



Leave of Absence Policy

Category: Academic

Responsibility: Associate Dean, UGME

Approval: Student Academic Management Committee

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Purpose:

To ensure students have the ability to request defined periods of time away from the Undergraduate Medical Education (UGME) Program.

9.10 Student Health and Patient Safety A medical school has effective policies and processes to address situations, where a student's personal health may pose a risk of harm to patients. These policies and processes are clearly communicated to students. These patient safety policies and processes include:

- a) timely response by the medical school*
- b) provision of accommodation to the extent possible*
- c) leaves of absence*
- d) withdrawal from the program*

Definition – Leave of Absence: An authorized, time-limited pause in program progression governed by the UGME [Leave of Absence](#) Policy. Authorized, time-limited pause with intent to return. A leave of absence constitutes temporary withdrawal from the MD program and is intended to support eventual return to training. Where appropriate, a leave of absence should be considered prior to program withdrawal so that LOA supports student well-being and equity by preserving continuity of training, minimizing unnecessary disruption to academic records.

Scope:

This Policy applies to absences from the UGME program exceeding **5 consecutive days** (ie. Personal, health related, parental, educational, or related to professionalism concerns, or where a student may temporarily be unable to meet the academic and professional standards of the program).

This Policy pertains to all UGME students in the University of Saskatchewan, College of Medicine.

This Policy includes students based in all current UGME program sites.

This option for leave exists outside the current policies guiding both the [Pre-Clerkship Attendance and Absence Policy](#) and the [Clerkship Attendance and Absence Policy](#) of the MD Program.

Principles:

Consideration will be given to reasonable requests for time away from the UGME program.

All leaves must ensure that when granted, will not compromise the student and program goal for a successful outcome of their undergraduate education.

Policy:

The UGME Program reserves the right to grant defined leave of absences while maintaining expectations and rigors of a professional program. Requests for leave exceeding five (5) consecutive days require formal approval and will be considered within the context of curricular requirements, learner progression, and professional standards.

A Leave of Absence is a time-limited, approved interruption of training recorded administratively on the academic transcript as 'Leave of Absence.' It does not constitute withdrawal from the MD program, carries no academic credit or grade, and is intended to support a student's eventual return to training.

Responsibilities:

Administrative staff with oversight by the Program Manager and Academic Director are responsible for operationalizing the procedures outlined, in consultation as required with the Associate Dean UGME.

Non-Compliance:

Instances or concerns of non-compliance with the *Leave of Absence Policy* should be brought to the attention of the Vice-Dean, Education or the Associate Dean, Undergraduate Medical Education, within the College of Medicine.

Procedures:

A. Requested leaves:

Students shall apply in writing (email letter is permissible) to the Academic Director, cc'ing the Program Manager requesting a defined period away from the UGME program. This request will be shared with the Associate Dean Undergraduate Medical Education, Year Chair, Year Site Coordinator.

This request must be made not less than 30 days prior to the student's requested start date for the leave, whenever possible.

The program will consider all documentation and information in order to consider an approval or an amended recommendation for a leave. For reasons of privacy, students may submit documentation through the Office of Student Affairs at the relevant site and the Office of Student Affairs will confirm receipt with the UGME program.

A leave of absence should be considered prior to program withdrawal when circumstances are time-limited and recovery or resolution is anticipated, as it preserves program continuity while maintaining academic standards.

Given that requests for leave of absence may come at times that do not coincide with Student Academic Management Committee (SAMC) meetings, the Committee grants the Academic Director, in consultation with the appropriate Year Chair and the Associate Dean, the authority to approve student leaves and withdrawals, and student requests for re-entry into the program after brief absences or leaves.

SAMC, whenever feasible, will be involved in decisions regarding return to program after an extended leave.

B. Program Initiated Leave of Absence

Should a student's personal health change or professionalism issues be identified such that the student's participation in the program may present a risk to others or the student is no longer able to meet the Technical Standards (*Essential Skills and Abilities Required for the Study of Medicine*), then the student may be required to take a leave or withdraw from the program until such a time that the student no longer poses a risk or until the student is able to meet the Technical Standards.

[Student Health and Safety of Others](#) Situations such as but not limited to :

- Prolonged or repeated absences that exceed allowable limits;
- Medical, psychological, or safety concerns;

- Inability to meet academic, clinical, or professional expectations;
- Pending review, remediation, or resolution of academic or professionalism concerns.

C. Both requested and required leaves:

The UGME program reserves the right to determine the conditions for a student's return to the Program. These conditions may include, but are not limited to,

- the requirement that a student repeat portions of the Program when the duration of the leave exceeds a reasonable expectation for retention of required clinical skills or the ability to effectively make up missed curriculum.
- An individualized academic plan outlining requirements for reintegration, remediation, and/or progression must be developed and approved prior to the student's return.
- In cases where the Leave of Absence was granted for health-related reasons, the student must also provide documentation confirming fitness to return to the Program from their most responsible physician who has been providing direct care to the student.

The leave of absence may impact progression, assessment timelines, clinical placements, and anticipated program completion dates. Conditions for return, including requirements of remediation or reassessment may be specified at the time the LOA is granted. The process for return to the program and any conditions of return will be outlined in writing to the student following review and decision by the Student Academic Management Committee.

Communication & Distribution:

This policy will be housed on the College of Medicine SharePoint, in the UGME Admin common folder. It will also be housed in SAMC SharePoint folder. This policy will be posted on the College of Medicine website, under the Policies tab of the Students dropdown menu, as well as the policies tab of the Faculty Dropdown menu. Any updates approved by SAMC will be distributed to all Year Chairs and all admin coordinators/support staff responsible for the MD program across the province, who will distribute it to all faculty leads and the Year Sub-committees and Clerkship Sub-committee.

Contact:

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