entity/organization at which the student will be interning

During the leave period, a student may not be enrolled at another university. School of Medicine policy requires that health insurance be continued during the period of leave. Prior to requesting the LOA, it is also recommended that the student contact the Health Insurance Coordinator in the Registrar's Office for information on how the LOA will affect their health insurance coverage and premium responsibility. When on an approved LOA there is no tuition charge; the period of leave is regarded as an interruption of the degree program.

A student on LOA may not make use of any School of Medicine services except University Health Services, University Mental Health Services and the Student Assistance Program, provided insurance and health fees are being maintained. For students on medical leave of absence, School of Medicine policy allows the program/department to pay Health and Dental Insurance premiums and University Health Service fees for a period of up to one year if requested by the student. A student on a leave of absence who wishes to continue working at the School of Medicine must be hired through the Human Resources division of the department employing them. No exceptions can be made.

When a Program Director has granted a leave of absence, a Time Status Change form must be completed and submitted to both the Associate Dean for Graduate Biomedical Education and the Registrar, who will modify the student's enrollment record.

Returning from Leave of Absence

When returning from leave of absence, a graduate student must submit documentation (from one of the sources below) to their Program Director that explains what progress has taken place during the student's absence that would enable him/her to be successful upon return.

Medical Condition: A Fitness to Return evaluation must be conducted by the Student Assistance Program or by the treating healthcare provider and/or UHS prior to resumption of studies.

Military Duty: a letter or verification from the Armed Forces.

Personal or Family Hardship: a personal letter.

Additional letters of support (e.g. from an advisor, department chair, etc.) are welcome.

It is the responsibility of the Program Director to notify the Associate Dean/Registrar that the student is returning to full time status. The Director will submit a Student Change of Status form to notify the Registrar that the student's LoA has ended.

Unless a longer period of leave has been approved as provided below, if a student does not register for coursework after the second year of leave, the LoA

automatically ends without further notice to the student and the student is no longer enrolled. Reapplication is required.

In unusual circumstances, a program director may request from the Associate Dean for Graduate Biomedical Education a student LoA extension beyond two years. A letter documenting that this extension request has been granted must be submitted to the Registrar prior to the end of the initial leave period.

Any exceptions to these guidelines must be approved by the Associate Dean for Graduate Biomedical Education and reported to the Registrar.