

Officer Owner:	Executive Associate Dean, Student Affairs	Origination:	02/2025
Area:	07 – Student Affairs	Last Revised:	04/2025

950-07-024 - Leave of Absence & Fit to Return Assessment Policy

I. Policy Summary

Scope: UCR SOM MD Undergraduate Students

Purpose: This policy outlines the process to request and return from a Leave of Absence for medical students.

II. Definitions

- A. Fitness for Duty Assessment is defined as an evaluation by a licensed professional (e.g., physician or psychologist) in the State of California who is qualified to assess a medical student's fitness to perform essential functions outlined in the [Technical Standards](#) in a safe, productive, and effective manner to fulfill curricular requirements.
- B. Involuntary Leave(s) of Absence (Involuntary LOA) is when a student has not selected to take a voluntary leave and the School has determined that the student must be placed on a temporary period of non-enrollment prior to graduation based on one of the reasons listed in the policy below.
- C. Leave(s) of absences (LOA) is defined as a period of non-enrollment during which a student is not considered to be working toward the MD degree, which can be either a Voluntary Leave of Absence or an Involuntary Leave of Absence.
- D. Medical Leave of Absence (Medical LOA) is defined as a non-enrollment period that allows a student time to address personal health needs including mental or physical illness, substance abuse, injury, or disability and requires a Fitness for Duty Assessment in order to return to enrollment status, which can be either a Voluntary Leave of Absence or an Involuntary Leave of Absence.
- E. Voluntary Leave(s) of Absence (Voluntary LOA) is a temporary period of non-enrollment in which students choose to interrupt their studies prior to graduation.

III. Policy Text

The Executive Associate Dean for Student Affairs may grant a one-year Voluntary LOA, determined on a case-by-case basis. A one-year extension to the Voluntary LOA may be requested and granted by the Progress and Promotion Committee. The one-year extension request must be submitted and reviewed by the Progress and Promotion Committee prior to end of the first year of Voluntary Leave. Students must comply with the 6-year time limit to graduate from medical school, which allows for a total of two years of leave except for time for pursuing an academic degree. Any student that does not meet the 6-year time limit to graduation policy will be considered dismissed from the School. Only the Progress and Promotion Committee can grant an exception to the 6-year time limit policy by allowing additional leave time beyond two years. UCRSOM is required to report all leaves/interruptions of medical education in the Medical Student Performance Evaluation (MSPE), which will be documented by the start and end date of the leave period(s).

IV. Responsibilities

Office of Student Affairs & Progress and Promotion Committee

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V. Procedures

A. Voluntary Leave Procedures

To pursue Voluntary LOA for up to one year, students must consult with the Executive Associate Dean for Student Affairs or their designee on the process of requesting a Voluntary LOA and to discuss the circumstances for the Leave of Absence. Once the student determines they wish to request a Voluntary LOA, they must submit their request in writing to the Executive Associate Dean for Student Affairs or their designee and clearly state the basis of the request, specify preferred beginning and end dates of the Voluntary LOA, and include contact information while on Voluntary LOA. Students should also consult with the Offices of Student Support and Wellness, Financial Aid, and Academic Success to discuss any implications of taking a leave related to areas of responsibilities of each of these offices. It is the responsibility of the students to consult with these departments.

When a Voluntary LOA is approved, Student Affairs will work with the student to ensure appropriate university leave forms or other needed documents are completed. Student Affairs will notify appropriate “need to know” administrators and offices when a leave of absence has been approved and approaching the beginning of the leave. The SOM registrar will update appropriate systems with the status of the student’s leave and academic status, as appropriate.

B. Involuntary Leave Procedures

Under certain circumstances, a student may be placed on Involuntary LOA. An Involuntary LOA is not a disciplinary sanction. A student who prefers to take a Voluntary LOA for medical reasons rather than to be placed on an Involuntary LOA for medical reasons is ordinarily allowed to do so. Transcripts do not distinguish between Voluntary LOAs and Involuntary LOAs.

An Involuntary LOA may be required for the following reasons:

1. Medical circumstances:

- a. The student’s behavior, stemming from either a medical related reason (e.g. behavioral health or substance abuse) or other non-medical related reason, poses a direct threat to the health or safety of any person or has seriously disrupted others in the student’s residential community, learning environment, university, or clinical affiliates.
 - b. The student’s threatening, self-destructive, or disruptive behavior is suspected to be the result of a medical condition or substance abuse, the behavior is persistent, and the student has refused to cooperate with efforts by UCRSOM to determine the cause of the ongoing behavior.
 - c. The student is not cleared to return to enrollment and/or residence at the medical school following either: (i) a hospitalization or emergency room visit that raises serious concerns about the student’s health or well-being; or (ii) other circumstances that raise serious concerns about the student’s health or well-being and reasonably call into question their ability to function as a student in the medical school environment.
2. Failure to adhere to the terms of an agreement to engage in treatment. The student’s continued enrollment and/or residence is conditioned on the student’s agreement to engage in treatment, such as following the recommendations of the student’s treatment team, and the student has failed to adhere to the terms of that agreement.
 3. Alleged criminal behavior: The student has been arrested on allegations of serious criminal behavior or has been charged with such behavior by law enforcement authorities.
 4. Risk to the community: The student has allegedly violated a disciplinary sanction by the University or School, or their presence on campus poses a significant risk to safety or to the educational

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environment of the community.

5. Indebtedness: The student's term bill is unpaid, and the student has not made arrangements acceptable to the School to address the issue.
6. Failure to provide medical documentation of required immunizations.
7. Unfulfilled School requirements: The student has not met an academic or other school requirement, including, without limitation, attending class or participating in required activities, and has not taken steps acceptable to the School to meet the requirement.
8. Failure to register. The student has not registered as required at the beginning of each term.

The decision to place a student on involuntary leave for no more than a year (inclusive of existing leaves is not more than a total of one year except time for pursuing an academic degree) is made by Executive Associate Dean for Student Affairs or their designee in consultation with the Progress and Promotion Committee. A student is notified in writing that they have been placed on involuntary leave. The student may petition the Faculty Executive Committee for reconsideration within five calendar days and final appeal to the Dean of the Medical School within 5 calendar days of notification of FEC's decision.

C. Fitness for Duty

UCRSOM may require a Fitness for Duty Assessment when one of the following applies:

1. A student voluntarily requests medical leave.
2. A student on involuntary leave due to medical circumstances or failure to adhere to the terms of the treatment agreement.
3. There is a notification from any source to the Executive Associate Dean for Student Affairs regarding a concern about a student that meets one of the Involuntary LOA definitions for medical reasons listed above.
4. There is a notification from any source to the Executive Associate Dean for Student Affairs regarding a concern that a student is/may not be meeting the [Technical Standards due to a student's mental or physical state \(which includes impairment due to substance abuse\)](#).

D. Fitness for Duty Assessment

If the Executive Associate Dean for Student Affairs, in consultation with Progress and Promotion Committee, requires a student to undergo a Fitness for Duty Assessment, the evaluator must determine whether the student:

1. Poses a significant risk of substantial harm to the health and safety of the student or others that cannot be reduced or eliminated with or without reasonable accommodation; and/or
2. Due to a known or suspected illness, injury, substance abuse condition, or other medical condition is not able to perform the essential functions of a typical medical student with or without reasonable accommodation.
3. The evaluator will submit a written Fitness for Duty Evaluation Report addressed to the Executive Associate Dean for Student Affairs which includes an evaluation of the criteria listed above and any relevant recommendations.

The student must cooperate fully with the selected evaluator and must sign any necessary consent forms for the assessment and communication of the results to the Executive Associate Dean of Student Affairs and the Progress and Promotion Committee. The cost(s) for any required Fitness for Duty Assessment will be the responsibility of UCRSOM. The cost(s) for any subsequent treatment shall be the sole responsibility of the student.

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When the Fitness for Duty Evaluation Report is received, it will be shared with the student and forwarded to the Chair of the Progress and Promotion Committee, who will share the determination of the evaluator with the Progress and Promotion Committee and may elect to share the report in its entirety with the committee. The Progress and Promotion Committee shall request the student meet with the Progress and Promotion Committee to review the report and determine appropriate action consistent with policies in the Student Handbook. If the Progress and Promotion Committee determines the student is not meeting essential functions in accordance with criteria listed above, the Progress and Promotion Committee shall take appropriate action including but not limited to: medical leave of absence; personal leave of absence; dismissal; and/ or a denial of return to enrollment (i.e. for a former student who previously attended UCRSOM and is seeking readmission).

Return to Duty: A student may return following an additional Fitness for Duty Assessment that is submitted to the Progress and Promotion Committee. The Progress and Promotion Committee will consider the new Fitness for Duty Evaluation Report and may make a written recommendation for the student to return, which may include limiting patient access. The Fitness for Duty Evaluation Report and all written records regarding the decisions and determinations of the Progress and Promotion Committee will be kept in the student's permanent file, which may consist of paper and electronic records, properly secured in the Office of Student Affairs. If a Fitness for Duty Evaluation Report was issued more than six months ago, a new evaluation report may be required.

Once a Fitness for Duty Evaluation Report is received, the PPC determines whether a student is meeting the essential functions in accordance with the Technical Standards and policies in the Student Handbook. A student who refuses to submit to a Fitness for Duty evaluation will not be permitted to continue in the curriculum and will be subject to dismissal.

VI. Forms | Instructions

Leave of Absence Form

VII. Related Information

Medical Student Handbook

Absence Policy

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VIII. Approvals:

MEDICAL EDUCATION COMMITTEE (04/17/2025)

Signed by:

Daniel Teraguchi

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DANIEL TERAGUCHI, EdD

EXECUTIVE ASSOCIATE DEAN, STUDENT AFFAIRS,

SCHOOL OF MEDICINE

5/6/2025 | 6:19 PM PDT

DATE

Signed by:

Paul Hackman

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PAUL HACKMAN, J.D., L.L.M.

CHIEF COMPLIANCE AND PRIVACY OFFICER,

SCHOOL OF MEDICINE

5/6/2025 | 2:50 PM PDT

DATE

Signed by:

Deborah Deas

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DEBORAH DEAS, M.D., M.P.H

VICE CHANCELLOR, HEALTH SCIENCES

DEAN, SCHOOL OF MEDICINE

5/8/2025 | 5:48 PM PDT

DATE