



Policy Title: Medical Student Leave, Withdrawal, and Readmission Policy

Policy Number: EC.10.01.170912

Applies to: All medical

Date: 08/30/2023

1.0 Policy Statement:

It is the Elson S. Floyd College of Medicine policy to define and process various student leaves of absence, withdrawal, and readmission requests in the MD program.

2.0 Definitions:

Administrative (required) leave of absence: The College of Medicine's removal of a student from any or all academic and clinical activities for a period of time.

Dean for Student Affairs: The College of Medicine's Student Affairs dean responsible for supporting students initiating and returning from leaves of absence. May include the Vice Dean for Admissions, Student Affairs, and Alumni Engagement and/or the Assistant Dean for Student Affairs

Fitness to practice: Determination from a fully Washington licensed mental health professional that a student is fit, i.e., is competent, will adhere to the College of Medicine academic and professionalism standards, and can safely participate in all programmatic learning activities, including clinical consultations with patients.

SEPAAC: The College of Medicine Student Evaluation, Promotion, and Awards Committee.

Medical student: A student in the MD program of the College of Medicine. An accepted applicant becomes a medical student upon matriculation on the first day of class in the first year.

Voluntary leaves of absence: A leave of absence initiated voluntarily by the student and limited to the following:

- *Academic:* Allows a student the opportunity to complete another degree.
- *Financial:* Allows a student time to resolve financial issues.
- *Medical:* Allows a student time to address personal health needs including mental or physical illness, injury, or disability.
- *Military:* Allows a student to fulfill military obligations.
- *Personal:* Allows a student time to address significant personal circumstances.
- *Scholarly:* Allows a student the opportunity to pursue a scholarly/research interest.

3.0 Responsibility:

Office of Student Experience

4.0 Procedures:

Voluntary Leave of Absence

Requesting

To pursue a voluntary leave of absence for up to one year, students must consult with Student Affairs for understanding about the process for requesting a voluntary leave and to discuss the circumstances for the leave. Students will work with Student Affairs to coordinate with other college and campus offices including financial aid, registrar, and other entities to provide a profile of potential outcomes and to understand the ramifications of the leave of absence. Once the student determines they wish to take a voluntary leave, they send a written request (via email) to the Assistant Dean for Student Affairs. The request should clearly state the basis of the leave, specify preferred beginning and end dates, and include contact information while on leave.

Approval

The Deans for Student Affairs will consult with the Associate Dean for Assessment and Evaluation (ADAE) and the student's Associate Dean for Clinical Education (ADCE) to ensure the student is not on Academic Warning or Academic Probation, and that no other circumstances exist that may indicate academic or professionalism concerns. Student Affairs may also consult with the Associate Dean for Curriculum (ADC).

For *scholarly* leaves of absence, students must have a research mentor who provides written attestation to the mentor's oversight and the student's research involvement. Upon completion of the scholarly leave of absence, students will also be required to present their scholarly work in a manner determined by the College.

After these consultations, voluntary leaves will be determined as follows:

	Academic or Professionalism Concerns	
	Yes	No
Non-Urgent Voluntary Leave	SEPAC determines	Student Affairs determines
Urgent Voluntary Leave	Student Affairs approves absences as needed while SEPAC determines	Student Affairs determines

If the timing of the requested leave occurs mid-course or mid-year, Student Affairs will consult with the Offices of Assessment and Evaluation and Curriculum and the ADCE to clarify re-entry requirements to be noted in the approval.

For academic/scholarly and non-urgent personal leaves, students must meet the following conditions for their leave to be approved:

- Must be in good academic standing (i.e., not be on Academic Probation).
- Must have satisfactorily completed all required coursework, including remediation, prior to commencing leave.
- Must have attempted the USMLE examination(s) required at that stage prior to

commencing leave, when applicable.

A voluntary leave of absence to extend enrollment in the College due to failure to obtain a post-graduate residency position (i.e., not matching to residency) is not permitted.

Students taking a voluntary leave of absence will not be permitted to take the USMLE Step exams during leave unless they have failed the first attempt.

When a voluntary leave of absence is approved, Student Affairs will work with the student to ensure appropriate university leave forms or other needed documents are completed. Student Affairs will notify appropriate campus and college offices when a leave of absence has been approved and approaching the beginning of the leave. The campus registrar will notify appropriate university offices of the leave and student's academic status, as appropriate.

Administrative (Required) Leave of Absence

Every medical student enrolled in the College of Medicine is expected to participate and perform in an appropriate and safe manner consistent with the College of Medicine academic standards including professional standards. The College of Medicine reserves the right to remove a medical student from any and all academic and clinical activities if student's behavior fails to meet those standards or that behavior raises significant concern about the safety of the student or others (e.g., patients, other students, faculty, and staff). Additional considerations for an administrative leave of absence may include significant professionalism concerns and/or not passing coursework or attempting the USMLE Step exams in the designated timeframe. The SEPAC makes decisions about administrative leaves of absences consistent with the Medical Student Promotion, Dismissal, and Graduation Policy.

The College of Medicine expects that all faculty, staff, and students report behavior that threatens the student's own safety or the safety of others or raises concern about impairment or an inability to function in educational or clinical settings (e.g., drug or alcohol use and/or erratic behavior). If a student poses an immediate threat to self or others, call 911. Otherwise, all other concern notifications or reports can be made by:

Personal notification to College of Medicine personnel such as an Associate Dean for Clinical Education, a dean for Student Affairs, or the Associate Dean for Assessment and Evaluation or a faculty member.

All reports to College of Medicine systems or personnel will be investigated and elevated to the SEPAC for review and recommendation, as appropriate. Recommendations may include an administrative leave of absence, fitness for practice evaluation, or dismissal. A College of Medicine dean for Student Affairs will coordinate with the leadership at each campus for any campus-based safety network and represent the College of Medicine in appropriate campus actions, which if appropriate, may include notification to campus security.

The following table describes the circumstances for an Administrative Leave:

	Academic or Professionalism Concerns	
	Yes	Unclear
Administrative Leave	SEPAC determines	Investigation
Urgent Administrative Leave (e.g., unsafe for patients in clinical learning environment due to student vulnerability, student behavior creates a problematic learning environment for peers, staff, faculty or an unsafe environment for patients)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ADCE, ADAE/ADC, or Student Affairs removes student from the learning environment • Student Affairs grants absences • SEPAC determines leave 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ADCE, ADAE/ADC, or Student Affairs removes student from the learning environment • Student Affairs grants absences • Student Affairs, ADAE, ADCE investigate to determine: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Referral to SEPAC or ○ Encourage student to take a voluntary LOA • SEPAC determines leave only if referred

Students on an administrative leave of absence may be permitted to take USMLE Step exams if their leave is due to the need to pass a Step exam following a Step failure.

An administrative leave of absence often results in a delay in the student’s progress toward graduation.

Fitness for Practice

If a student is subject to an administrative (required) leave of absence based on concerns related to safe practice (in a learning environment), including health or professionalism issues that may result in impairment, or a threat to self or others that is determined to be significant, the SEPAC may require a Fitness for Practice evaluation before the student may resume classes or clinical rotations. The SEPAC notifies the student in writing that the administrative leave of absence remains in effect until such time as a student is returned to the program following a Fitness for Practice evaluation that deems the student can safely re-engage in the learning program.

Fitness for Practice evaluations must be carried out by fully WA state licensed mental health providers whose qualification(s) must be agreed upon by the SEPAC and a Dean for Student Affairs in consultation with the student. The student is responsible for any costs associated with the evaluation and any costs associated with required follow-up evaluations or treatment. A Fitness for Practice evaluation must be submitted to Student Affairs who forwards the results to the SEPAC as appropriate.

Students who decline to secure a required Fitness for Practice evaluation by a WA state fully licensed mental health provider are subject to dismissal from the College of Medicine.

The SEPAC is responsible for determining whether, if any, additional conditions the

student must meet to return to enrolled status in the MD program (e.g., remediation).

Credit for Term

If a pre-clerkship student is partially through a term when they take a voluntary leave of absence or are placed on an administrative leave of absence, they are required to repeat that term unless an appeal to the SEPAC is approved. Students wishing to appeal to the SEPAC may do so by meeting with a dean for Student Affairs to prepare an appeal. The SEPAC evaluates the appeal to determine if credit can be given for that term or if other arrangements to complete that term can be arranged, consistent with University or College of Medicine policies.

If a clerkship medical student takes a voluntary leave of absence or is placed on an administrative leave of absence during the longitudinal integrated clerkship (Year 3) or a clinical rotation (Year 4), the Clerkship Co-Directors, in consultation with the Associate Deans for Assessment, Curriculum, and Clinical Education (for that campus), will determine the number of weeks of instructional credit applied.

A student who has successfully completed the requirements for a term, including in the fifth-year option, may need not repeat that term. However, if substantial curriculum changes have been made since the leave commenced, a student may be required to retake previous coursework.

Fifth Year Option

The College of Medicine provides a fifth-year tuition plan for students who are required to take a fifth year of medical school. Eligible students pay a tuition cost that is 10 percent of full tuition, plus full mandatory fees. Prorated amounts are calculated based on the number of terms that a student is taking within the fifth year (e.g., prorated 10 percent tuition cost of 1 term).

Return Following a Voluntary or Administrative Leave of Absence

All students on leave must submit a letter of intent to return, specifying the preferred date of return, to Student Affairs at least three months (90 calendar days) in advance of the return date. Students returning to clinical learning must also meet with Student Affairs 120 days in advance to preferred return date to discuss return details to provide preliminary notice to the student's clinical campus team and SEPAC allowing time to accommodate any new requirements for return, clinical onboarding, and clerkship scheduling.

The SEPAC may specify requirements for returning to the program such as

- Completion of any required remediation
- Re-entry orientation, skills assessment, or specific deliverables
- Statement of "fitness to practice" from a fully licensed WA state healthcare provider or from the Washington Physicians Health Program.
- Compliance requirements to enter into the clinical environment (TB Testing, Immunizations, BLS certification, etc.)

If the SEPAC includes additional requirements for returning to the MD program, the letter must also indicate how the student has met these requirements and include appropriate

supporting documentation as required. Documentation must accompany the return request, if required.

The SEPAC will strive to ensure that students will have the best chance of meeting graduation requirements; therefore, the SEPAC may adjust the proposed return from leave in order to accommodate factors including, but not limited to, course timelines, clinical training capacity, financial aid, WSU course requirements, etc. In all considerations, the SEPAC will strive to ensure that students are treated equitably, that requirements are

consistent with the policies and procedures of the College of Medicine and university, and that efforts are made to support student success as appropriate and feasible.

Students are not guaranteed their prior clinical campus location upon return from a voluntary or administrative leave of absence. The appropriate offices and clinical campus teams will consult to understand the clinical capacity for the student's campus and other clinical campuses. If it is deemed that the student's original clinical campus cannot accommodate the student upon return from a leave, the student will be assigned to another clinical campus that has capacity.

Students returning from leave will have an academic records review by the Associate Dean for Assessment, Evaluation which will determine their education plan including determining their status: 1) promotion to the next year; 2) eligibility to retake examination(s); 3) what courses they must (re)take; and/or 4) dismissal for failure to progress. Any curricular changes in course content or assessment methodology that occurred while the student was on leave may necessitate modifications in the student's educational plan. Based on this review, a student's anticipated graduation date may be modified.

Students who do not return to the College of Medicine at the conclusion of the voluntary or administrative leave of absence or do not submit the required documentation by the stated deadlines will be reviewed by the SEPAC which may decide to dismiss the student from the College of Medicine. Students have ten (10) business days to appeal this decision (per the Medical Student Promotion, Dismissal, and Graduation Policy); if an appeal is not pursued, the student will be dismissed following the tenth business day. Students who have been administratively dismissed following a voluntary/administrative leave of absence from the College of Medicine and wish to be readmitted should refer to the *Readmission from Voluntary Withdrawal* section.

Voluntary Withdrawal

A student may choose to voluntarily withdraw from the College of Medicine with the intent not to return as an enrolled student.

To voluntarily withdraw, students must initiate a request with a dean for Student Affairs in writing or in person. Student Affairs will assist the student in meeting with other offices including financial aid, registrar, and other entities to fully understand the ramifications of the withdrawal. Students will be referred to the College of Medicine Tuition Refund Policy during this process. Once a decision has been made to withdraw, the student should communicate that decision in writing via email to the

Office of Admissions, Student Affairs, and Alumni Engagement. The voluntary withdrawal effective date is either the last day the student attended a curricular or clinical event and/or the date their Leave of Absence commenced.

Readmission from Voluntary Withdrawal or Administrative Dismissal

Former students who withdrew or were administratively dismissed following a leave of absence from the College of Medicine may petition for readmission within 12 months from the effective date of the withdrawal or dismissal. All petitions for readmission must be in writing with all correspondence directed to the SEPAC through Student Affairs. The petitioner may ask to appear in person before the SEPAC. The SEPAC decides whether to readmit or not based on the merits of the former student's rationale for readmission and the likelihood of success. Any student who withdraws or is administratively withdrawn while on Academic Probation (not in good academic standing) must provide evidence of fitness to re-engage in learning, particularly in clinical environments in order to be considered for readmission. Students who are dismissed from the college for academic or professionalism concerns while on academic probation will not be considered for direct readmission through this pathway.

If the SEPAC rejects the petition, further petitions from the former student will not be accepted. If the SEPAC approves the petition to readmit, it refers the readmitted student to the appropriate College of Medicine offices for the development and implementation of an appropriate curriculum plan, including the point of re-entry into the MD program. Any plan generated by College of Medicine offices is subject to approval by the SEPAC.

Students who withdraw in good academic standing to pursue another advanced degree may petition for an extension beyond the 12-month deadline for readmission but must do so before the 12-month deadline.

Former students who do not petition for readmission within 12 months following withdrawal must re-apply to the first-year class through the admissions process and meet all requirements for that enrollment year.

5.0 Related Policies

- Tuition Refund Policy EC.12.01.170425
- Technical Standards Policy AD.10.02.170508
- Medical Student Promotion, Dismissal, and Graduation SE.09.02.170808
- USMLE Step Policy (to be published)

6.0 Key Search Words

Leave of absence, voluntary leave, failure to return

7.0 Revision History

Original Date of Approval	Original Policy number	Review/Revision
5/6/2016	EC.10.01.170912	9/12/2017
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