

POLICY: Medical Student Leave of Absence

INITIAL EFFECTIVE DATE:	LAST REVISION DATE:	RESPONSIBLE DIVISION/ DEPARTMENT/COMMITTEE
March 14, 2025	March 14, 2025	Curriculum Committee Office of Student Affairs

POLICY STATEMENT

A leave of absence (LOA) may be voluntary or involuntary. LOAs are counted as part of the six-year time limit for graduation from the MD program. Students pursuing a combined degree may have a different time-to-degree time limit.

Voluntary Leave of Absence

A student may request a voluntary LOA for one of the following reasons:

- Academic Enrichment
- Financial Reasons
- Medical Reasons
- Personal Reasons

Granting of a voluntary LOA must be approved by the Associate Dean for Student Affairs (or designee) and the Senior Associate Dean for Academic Affairs (or designee). The maximum amount of time granted for a voluntary LOA is 12 months.

A student who is granted a voluntary LOA may receive a refund of tuition and fees in accordance with HWCOM Tuition Refund Policy.

Involuntary Leave of Absence

A student may be involuntary placed on LOA under one of the following categories:

- Administrative. A student may be placed on administrative LOA if s/he exhibits behavior that could result in harm to a patient or another person. The Associate Dean for Student Affairs (or designee) will consult with the Office of Student Conduct and Academic Integrity ("SCAI") and/or the University Police Department, and the student will be removed from clinical and/or classroom settings and placed on an administrative LOA pending further investigation.

A student who is dismissed by the MSEPC will be removed from clinical settings. If the student has completed all non-clinical requirements, they will be placed on an administrative LOA pending the outcome of an appeals process.

- **Academic Remediation.** A student who is recommended by the MSEPC to repeat an academic year will be placed on an academic remediation LOA until the start of the academic year of the student's new cohort. A student may also be placed on an academic remediation LOA if the student cannot be promoted to the next year of study due to failure of the USMLE Step 1 or 2 exams.

An involuntary LOA may impact tuition, fees, and financial aid.

Return from LOA

Students may be required to meet certain conditions before being allowed to return from LOA. Reinstatement to active student status after a voluntary LOA must be approved by the Associate Dean for Student Affairs (or designee) and the Senior Associate Dean for Academic Affairs (or designee).

Students who take a medical leave of absence may be required to submit a medical clearance letter to return to courses or clinical rotations.

A student who determines that s/he is not returning at the previously scheduled date must consult with the Associate Dean for Student Affairs before the scheduled return date; an extension of the original LOA must be requested in writing. If the extension is not granted, the student must return by the end of the leave; otherwise, the student is deemed to have voluntarily withdrawn from HWCOC.

Financial Aid Implications for Taking a Leave of Absence

General Implications. HWCOC students who are approved to take an LOA must meet certain requirements and be informed of the Financial Aid implications per Title IV regulations. Taking a LOA may affect student loan deferment, grace period, loan repayment, and financial aid eligibility. Students are advised to investigate these implications as they pertain to their personal situations before requesting an LOA. Upon return from LOA status, the student is required to participate in an entrance interview with a financial assistance administrator to discuss specific financial aid implications and future financial aid eligibility.

Return of Title IV Funds. If a student's award package includes federal funds and the student is granted an LOA or withdraws before completing 60 percent of the term, federal regulations require that a portion of the student's federal aid be returned to the Department of Education. For purposes of calculating the refund, the aid year is divided into three separate enrollment terms, which coincides with the disbursement of aid. A federally mandated calculation determines the portion of aid to be returned based on the number of days remaining in the payment period. The refund due to the Department of Education will credit the outstanding balances on Federal GradPLUS Loans followed by the Federal Direct Unsubsidized Loans.

Satisfactory Academic Progress. A student returning from an approved LOA will have the same Satisfactory Academic Progress (SAP) status as when they began the LOA if the

standards of SAP are met. The student may continue to receive scholarships, Title IV, and other financial aid upon their return to HWCOM provided that the LOA was not granted because of poor academic performance and/or being placed on academic probation due to unsatisfactory progress towards the medical degree. If the LOA is in conjunction with not meeting SAP, the student may submit a SAP Appeal to the HWCOM Office of Financial Assistance upon return to HWCOM, as outlined in Procedure, Satisfactory Academic Progress for Financial Aid Eligibility.

SCOPE

This policy applies to all medical students.

REASON FOR POLICY

This policy informs medical students of the difference between a voluntary and involuntary leave of absence (LOA), guidelines for taking an LOA, and financial aid implications of LOAs.

DEFINITIONS

TERM	DEFINITIONS
Leave of absence	A temporary period of separation from the MD degree program that may be voluntary or involuntary.
Academic enrichment LOA	A type of voluntary LOA granted to a student who is pursuing research, an advanced degree, a medically related fellowship, or other educational experience or form of academic enrichment.
Financial reasons LOA	A type of voluntary LOA granted to a student who is unable to pay tuition or other educational financial obligations for all or part of an academic period.
Medical LOA	A type of voluntary LOA granted to a student who has a health-related matter that is significantly limiting his/her ability to function successfully or is temporarily preventing the student from meeting curricular requirements. Examples of such conditions include: severe and prolonged illness, surgery, and pregnancy.
Personal LOA	A type of voluntary LOA granted to a student who needs to dedicate primary attention and effort to personal circumstances or situations that inhibit or interfere with academic performance or progress. A student may not request this type of leave more than once in an academic year.

Administrative LOA	A type of involuntary LOA a student may be placed on if she/he exhibits behavior that could result in harm to a patient or another person, or if the student has been dismissed from HWCOC and is appealing the MSEPC's decision.
Academic remediation LOA	A type of involuntary LOA a student may be placed on if she/he is asked to repeat an academic year, or if the student cannot be promoted to the next academic year.

RESPONSIBLE PARTIES

Associate Dean for Student Affairs
HWCOC Registrar

RELATED RESOURCES

Procedure, Medical Student Leave of Absence
Procedure, Satisfactory Academic Progress for Financial Aid Eligibility
Policy, Tuition Refund

CONTACTS

Questions about this policy should be directed towards the Associate Dean for Student Affairs, Office of Student Affairs.

POLICY HISTORY

List initial effective date, revision dates, and/or review date.

Initial Effective Date: March 14, 2025

Review Dates (*review performed, no updates*): N/A

Revision Dates (*updates made to document*): March 14, 2025

PROCEDURE: Medical Student Leave of Absence

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PROCEDURE STATEMENT

Students interested in pursuing a voluntary LOA must contact the HWCOM Registrar to initiate the process. As part of the LOA process and prior to returning from LOA, students are required to meet with Financial Assistance, an Office of Student Affairs dean, and an Office of Medical Education dean.

Students are also required to complete the official LOA or Return from LOA form via DocuSign, indicating the reason for the LOA, the requested start date and return date, and any additional required details (e.g., research topic and location for research LOAs). Students must gather signatures from all individuals they meet with. Once signed, the form is then routed for final approval from the Associate Dean for Student Affairs (or designee) and the Senior Associate Dean for Academic Affairs (or designee).

If approved, the LOA or return from LOA is officially processed by the HWCOM Registrar.