



TEXAS TECH UNIVERSITY HEALTH SCIENCES CENTER

Operating Policy and Procedure

HSC OP: 77.21, Student Leave of Absence Policy

PURPOSE: The purpose of this Health Sciences Center Operating Policy and Procedure (HSC OP) is to provide Leave of Absence (LOA) guidelines for students seeking or required to take a leave of absence for medical, personal, academic, or other relevant reasons.

REVIEW: This HSC OP will be reviewed by May 1 every two years (E2Y) by the Associate Provost for Student Affairs in consultation with the Registrar, Student Affairs Committee, Academic Affairs and Curriculum Committee, and Academics Council.

POLICY/PROCEDURE:

1. Definitions.

- a. *Leave of Absence (LOA)*: Students are expected to proceed through TTUHSC to graduation in a continuous, uninterrupted fashion. However, a student may temporarily separate from the institution via an approved LOA for various reasons. An LOA is a temporary break from academic studies granted to students for medical, military, personal, academic, or other relevant reasons. LOA allows students to maintain an active status with the university while temporarily suspending their academic obligations with the intention of re-enrollment. It will not, however, afford an individual the status of an officially enrolled student. If the LOA is student-initiated, the student remains eligible to be enrolled.

A LOA is intended for students who need to take a temporary break from their studies due to medical, personal, medical, military, research, or other significant reasons, and should not be used to address incomplete coursework. An Incomplete is a grade given to a student who has been unable to complete specific course requirements by the end of the term due to unforeseen, extenuating circumstances. In such cases, the student remains enrolled in the course and is given additional time to finish the outstanding work, as arranged with the instructor. The LOA policy is designed for broader, often longer-term interruptions in academic enrollment, while an incomplete allows for the completion of coursework within a defined timeframe without the need for a formal leave from the university. This leave of absence policy should also not be used for dropping a course or full withdrawal from the university.

- b. *Academic Leave of Absence (ALOA)* - Student-Initiated: When there is a legitimate academic reason that requires a student to temporarily exit the regular curriculum. Situations that may warrant an academic LOA include but are not limited to, the desire to participate in another degree program or the desire to participate in a research program.
- c. *Medical Leave of Absence (MedLOA)* – Student-Initiated: A temporary break granted to students who are unable to continue their academic studies due to medical reasons, which may or may not interfere with their ability to perform the essential functions of their academic program. MedLOA allows students to temporarily suspend their enrollment while they focus on receiving medical treatment, recovering from illness or injury, or managing a health condition that significantly impacts their ability to participate in academic activities. To request a MedLOA, students must provide a written statement from a licensed healthcare provider or physician certifying the medical necessity of the leave and outlining the expected duration of absence. Upon completion of the medical leave, students may be required to provide documentation from their healthcare provider confirming their readiness to return to academic studies. The university reserves the right

to impose conditions for re-entry following an MLOA, including academic review, medical clearance, or compliance with any treatment plans recommended by healthcare professionals.

If the student is also registered with the TTUHSC's Student Disability Services (SDS), SDS staff will verify documented need of MedLOA.

- d. *Military Leave of Absence (MLOA)* – Student-Initiated: A leave of absence to fulfill a U.S. military obligation per [4 Texas Administrative Code \(TAC\) §4.8](#). The request for MLOA must include military documentation. TTUHSC follows federal policy for students seeking leave of absence for military duty. Students seeking military leave of absence should review the Higher Education Opportunity Act of 2008 (Section 484C of the HEA) and implementing regulations in 34 CFR Section § 668.18.
- e. *Personal Leave of Absence (PLOA)* – Student-Initiated: A leave of absence granted to students for reasons of a personal nature that impact their ability to be successful in their academic program. This type of leave is designed to provide students with the necessary time away from their studies to address and manage personal issues that are not directly related to their health. These may include, but are not limited to requests regarding family-related issues unrelated to health, family emergencies, bereavement, personal or family obligations, personal projects, visa issues, reconsideration of career direction, and other non-academic challenges.

2. Procedures.

- a. Requesting a Leave of Absence
 - (1) Students must submit a Leave of Absence Request Form to their respective school's Student Affairs Office.
 - (2) Requests must be approved or denied by the school's designated representative or committee. The school's designated representative will have authority for granting academic, administrative, medical, and personal leaves as well as academic reassignment; including the duration of such leave or reassignment and the criteria for return to active enrollment.
 - (3) If a student has not completed a course or courses during the term for which they are requesting a LOA, the school must provide guidance on the necessary registration changes for those courses or provide the grade for the course(s).
 - (4) The effective date of a LOA must align with the term for which the LOA has been requested.
 - (5) Students not in good academic standing may require additional approval from their school.
 - (6) If approved, the LOA request will be routed to the Registrar's Office for processing.
 - (7) The Registrar's Office verifies that all coursework is graded, or that the appropriate registration changes have been made, and will code the student's record as "IL" (Inactive - Leave of Absence) and will make a notation on the transcript. The Registrar's Office will also report the appropriate enrollment status to the National Student Clearinghouse during the next submission period if the LOA is greater than thirty (30) days.
- b. Duration and Duration Reporting
 - (1) Leave of Absence is granted for no longer than 12 months.
 - (2) Exceptions for a LOA for more than 12 months may be considered on a case-by-case basis for MLOA.
 - (3) All leaves of absence lasting longer than thirty (30) days will be reported to the National Student Clearinghouse. This notification may impact loan repayment timelines, grace periods, and other financial aid considerations. Students are strongly encouraged to familiarize themselves with their status with the National Student Clearinghouse and to contact their lenders directly to discuss how their leave of absence may affect their loan obligations.

c. Conditions

- (1) Up to one PLOA may be granted during the student's enrollment in a particular program. Exceptions will be considered on a case-by-case basis or in accordance with program-specific guidelines.
- (2) Transcript Documentation: All LOAs will be notated on the student's transcript and, for students in the School of Medicine (SOM), will be reported on the Medical Student Performance Evaluation (MSPE) letter.
- (3) Students in programs with clinical licensing and other accreditation requirements may need to take additional steps while on LOA. Students should consult their individual programs to ensure compliance with specific requirements.
- (4) Impact on Academic Progress: An LOA may impact a student's academic progress by extending the overall time to degree completion, as the period of leave counts towards the time-to-degree limits set by the university.
- (5) Financial Support: Students are not eligible for university fellowship support, university research grants, and financial aid.
- (6) Academic Appointments and Employment at TTUHSC: Students are not eligible to hold apprentice or other student appointment titles.
- (7) Student Employment: Students are not eligible to hold a student employment appointment.
- (8) Health Insurance: Students are not covered by student health insurance through the institution unless they have paid the required fees for the current semester unless otherwise specified.
- (9) Library Privileges: Students maintain borrowing privileges at the library.
- (10) International Students: International students are required to secure approval from the Office of International Services to enroll in LOA.
- (11) Email Access: Student will maintain access to their TTUHSC e-mail account.
- (12) eRaider Access: Student will maintain access to their TTUHSC eRaider account.
- (13) Other Student Services Covered by Student Fees: Students will maintain access to student services for which they have paid fees for the duration of the semester in which the fee is paid unless otherwise specified.
- (14) Dual Program Students: Students in dual degree programs must request a LOA from both programs and will need to request reinstatement to both programs/departments.
- (15) Conditions for return may be imposed and reviewed by the student's Program Director on a case-by-case basis. Due to the evolving nature of healthcare knowledge and curricula, a student returning from a LOA may be required to repeat all or part of a curricular year, or years, regardless of previous course/clerkship performance. The determination of which courses will be required will be included in the conditions for return from LOA.
- (16) Students on ALOA who are completing research must adhere to all applicable university policies and procedures governing research activities, including but not limited to intellectual property rights, human subjects research, animal welfare regulations, biosafety protocols, and environmental health and safety standards. Any research conducted during LOA must comply with ethical guidelines and regulatory requirements established by the university and relevant regulatory bodies.

d. Confidentiality of LOA and Records

- (1) TTUHSC will maintain the confidentiality of information regarding LOA in accordance with federal, state, and local law, and to the greatest extent possible in order to process such leaves.
- (2) All records concerning LOA are confidential and the official copy of such records shall be retained by the Office of the Registrar, Dean, and/or Program Director. Access to these records is limited by appropriate federal, state, and local laws. Such records will be maintained according to the institutional Records Retention (OP10.09) policy.

- e. Return from Leave of Absence
 - (1) Students must contact their Program Director, or school's designated representative, and the registrar at least 30 days in advance of their return.
 - (2) The student must submit a Return from Leave Readmission Application.
 - (3) Documentation confirming satisfaction of return conditions, if any are established during the approval process, is required.
 - (4) Students who return from LOA must be immediately re-enrolled into coursework or placed on an academic reassignment. Re-enrollment must take place prior to the census one date in the term to which the student is returning.

- f. Withdrawal and Readmission
 - (1) Students who decide not to return to the institution must formally withdraw from TTUHSC. To do so, students should contact their respective Student Affairs Office (SAO). A student who fails to enroll or withdraw from the institution by the census one date of the approved return term may be administratively dismissed from the program, and the institution, and will be required to apply for readmission.
 - (2) International students returning to the US will need to present immigration documents to International Student Services for review upon return to TTUHSC.
 - (3) Withdrawn students must re-apply for admission. Re-admission criteria apply.

- g. Appeal for Denial of Leave or Re-entry
 - (1) In the event a student's request for LOA is denied, the student may submit a written appeal to the school's Dean or designee. The Dean or designee may hear the matter directly or may appoint a 3-member committee composed of school administrators and/or faculty to hear the matter and make recommendations. Committee members must not have served on the initial decision-making process. The appeal decision will be final.
 - (2) In the event a student for LOA re-entry is denied, the student may submit a written appeal to the school's Dean or designee. The Dean or designee may hear the matter directly or may appoint a 3-member committee composed of school administrators and/or faculty to hear the matter and make recommendations. Committee members must not have served on the initial decision-making process. The appeal decision will be final.

- h. Compliance
 - (1) This policy is compliant with [Texas Tech University System Regulation 07.15](#) by ensuring that students are granted equitable access to educational programs and leave of absence opportunities without discrimination based on pregnancy, childbirth, or related conditions.