POLICY FOR GRADUATE STUDENT LEAVE AND VOLUNTARY LEAVE OF ABSENCE AT THE SCHOOL OF MEDICINE

The following policy applies to all graduate students enrolled in Masters and PhD programs at the School of Medicine, WITH THE EXCEPTION of students who are funded by grants/fellowships that have their own leave policy. In those cases, the students will follow the policy of the granting/fellowship agency.

Vacation (paid leave): 15 days (3 weeks) paid leave per year of enrollment (in addition to 10 official days sanctioned by the University and listed below).

New Year's Day
Martin Luther King Day
Memorial Day
Independence Day
Labor Day
Thanksgiving Day
Day after Thanksgiving
Day before Christmas
Christmas
Day before New Year's

Spring break and Winter break weeks can be taken as paid leave but will count against total days allotted for paid leave. Paid leave is distinct from sick leave (covered below) and sick leave should not be deducted from paid leave. Unused days of paid leave may not be carried over into the following 12-month period and are not payable upon departure.

Notes:
- Graduate students must provide reasonable advance notice of intention to use paid leave and must receive consent from the faculty supervisor.
- Teaching assistants may not use paid leave to diminish or delay any instructional duties.
- Time spent traveling to and attending academic conferences approved by the faculty supervisor is not considered paid leave.
- For this policy, a year refers to September 1st - August 31st.

Sick Leave: 15 days (3 weeks) paid leave per year. Unused days may not be carried over into the following 12-month period and are not payable upon departure. Sick leave may not be subtracted from any paid leave earned through the policy above.
When a student takes sick leave, they should notify their faculty advisor and keep them up-to-date daily or as feasible. At its discretion, the department or advisor may require the student to submit verification of the need for sick leave from their healthcare

provider to the University Health Service Center for review. Any documents containing a student's medical information must be kept separate from his/her academic file.
Extended absences (more than two weeks) must be reported by the student and the advisor to the program administrator as quickly as possible. If the illness requires an extended absence, the student may apply for a leave of absence, as described below.

New Child Accommodation: Parental paid leave of 40 days per year (8 work weeks) can be used for the adoption or birth of a child. Parental leave does not carry over from year to year. Sick or vacation leave can be combined with a new child accommodation request for a total of 14 consecutive weeks. Under special circumstances, and in consultation with the faculty advisor, this period may be extended by the program director. Please see:
https://www.jhu.edu/assets/uploads/2017/06/newchildaccommgradandpostd oc.pdf

Voluntary Leave of Absence (LoA): A student may request a voluntary leave of absence for reasons including the following and must provide the proper documentation for their given situation, as indicated below:

- medical condition, including mental health conditions: a letter from the treating healthcare provider
- military service: a letter or verification from the Armed Forces
- personal or family hardship: a letter from the student applying for leave
- internship (typically 2-3 months): a letter from the entity/organization at which the student will be interning

Notes:

- Leave is granted for a maximum of 1 year, with the possibility of extension for one additional year.
- Leave may not exceed 2 years cumulative.
- A student does not receive a stipend from the University during leave.
- During an internship, the stipend, if any, is paid by one of the internship sponsors.
- The period of the leave is not included in "time to degree."
- A student cannot be enrolled in a degree granting program at another institution during a LoA.
- A student who has received federal financial aid, including undergraduate loans, may be subject to additional restrictions and should check with the Financial Aid Office before starting a LoA. The SOM Registrar must report students on LoA to the National Student Clearinghouse as withdrawn from student status. This will impact student loan payments.
- LoA impacts an international student's status. International students should contact the Office of International Services at least thirty (30) days before starting a LoA.
- Continuation of health insurance is required during LoA. For more information, including SOM policy on medical insurance, dental insurance, University Health Service, insurance premium payments, waiving benefits, eligibility to defer loans, termination of a LoA and COBRA, communications, and student account activity,

refer to *the Masters and PhD Candidates on Leave of Absence* memo from the Registrar's office and the *WAIVER of SCHOOL of MEDICINE BENEFITS for STUDENTS on LoA form.*

Voluntary Leave of Absence (LoA) Procedure

Initiating a LoA:

A student requesting a LoA from an academic program for an internship will first complete an internship Memorandum of Understanding (MoU), and obtain signatures from the thesis advisor, program director, and Associate Dean for Graduate Biomedical Education. If the program director approves a LoA associated with the internship, they complete a *Student Change of Status* form signed by the director and by the student. The signed form is immediately submitted to the Registrar's office by the director, along with a copy of the MoU.

A student requesting a LoA from an academic program for any other reason should first contact his/her faculty or thesis advisor and complete the form "Letter of Intent for Voluntary Leave of Absence" (page 5). This letter should be submitted by the student to the program director along with any relevant documentation. Additionally, the student and advisor should schedule a joint meeting with the program director to discuss the LoA request, prior to the proposed start date for the student's leave.

Following this meeting, if the request for LoA is approved by the program director, the director completes a *Student Change of Status* form signed by the director and by the student. The signed form is immediately submitted to the Registrar's office by the director, with a copy provided to the Associate Dean for Graduate Biomedical Education.

The program director will inform the thesis advisor of their decision to approve the LoA request. If no faculty or thesis advisor exists or the circumstances otherwise warrant, the program director will retain the right to approve a student's request for LoA without signatory approval from a student's advisor. In such circumstances, the program director will work with the student on placement with a new advisor if necessary upon the student's return.

Returning from a LoA:

The student will notify the program director of their intent to return to full time status, at least two weeks in advance and provide documentation as appropriate (similar to the documentation they submitted upon requesting the leave) to indicate they are able to return to full-time status.

The program director will contact the advisor to whom the student is to return, and confirm the student's return date. The director will submit a Student Change of Status form, signed by the director and the student, to notify the Registrar that the student's LoA has ended.

A student's initial LoA request may not exceed 1 year. The student may request an extension for up to 1 additional year. To request an extension, a student must complete a new "Letter of Intent for Voluntary Leave of Absence" and follow the procedure described above for initiating an LoA. The total period of leave may not exceed 2 years, unless approved as provided below.
if a student does not register for coursework before the end of the approved LoA term, the LoA automatically ends without further notice to the student. If this should occur, the student is no longer enrolled and will need to reapply for reentry into the program. The program director will send a notice to a student who is approaching the end of the approved LoA term informing them that their leave time is almost over.

In unusual circumstances (e.g., extended military service), a program director may request from the Associate Dean for Graduate Biomedical Education an extension of a student's LoA beyond two years. A letter documenting that this extension request has been granted must be submitted to the Registrar prior to the end of the initial leave period.

Involuntary Leave of Absence: Students may be asked to withdraw or be placed on an involuntary medical leave of absence when their health, or the behavioral manifestations of their health, render them unfit to continue the course of study. Prior notice and the opportunity to be heard will, under ordinary circumstances, be given before the imposition of an involuntary leave of absence. However, the School of Medicine reserves the right to conclude that, on certain occasions, conditions exist which warrants an immediate leave of absence in order to avert imminent harm to the student, or to other persons or property. In such an event, a student on an involuntary leave of absence will be apprised immediately of procedures for appeal and reinstatement by the Associate Dean for Graduate Biomedical Education.

Policy approved by vote of the MA/PhD Committee March 11, 2019

Letter of Intent for Voluntary Leave of Absence

This form is completed by the student, signed by the student and thesis advisor and submitted to the program director along with any relevant documentation. The student and thesis advisor will schedule a meeting to discuss this letter with the program director, prior to the student's intended start date for this leave.
The initial request may not exceed 1 year, and the total period of leave may not exceed 2 years.

Student Name: _____ Thesis Advisor Name: _____

Intended Start date: _____ Anticipated return date: _____

Best way to contact you during your time off:
phone number: _____ email address: _____

Reason for request: □ Medical □ Military □ Personal
Comments: _____
_____
_____

The following documentation should accompany this request:

- medical condition, including mental health conditions: a letter from the healthcare provider
- military service: a letter or verification from the Armed Forces
- personal or family hardship: a letter from the student applying for leave

Graduate Student
I am requesting the above leave of absence and agree to keep my advisor and program director up to date on any changes in the circumstances of my leave as feasible, including any changes in my anticipated return date. I will notify the program director at least two weeks before my intended return date, and submit the necessary paperwork. I understand that I may not be able to continue working on the same project on which I am currently engaged upon my return.

_____ _____
Student Signature Date

Thesis Advisor
I support the student's request for a Leave of Absence, and I am prepared to accept the student back in the lab upon their return, although I may not be able to guarantee the student's ability to continue work on the exact project on which they are currently engaged. If in the interim, unforeseen circumstances (e.g., loss of funding) prevent me from supporting the student upon their return, I will reach out to the program director to discuss the best solution for the student.

_____ _____
Thesis advisor signature Date