

I. POLICY

Leave of Absence and Withdrawal

II. PURPOSE

This policy defines the conditions and student responsibilities associated with Leaves of Absence (LOA), including voluntary and administrative LOAs, and withdrawals for students in the School of Medicine (SOM) or School of Health Professions (SHP) at the Virginia Health Sciences (VHS) at Old Dominion University (ODU).

III. RESPONSIBLE PARTY AND REVIEW CYCLE

SOM and SHP Student Affairs will review this document annually.

IV. ACCREDITATION REFERENCES

LCME 12.2	Tuition Refund Policy
SACSCOC 12.3	Student Rights
SACSCOC 12.4	Student Complaints

V. DEFINITIONS

Administrative LOA: When a student is placed on an LOA according to institutional or program policies or procedures.

Voluntary LOA: When a student takes an LOA to interrupt their studies for a period of two weeks or more but intends to return to ODU to complete the currently enrolled academic program(s).

Withdrawal: When a student does not intend to complete the enrolled academic program(s) and instead wishes to terminate their enrollment at ODU. This definition does not apply to students' intentions to withdraw from a course.

VI. DESCRIPTION

There may be circumstances that require students to take time away from their educational program. If the time away will be more than two weeks, an LOA may be required. There are two types of LOA:

1. Voluntary LOA
2. Administrative LOA

Whether Voluntary or Administrative, an LOA will be granted for up to 12 months. In exceptional circumstances, consideration will be given for an extension, up to a maximum of 24 months with program approval. LOAs begin on the last date of attendance of academic responsibilities, and requests for retroactive LOAs will not be approved.

Students on LOAs are considered enrolled students. Access to program activities, classroom activities, learning management systems, common student spaces, clinical spaces, and other resources such as libraries, ODU email, and other network resources will be determined on a case-by-case basis. Students on LOAs may not participate in clinical activities or a professional skills program; will not receive credit, including elective credit, for any work done while on an LOA; and cannot be required to engage in academic activities while on an LOA.

Students will be required to have an Academic Plan to document make-up activities and/or any changes to their progress in their program when they return from an LOA. Any extensions of an LOA may require modification of the Academic Plan. If a student has been approved for a grade of “Incomplete” with a deadline that will expire during the LOA, the grade deadline is extended to a reasonable time to complete the work after the student returns from the LOA.

A SOM student on a Voluntary LOA remains in good standing and is eligible to sit for the United States Medical Licensing Examinations (USMLE) if compliant with the USMLE Procedures Policy. The program standing and eligibility for the USMLE of an MD student on an Administrative LOA will be determined on a case-by-case basis. SHP students should consult their Program Director for national exam eligibility.

At the end of the requested LOA, the student must return or will be considered withdrawn for both enrollment and financial aid purposes. Failure to return from an LOA after attempts made by SOM or SHP to communicate with the student regarding the decision to return will result in an administrative withdrawal from ODU.

SOM and SHP Student Affairs is available to answer any questions students may have about LOAs.

Voluntary LOA

When students are unable to continue their studies for a period of two weeks or more because of illness or emergent personal/family problems or choose to interrupt their studies for research or other personal pursuits, but intend to return to complete the currently enrolled academic program(s), they are eligible for a Voluntary LOA. Students who need to be excused from fewer than two weeks of coursework should contact their Program Director or other administrator. In cases where illness prevents a student from participating in coursework, documentation determined appropriate by the SOM and SHP Assistant Vice Dean for Student Affairs may be requested.

Student reservists who are called to active military duty or military members who are deployed will be granted a Voluntary LOA until they are released from active duty or deployment. Students must furnish a copy of their orders or similar official documentation to the SOM and SHP Assistant Vice Dean for Student Affairs or designee.

Voluntary LOA Process

To request an LOA, a student must complete and sign the Leave of Absence/Withdraw Form, available from the Registrar's office or their academic program. The signed form must then be presented to the student's program, SOM and SHP Registrar, or SOM and SHP Student Affairs, all of whom will review the form, approve it if appropriate, and submit it for administrative review and processing. If a student is in communication with their program, the SOM and SHP Registrar, or SOM and SHP Student Affairs but, due to unforeseen circumstances, is unable to complete the Leave of Absence/Withdraw Form before starting the Voluntary LOA, the SOM and SHP Assistant Vice Dean for Student Affairs or designee may document the reason and grant the student's request for a Voluntary LOA provided that the student return the signed form within two weeks. Failure to return the form will result in the LOA being deemed an Administrative LOA.

If a student is unable to communicate with their program and/or SOM and SHP Student Affairs about their need for a Voluntary LOA due to medical or other extenuating circumstances, they will be placed on an Administrative LOA.

Return from Voluntary LOA

Students must return from Voluntary LOA by no later than the date indicated on their Leave of Absence/Withdraw Form. A student wishing to return from a Voluntary LOA must contact their program administration, SOM and SHP Registrar, and/or SOM and SHP Student Affairs at least two weeks before the intended return date. Returns in less time will be considered only in extenuating circumstances. Due to the structure of academic programs, a student's return date from the LOA will be determined in consultation with the program. Students on Voluntary LOAs for medical reasons may be required to provide clearance from their treating medical provider to return, including verification that the student will be able to meet the Academic and Technical Standards outlined by their program. Other contingencies for returning, determined at the onset of the LOA, must be met prior to the student's return. Once cleared to return, the student will complete and sign the Return from Leave of Absence Form with the Program Director, SOM and SHP Registrar, and/or SOM and SHP Student Affairs.

Administrative LOA

The SOM and SHP Assistant Vice Dean for Student Affairs or designee and Program Director may initiate an Administrative LOA under the following conditions:

- Failure to return the Leave of Absence/Withdrawal Form for a Voluntary LOA due to medical or other extenuating circumstances;
- Being unable to participate in the Student Conduct Process for extenuating circumstances;
- When required to repeat an academic term by a Student Progress Committee;
- When there is a reasonable possibility the student's behavior will result in harm or injury to self or others and, after an individualized assessment, it has determined that the risk of such harm cannot be eliminated or reduced by a reasonable accommodation.



Students who are placed on Administrative LOAs and who were referred to the threat assessment team for action may have additional restrictions that limit their access to ODU academic buildings, activities, and resources. The student will be notified in writing of these actions. Such additional restrictions are not subject to appeal.

Administrative LOA Process

Students who are placed on an Administrative LOA because of failure to return the Voluntary LOA form will be notified in writing to their ODU email address and last known home address.

Students who are placed on Administrative LOA while waiting to repeat an academic term shall be notified by SOM and SHP Student Affairs.

All other students being placed on Administrative LOA will receive written notice that provides:

1. An explanation and description of the basis for the possible leave;
2. The student's right to meet with the Program Director and/or SOM and SHP Assistant Vice Dean for Student Affairs or designee to respond to the details of the basis for the possible leave;
3. The student's right to bring an advisor or support person (e.g., family member, friend, support person, etc.). An advisor may not speak on behalf of the student and cannot be an attorney representing the student;
4. The date and time of the meeting; and
5. Information about relevant policies and/or procedures.

If the student is unable to attend the meeting when scheduled, the Program Director and/or SOM and SHP Assistant Vice Dean for Student Affairs or designee will make best efforts to reschedule the meeting to a time when the student can meet. Requests for additional time to meet will be considered on a case-by-case basis. If the student fails to respond, fails to schedule or reschedule a meeting within a reasonable time period, refuses to meet, or is incapacitated and unable to respond, the Program Director and SOM and SHP Assistant Vice Dean for Student Affairs or designee will place the student on an Administrative LOA.

If a meeting occurs, the student will be given an opportunity to present information they wish for the Program Director and SOM and SHP Assistant Vice Dean for Student Affairs or designee to consider why they should not be placed on an Administrative LOA and may be given an opportunity to go on a Voluntary LOA at the conclusion of the meeting when appropriate. Students who do not keep the meeting appointment, refuse, or are unable to meet with the Program Director and/or SOM and SHP Assistant Vice Dean for Student Affairs or designee, or choose not to go on a Voluntary LOA, if offered, will be placed on an Administrative LOA without further opportunity for discussion.

Following the meeting, the Program Director and the SOM and SHP Assistant Vice Dean for Student Affairs or designee will notify the student in writing as to whether the student will be



placed on an Administrative LOA and, if applicable, the duration of the Administrative LOA, the conditions for reinstatement to the program, any campus restrictions, and any information related to the appeal process. An Administrative LOA is not an academic or disciplinary sanction, and a student will not be placed on an Administrative LOA in lieu of disciplinary or other action under institutional or program policies or procedures.

Appeal of Administrative LOA

If a student believes that a decision for an Administrative LOA made by the Program Director and SOM and SHP Assistant Vice Dean for Student Affairs or designee was arbitrary or unreasonable, the student may appeal to the Dean of their school (i.e., Dean of the School of Medicine or Dean of the School of Health Professions). Appeals must be submitted to the Dean, in writing, within five (5) business days of being notified of the Administrative LOA decision and must outline the facts the student believes were not considered and/or explain what procedures are arbitrary.

The Dean will review the appeal and supporting information and will notify the student, in writing, as to whether the Administrative LOA is upheld or reversed within fifteen (15) business days of receipt of the appeal. The Dean may also grant the appeal in part and deny the appeal in part, or modify any portion of the return conditions placed on the student. The student shall remain on the Administrative LOA with all stipulated limitations while their appeal is pending. If it is determined that the student is permitted to return to school, the decision letter will also address the status of any restrictions from campus that were imposed as Interim Action. The Dean's decision is final. If the student had a Student Conduct Process charge and the Administrative LOA is overturned, the student shall immediately resume the conduct process.

Return from Administrative LOA

When all criteria for reinstatement (as outlined in the Administrative LOA notice) have been completed, a student may request to return from an Administrative LOA by submitting to the SOM and SHP Assistant Vice Dean for Student Affairs or designee and Program Director a written request with all supporting documentation that demonstrates compliance with the conditions of reinstatement. Upon receipt of the written request for reinstatement, the SOM and SHP Assistant Vice Dean for Student Affairs or designee (and Program Director for Health Professions students) will review and confirm compliance.

Depending upon the reason for the Administrative LOA, the student may be required to meet with the Student Progress Committee of their program, threat assessment team, or an institutional administrator to discuss their request to return. Within ten (10) business days of their request to return and/or meeting, the student will receive communication that may include the decision regarding their request to return to SOM and SHP. Factors that may be considered when making the decision regarding reinstatement include, but are not limited, to the following:



1. The impact of the student's behaviors on others, if any, within or outside the SOM and SHP and/or ODU community;
2. The input of any healthcare professionals with whom the student has consulted;
3. The results of any required evaluation to determine if a student can meet the Technical Standards of their program safely;
4. The student's activities and behaviors during the period of the Administrative LOA both on and off campus; and
5. Other authorized information that SOM and SHP Student Affairs or other institutional entity deems relevant.

Due to the structure of some academic programs, the Program Director and SOM and SHP Assistant Vice Dean for Student Affairs or designee will determine the return date.

Reporting of LOAs

LOAs from SOM and SHP, whether Voluntary or Administrative, will be noted on the student's transcript in the following format:

Leave of Absence (Last Date Attended) – (Return Date)

In addition, all medical schools are required to report LOAs on the Medical Student Performance Evaluation for MD students, including the dates and a brief description of the reason for the LOA. SHP students should consult with their Program Directors to determine if there are program-specific reporting requirements.

Academic course(s) interrupted by Voluntary or Administrative LOAs may result in a grade designation of Incomplete and will be subject to the program's related grading policy. Course(s) initially interrupted by Voluntary or Administrative LOAs may result in Withdrawal (i.e., W) if the student ultimately withdraws from the program (see below). LOAs should not be used to avoid failures of academic courses. In extenuating circumstances, Program Directors can assign a grade designation of W for the course(s) interrupted by an LOA that a continuing student completes outside the parameters of the program's Incomplete grading policy.

LOA Tuition and Fees Impacts

Fees, or applicable refunds, for students on an LOA will be calculated in accordance with the [Student Accounts Receivable Policy](#). In addition, students who take an LOA for more than 180 days will be considered "financially withdrawn" for financial aid and scholarship purposes based on the Department of Education. It is a requirement for students to meet with Financial Aid for approval of an LOA. Under exceptional circumstances when a student is unable to meet with Financial Aid prior to taking an LOA, the LOA may still be approved and the Financial Aid meeting will be deferred until a later time. It is also strongly recommended that students talk with Financial Services to understand the financial ramifications of taking an LOA on tuition and fees owed.

Actions Related to Other Institutional Policies During LOAs

LOAs, whether Voluntary or Administrative, do not automatically stop an administrative action or process (e.g., related to conduct or academic integrity processes, or other institutional or program policies or procedures), and the actions related to those policies or procedures may continue during the LOA period. The decision to continue with these actions will be made on a case-by-case basis. Any outstanding sanctions, remediations, or other actions required of the student may be required to be completed prior to the return from the LOA.

LOAs, whether Voluntary or Administrative, may substantially impact students' progress in their programs. Students are encouraged to consult their program handbooks and administration. Students will be expected to comply with program and graduation requirements in effect when they return to their program.

Withdrawal

Students who do not return from LOA will be administratively withdrawn from ODU.

Students who wish to withdraw from their SOM or SHP program (including while on LOA) must complete a Withdrawal Form, available from and presented to their program administration, SOM and SHP Registrar, and/or SOM and SHP Student Affairs. The SOM and SHP Registrar will sign and modify the student information system accordingly, report the change to the Clearinghouse or National Student Loan Data System for Students if warranted, and provide a copy of the Enrollment Status Change form to Financial Aid and Financial Services. The SOM and SHP Registrar will determine the last date of attendance in consultation with program administration and SOM and SHP Student Affairs.

Students who have received a final dismissal decision are not eligible to withdraw from ODU. Students are encouraged to consult with their program handbooks and administration regarding these procedures.

Students who withdraw from an SOM and SHP program and wish to return to the institution in any program, including their initial program of study, must apply through the admissions process as new students.

Transcript Notations for Withdrawals

Withdrawals from ODU will be noted on the student's transcript in the following format:
Withdrawal (last date attended)

A grade of W will be recorded on the transcript for all academic courses interrupted by the withdrawal.

VII. RELATED DOCUMENTS

SOM and SHP Expectations for Student Conduct Policy
SOM and SHP Interim Actions Policy

SOM and SHP Non-Involvement of Student Healthcare Providers in Education Policy
SOM and SHP Student Accounts Receivable Policy
SOM and SHP Student Complaint Processes (per individual programs' handbooks)
SOM and SHP Student Emergency Procedures Policy
SOM and SHP Student Non-Academic Complaint and Formal Grievance Policy
SOM and SHP Student Progress Procedures (per individual programs' handbooks)
SOM USMLE Procedures Policy (MD Student Handbook)
ODU Code of Student Conduct
ODU University Policy # 1005, Discrimination

VIII. HISTORY OF APPROVALS AND UPDATES

The following list documents policy approvals and updates by oversight authority, date, and summary of changes. This policy is housed on the SOM and SHP Institutional Student Handbook webpage.

- On September 10, 2019, the Eastern Virginia Medical School (EVMS) Board of Visitors approved revision of the policy.
- On November 18, 2022, the EVMS Office of the General Counsel approved a change to the LOA Tuition and Fees Impacts section of the policy.
- On September 19, 2023, the EVMS Board of Visitors approved revision of the policy to clarify procedures for Administrative LOAs and to incorporate the LOA and Withdrawal processes into one policy.
- On July 1, 2024, this policy was transitioned to a SOM and SHP policy as part of the integration with Old Dominion University.