



QUILLEN COLLEGE of MEDICINE

EAST TENNESSEE STATE UNIVERSITY

Policy Name/Number: QCOM Leave of Absence Policy / ADMIN-0921-20

Policy Owner: Deidre Pierce, MD / Associate Dean of Student Affairs	
Committees, Departments, or Individuals Responsible for Implementation: Offices of Student Affairs and Academic Affairs	
Original Approval Date/ By: 9-23-2022 / Beth Anne Fox, MD, MPH-Vice Dean	Effective Date: 5/21/2024
Most Recent Revision Date: 5/21/2024	Policy Advisory Committee Review Date: 5/21/2024
Date of Next Review: 5/21/2027 <i>(All policies are reviewed by the Policy Advisory Committee every 3 years unless circumstances for an earlier review is identified.)</i>	

(A) Policy Statement:

A leave of absence is a period during which a student is not taking part in the College of Medicine's required educational program. A leave of absence is granted for a maximum of one (1) year except in cases of military leave. Students may be required to produce documentation to support a leave of absence request.

(B) Purpose of Policy:

Medical students may apply for or request a leave of absence via the Office of Academic Affairs or the Office of Student Affairs. In some circumstances, a leave of absence may be recommended/required by the Dean. All students requesting or determined to require a leave of absence must have a [Leave of Absence Form](#) completed and on file in the Registrar's Office.

(C) Scope of Policy (applies to):

All Quillen College of Medicine medical students.

(D) Policy Activities:

Permission for a leave of absence is not guaranteed, unless the leave is required by law, or as indicated below. Students should submit requests as soon as reasonably possible for medical or military leave. Supporting documentation may be required to evaluate this type of request.

Upon the initiation of a leave of absence, a designation of Withdrew Passing (WP), Withdrew Failing (WF) or Incomplete (I) will be recorded on the transcript for any course that has not received a final grade. If an Incomplete (I) is recorded, it must be resolved prior to the student's advancement to the next level of training. If a Withdrawal (WP or WF) or a final grade of Fail (F) is recorded, the student is required to repeat that course to be eligible for advancement or graduation.

Students requesting a leave of absence must meet with the Office of Financial Services to review any financial implications of the leave, including a review of Veterans Administration Educational Benefits if applicable. The student must also meet with the Vice Dean for Academic Affairs to discuss academic implications and any potential changes to their medical education progress.

The Offices of the Dean, Academic Support, Student Affairs, and Academic Affairs, as well as the Student Promotions Committee, may mandate and arrange any re-entry conditions, which may include but not be limited to: repeating some or all previously completed course work, or obtaining fitness for duty examination or medical clearance following a medical leave.

The student must note that the timing of re-entry to the College of Medicine is not guaranteed following any leave of absence. As soon as possible prior to the end of the leave of absence, the student must submit a request to return, in writing, to the Office of Student Affairs or the Office of Academic Affairs. Any student wishing to request an extension to their leave must submit a new request form to the Office of Student Affairs or the Office of Academic Affairs as soon as possible in advance of the original date of return. The approval process for an extension will follow the same protocol as the original leave request. If an extension is not granted, a student on a leave of absence may have his/her matriculation terminated.

The Office of Academic Affairs will confirm acceptance, extension, or termination of leaves of absence with the student. Medical students granted a leave of absence for any reason are responsible for maintaining contact with the Offices of Admissions, Academic Affairs, and Student Affairs by responding to emails, phone calls, or letter communication.

- All leaves will be noted in the student's academic history section of the Medical Student Performance Evaluation (MSPE). An Administrative Leave of Absence will be noted in the Adverse Action section.

There are five different types of leaves of absences, and they are defined below: academic, administrative, medical, military, and personal.

Academic Leave of Absence

- A voluntary leave to pursue research, an externship, a degree-granting program outside the College of Medicine, or any other career advancing activity.
- A student must apply for and receive approval to receive course credit for a research project taking place during an Academic Leave of Absence.
- A student granted permission to take an Academic Leave of Absence to participate in a degree-granting program will not be enrolled at the College of Medicine for the duration of the leave.
- To return from an Academic Leave of Absence of six months or greater, a healthcare professional must provide written documentation to the Office of Student Affairs indicating that the student is mentally and/or physically able to continue his/her medical studies on request as is customary for entry into medical school per the [Fitness for Duty Policy](#).

Administrative Leave of Absence

- A school-mandated leave to address a single or multiple academic, professionalism, or technical deficiencies.
- The College of Medicine may require a student to take an Administrative Leave of Absence if he/she has academic, professionalism, or technical deficiencies not addressed by other types of leaves.
- A student placed on an Administrative Leave of Absence will be removed from classes and/or clinical duties. The College of Medicine may also require that the student be prohibited from any academic facility or institutional event. Violations of the prohibitions set forth by Academic Affairs, Student Affairs and/or the Student Promotions Committee will result in the student's forfeiture of remaining appeal processes or rights.
- Students placed on an Administrative Leave of Absence may return to active student status contingent upon satisfactorily meeting the conditions set forth by the College of Medicine. Students who are not permitted to return will be dismissed.
- To return from an Administrative Leave of Absence of six months or greater, a healthcare professional must provide written documentation to the Office of Student Affairs indicating that the student is mentally and/or physically able to continue his/her medical studies on request as is customary for entry into medical school per

the Fitness for Duty Policy.

Medical Leave of Absence

- A leave to pursue medical care with supporting documentation from the student's healthcare provider, including maternal or parental leave for the birth of a child, adoption, or foster care placement that is taken instead of a Parental Accommodation Period or for an extended parental leave required beyond the allowed six-week period of parental accommodation.
- A student taking a Medical Leave of Absence will not be enrolled at the College of Medicine for the duration of the leave.
- To return from a Medical Leave of Absence, the attending health care professional must provide written documentation to the Office of Student Affairs indicating that the student is mentally and/or physically able to continue his/her medical studies. See the Fitness for Duty Policy.

- Special Situations: Parental Accommodation Period

- All eligible students will be granted a parental accommodation period of up to six weeks for the birth or the adoption of a child. For the purposes of this policy, an 'eligible' student is one that is not at risk of exceeding the deadline to complete the MD degree by the sixth graduation date following their matriculation. During this time, the student will continue to be enrolled as a full-time student. Because the student remains enrolled as a full-time student and continues to pay tuition, this is not a leave of absence. It is instead a modification of deadlines and academic expectations to accommodate the student's new parental responsibilities.
- The Vice Dean and the student should consult in advance about how the student will meet academic requirements; the student is responsible for ensuring that this consultation takes place and for requesting the parental accommodation. The student must complete the accommodation period within six weeks of the birth or adoption. The student may not divide the time of parental accommodation for use past this time limit. The total accommodation period for each birth or adoption is limited to six weeks. After the end of the Parental Accommodation period, students are expected to return to their studies and resume progress toward completing their medical degree.
- In consultation with the student, the Vice Dean and the Office of Academic Affairs will be responsible for the timing and placement of the student's return. Factors that may influence the return include but are not limited to the amount of time taken by the student for parental accommodation, the timing of the return, the part of the curriculum in which the student is enrolled, capacity and availability, and remaining academic requirements for graduation.
- If a student needs more than the six weeks of allotted time, they must take a Medical Leave of Absence. To return from a Medical Leave of Absence, the attending health care professional must provide written documentation to the Office of Student Affairs indicating that the student is mentally and/or physically able to continue his/her medical studies. See the Fitness for Duty Policy.
- While this period exists to accommodate students wishing to graduate and match with their original class, this policy does not guarantee that all students who take a parental accommodation period will graduate on time, and students are still responsible for completing their full graduation and course requirements. Certain policies are outside the control of QCOM which may affect the extent of flexibility offered. For instance, the NBME, USMLE, NRMP, ERAS and other organizations have policies regarding eligibility and timing.

Military Leave of Absence

- A leave to meet military service requirements.

- All military leaves of absence and requests for military leaves of absence will conform to the requirements of the Uniformed Services Employment and Reemployment Rights Act (“USERRA”).
- A student taking a Military Leave of Absence will not be enrolled at the College of Medicine for the duration of the leave.
- A Military Leave of Absence excludes a student from the six-year rule for completing the Doctor of Medicine degree.
- Qualified students who seek to take a leave of absence to perform military service should give notice of service as far in advance as is reasonable under the circumstances unless military necessity prevents advance notice.
- Students must provide verification to the Office of Admissions that they performed military service upon returning to the College of Medicine.
- When students wish to be readmitted, they should give notice of their intent to return. Veterans will be entitled to be readmitted and will be readmitted with the same academic status as when they last attended so long as:
 1. There is no disqualifying event, such as a dishonorable or bad conduct discharge,
 2. The cumulative length of absence and all previous absences for military service (service time only) does not exceed the established time period for such leave (generally five [5] years); and
 3. The student notifies the College of Medicine of his or her intent to return within three (3) years from the completion of the period of service, or, if recovering from a service-related illness or injury, no later than two (2) years after the recovery.
- The College of Medicine is committed to assist those service members seeking readmission. When necessary, and as determined on a case-by-case basis, the University will offer appropriate academic services, free of charge, to help students become prepared to resume their studies with the same academic status where they left off or to help the student be prepared to complete the program.

Personal Leave of Absence

- A voluntary leave to pursue additional concentrated support to achieve a specific academic goal such as study for Step examinations.
- A voluntary leave to pursue personal matters that fall outside the definitions of other types of leave.
- A student taking a Personal Leave of Absence will not be enrolled at the College of Medicine for the duration of the leave. To return from a Personal Leave of Absence of six months or greater, a healthcare professional must provide written documentation to the Office of Student Affairs indicating that the student is mentally and/or physically able to continue his/her medical studies on request as is customary for entry into medical school per the Fitness for Duty Policy.

Step 1 Requirements:

Students who take a leave of absence immediately following the M2 year, including those enrolled in a dual-degree program, must have a passing USMLE Step 1 score prior to the beginning of the required M3 Bridge to Clinical Clerkships course. Students are to take the Step 1 exam at least four weeks prior to the M3 Bridge to Clinical Clerkships course to ensure a score is received before the course begins. Students who participated in the Bridge to Clinical Clerkships course the prior year are expected to participate in the current course with their new class.

- Students granted a leave of absence are required to complete the MD degree by the sixth graduation date following their date of matriculation.

Adapted From:

Policy on leaves of absence. Policy on Leaves of Absence | Zucker School of Medicine. (n.d.).
<https://medicine.hofstra.edu/policy/policy-student-affairs-loa.html>.