

## **I. POLICY**

Leave of Absence

## **II. PURPOSE**

This policy defines the conditions and student responsibilities associated with Leaves of Absence (LOA), including both voluntary and involuntary LOAs.

## **III. RESPONSIBLE PARTY AND REVIEW CYCLE**

The Associate Dean for 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. DEFINITION(S)**

**Voluntary LOA:** When a student is unable to continue his or her studies for a period of two weeks or more because of illness or emergent personal/family problems or chooses to interrupt his or her studies for research or other personal pursuits, but intends to return to EVMS to complete the currently enrolled academic program(s).

**Involuntary LOA:** 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 has determined that the risk of such harm cannot be eliminated or reduced.

## **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. Involuntary LOA

Whether voluntary or involuntary, 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. At the end of the requested LOA, the student must return or will be considered withdrawn for financial aid purposes.

### **Voluntary LOA**

When a student is unable to continue his or her studies for a period of two weeks or more because of illness or emergent personal/family problems or chooses to interrupt his or her studies for research or other personal pursuits, but intends to return to EVMS to complete the

currently enrolled academic program(s), they are eligible for a Voluntary LOA. A student who needs to be excused from fewer than two weeks of coursework should contact his or her Program Director (for Health Profession [HP] students) or the Associate Dean for Student Affairs or designee (for Doctor of Medicine [MD] or Medical Masters [MM] students). In cases where illness is preventing a student from participating in coursework, documentation determined appropriate by the Associate Dean for Student Affairs must be submitted.

Student reservists who are called to active military duty or members of the military 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 Associate 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, found on the [Registrar's webpage](#). The signed form must then be presented to the Associate Dean for Student Affairs or designee, who will review the form, approve it if appropriate, and submit it to the Registrar. If, due to unforeseen circumstances, a student is in communication with the Associate Dean for Student Affairs but is unable to complete the Leave of Absence/Withdraw form before starting the Voluntary LOA, the Associate 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 Involuntary LOA.

Once a student is on a Voluntary LOA, he or she may use the Brickell Medical Science Library, his or her EVMS email, and other network resources. Access to program activities, classroom activities, and Blackboard may be terminated while a student is on LOA. A student may not participate in clinical activities or the professional skills program and will not, under any circumstances, receive credit, including elective credit, for any work done while on an LOA. An MD student who is on an approved LOA remains in good standing with EVMS and eligible to take USMLE board exams. Health Professions students should consult their program director for national exam eligibility.

#### Return from Voluntary LOA

A student who wishes to return from a voluntary LOA must contact the Associate Dean for Student Affairs prior to the intended return date. Due to the structure of some academic programs, the Associate Dean for Student Affairs will determine the return date in consultation with the Program Director. Students on a Voluntary LOA for medical reasons must provide clearance from their treating physician to return, including verification that the student will be able to meet the academic and technical standards outlined by their Program. Once cleared to

return, the student will complete and sign the Return from Leave of Absence Form with the Registrar.

### **Involuntary LOA**

In rare circumstances, the Associate Dean for Student Affairs or designee may place a student on an Involuntarily LOA 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 has determined that the risk of such harm cannot be eliminated or reduced.

A student will not be subject to an Involuntary LOA in lieu of disciplinary or other action under the Code of Student Conduct or academic procedures. An Involuntary LOA from EVMS will only be considered after reasonable attempts to secure a Voluntary LOA have been exhausted and the student's behavior has not improved.

### Interim Action

Upon recommendation of the Safety Management and Assessment Response Team (SMART), or when imminent harm is a concern, the Associate Dean for Student Affairs or designee may take interim action to remove or ban the student from campus, clinical activities, or from EVMS facilities pending the Involuntary LOA determination. In such event, the Associate Dean for Student Affairs or designee will notify the student in writing as soon as practicable after the student is removed. All interim actions will remain in effect until a final determination has been made. The student's emergency contact may also be notified of the decision to implement an interim action as may be permitted under the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA).

### Involuntary LOA Process

When an Involuntary LOA is being considered, the Associate Dean for Student Affairs will give the student 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 Associate 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 for the required meeting; and
5. Information about relevant policies and/or procedures.

If the student is unable to attend the meeting when scheduled, the Associate 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 Associate Dean for Student Affairs will place the student on an Involuntary LOA.

At the meeting, the student will be given an opportunity to present information they wish for the Associate Dean for Student Affairs to consider about why they should not be placed on an Involuntary LOA and may be given an opportunity to go on a Voluntary LOA. If the student does not keep the meeting appointment or refuses to meet with the Associate Dean for Student Affairs or to go on a Voluntary LOA voluntarily after the meeting outlined above, the Associate Dean for Student Affairs will place the student on an Involuntary LOA.

Following the meeting, the Associate Dean for Student Affairs will notify the student in writing as to the whether the student will be placed on an Involuntary LOA. If the Involuntary LOA will proceed, the Associate Dean for Student Affairs notify the student of the decision, in writing, along with the duration of the Involuntary LOA, the conditions for reinstatement to the program, any campus restrictions, and any information related to the appeal process.

Students who are placed on Involuntary LOAs for any reason will also be referred to SMART for review. If SMART decides to further limit a student's access to EVMS academic buildings, activities, and resources, the student will be notified accordingly. Such additional restrictions are not subject to appeal.

Access to program activities, classroom activities, and Blackboard terminates once a student is placed on an Involuntary LOA and access to other resources such as the Brickell Medical Science Library, EVMS email, and other network resources will be determined on a case-by-case basis. Students on Involuntary LOAs may not participate in clinical activities or the professional skills program and will not, under any circumstances, receive credit, including elective credit, for any work done while on an LOA. An MD student on an Involuntary LOA is not in good standing with EVMS and is not eligible to take USMLE board exams. Health Professions students should consult their program director for national exam eligibility.

#### Appeal of Involuntary LOA

If a student believes that a decision for an Involuntary LOA made by the Associate 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 Involuntary LOA decision and must outline the facts the student believes were not considered and/or explain what procedures arbitrary.

The Dean will review the appeal and supporting information and will notify the student, in writing, as to whether the Involuntary 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 Involuntary LOA with all stipulated limitations while their appeal is pending. If it is determined that the student is permitted to return to school, then the decision letter will also address the status of any interim action that was imposed. The Dean's decision is final.

### Return from Involuntary LOA

When all criteria for reinstatement (as outlined in the Involuntary LOA notice) has been complete, a student may request to return from an Involuntary LOA by submitting a written request to return along with all supporting documentation demonstrating compliance with the conditions of reinstatement to the Associate Dean for Student Affairs or designee. Upon receipt of the written request for reinstatement, the Associate Dean for Student Affairs or designee will review and confirm compliance and will arrange for the student to appear before the Student Progress Committee (SPC) to discuss their request to return. Within ten (10) business days of the meeting, the Associate Dean for Student Affairs or designee will communicate the decision of the SPC about the student's readiness to return to EVMS. Factors that may be considered when making the decision regarding reinstatement include, but are not limited to the following:

1. The conduct's impact on others, if any, within or outside the EVMS community;
2. The input of any healthcare professionals with whom the student has consulted;
3. The student's activities and conduct as a non-student during the period of involuntary leave; and
4. Other authorized information the Associate Dean for Student Affairs deems relevant.

Due to the structure of some academic programs, the Associate Dean for Student Affairs will determine the return date in consultation with the Program Director.

### **Transcript Notations for All LOAs**

LOAs from EVMS, whether voluntary or involuntary, will be noted on the student's transcript in the following format:

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

### **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 may be considered "financially withdrawn" for student aid purposes. It is incumbent upon students to talk with the Financial Aid or Financial Services office to understand the financial

ramifications of taking an LOA, including what tuition will be owed, what aid may need to be returned, and how such status may trigger loan repayment.

**VII. RELATED DOCUMENTS**

EVMS Compliance Reporting/Anti-Retaliation Policy  
Non-Discrimination and Anti-Harassment Policy  
Student Accounts Receivable Policy  
Student Complaint Processes (per individual programs' handbooks)  
Student Non-Academic Complaint and Formal Grievance Policy

**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 Institutional Student Handbook webpage.

- On September 10, 2019, the Board of Visitors approved revision of the policy.