

# Leave of Absence Policy for Medical Students

—This policy applies to all MD students.—

## Background

LCME element 12.2 states that a medical school is to have clear policies for the refund of a medical student's tuition, fees, and other allowable payments. Although there is a separate and distinct tuition refund policy (<http://bulletin.wustl.edu/medicine/policies/md-tuition-refund/>), the Leave of Absence (LOA) Policy does include language that directly relates to the impact on tuition. In addition, LCME element 12.4 states that a medical school provides its students with access to health care services. The LOA policy details student eligibility for student healthcare services (<http://bulletin.wustl.edu/medicine/policies/md-access-to-healthcare/>).

The LOA policy revision was necessitated by the implementation of the Gateway Curriculum and the entities that provide oversight on student progress. Within the Gateway Curriculum, the Competency Attainment Committee (CAC) and the Committee for Academic Promotion (CAP) are tasked with student promotion and remediation.

## Policies

### Leave of Absence Policy Voluntary Leave of Absence

A student may request a separation for academic or personal reasons by submitting a statement in writing to the Office of Student Affairs (OSA). Such a request should include an indication of the beginning and anticipated ending dates and a brief statement of the reason. The OSA will forward the separation request to the Student Success Team (SST). Separations of 1 year or less will be considered by the SST and may be referred to the CAP at the discretion of the SST. Depending on length of the proposed separation, the SST will recommend an official LOA or an absence in accordance with the Attendance Policy. A separation request of greater than 1 year, at the discretion of the SST, may require approval from the CAP.

Students requesting a personal LOA for medical reasons must submit a supporting letter from the Director of Student Health Services with their request. The university may condition its approval of a request for an LOA on the student meeting certain requirements that the university deems appropriate based on the student's individual circumstances. The goal of such conditions is to prepare the student for a successful return to the School of Medicine. For example, any student who requests an LOA for medical reasons is required to obtain a written statement of medical clearance from the Director of Student Health

Services before the student may return from leave. Such a statement and a request for return from leave should be provided to the Office of Student Affairs no more than 4 weeks before the student's anticipated return.

### Involuntary Leave of Absence

In the rare circumstances in which a student's behavior is of such a serious nature that the university determines that the continued presence of the student on campus or in clinical rotations poses a substantial threat to the safety, well-being, or health of that student, patients, and/or others in the Washington University community or to the ability of that student or others to engage in their customary functions and activities at the university, the School of Medicine may place a student on an involuntary LOA. The School of Medicine will follow the policy and procedures outlined in the university's Involuntary Leave Policy for Undergraduate and Graduate Students (<https://wustl.edu/about/compliance-policies/governance/involuntary-leave-policy-undergraduate-students/>).

### Leave of Absence Impact on Financial Aid

Student status is not maintained during the LOA, although the benefits of student health coverage and disability insurance are optional throughout an approved leave. Costs are payable by the MD program students. MD/PhD students may request support for these costs from the Division of Biology & Biomedical Sciences if funds are available. The Office of Student Financial Planning (<https://finaid.med.wustl.edu/>) should be consulted for information regarding loan repayment and grace periods when on an LOA.

Students granted an LOA, whether voluntary or involuntary, are not considered to be enrolled and are therefore not eligible for federal or institutional financial aid. Federal regulations require a Return to Title Four (R2TIV) calculation be completed for any student who has a break in attendance and who is not considered to be enrolled. Recipients of federal aid who are granted an LOA must complete exit counseling (<https://studentaid.gov/exit-counseling/>) within 30 days of their last date of attendance.

All students with institutional and/or federal aid contemplating or granted an LOA must have a meeting with the Assistant Dean and Director of Financial Aid within 15 days of the start of any LOA. Please note that extenuating circumstances may preclude a student from contacting the Director of Financial Aid. If that is the case, the student should do so as soon as possible.

### Leave of Absence Impact on Tuition

Students will benefit from a tuition stabilization plan, which provides that the tuition rate at matriculation will remain constant for up to 10 consecutive years. The stabilized rate will expire 10 academic years after matriculation. Therefore, students whose medical education is interrupted for any reason for more than 6 years will be charged at the rate of the class they rejoin. Appeals of this policy should be submitted in writing to the Medical School Registrar prior to the 10-year limit and thus any required increase in tuition. Appeals will be considered on a case-by-case basis, with the ultimate decision resting

with the Registrar/Assistant Dean for Academic Affairs. Please refer to the Financial Information section on Registration, Payments, and Withdrawal & Refunds Policy (<http://bulletin.wustl.edu/medicine/financial/#policies>) for more information about the effect of an LOA on tuition and other financially related matters.

## Policy on Student Status and Benefits During Research Years or Leaves of Absence

### MD/PhD

Student status is maintained while the student is in the research phase of the MD/PhD programs. During their research years, students are registered under the program granting the master's degree or PhD. Both student health and disability coverage are provided by the Division of Biology & Biomedical Sciences.

### Five-Year MD Program Research Year at Washington University School of Medicine

Student status is maintained throughout the approved research year. In exceptional circumstances, a second research year may be permitted. The student may receive a stipend, but they may not be considered an employee of the university. Students are registered in the School of Medicine. Both disability and student health coverage are required and are payable by the student. Outside funding often covers such fees.

### Approved Research Year Away

Student status is not maintained throughout the approved research year away; students are no longer registered in the School of Medicine. Both disability and student health coverage are optional with proof of like coverage. The cost of either elected coverage is payable by the student. Outside funding often allows these costs.

### Leave of Absence Leave of Absence Year at Washington University School of Medicine

Student status is not maintained during the LOA, although the benefits of student health coverage and disability insurance are optional throughout an approved LOA. Costs are payable by the MD program students. MD/PhD students may request support for these costs from the Division of Biology & Biomedical Sciences if funds are available. The Office of Student Financial Planning (<https://finaid.med.wustl.edu/>) should be consulted for information regarding loan repayment and grace periods when on an LOA.

### Leave of Absence Year Away

Student status is not maintained during the LOA away from Washington University School of Medicine. Both disability and student health coverage are optional with proof of like coverage. The cost of either elected coverage is payable by the student. The Office of Student Financial Planning (<https://finaid.med.wustl.edu/>) should be consulted for information regarding loan repayment and grace periods when on an LOA.

*Last approved on August 28, 2023*