



The Medical College of Georgia

Office of Academic Affairs

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Leave of Absence Policy and Guidance for Student Affairs

Leaves of Absence (LOA) are common amongst medical students nationwide for reasons including, but not limited to: academic distress, health matters, personal situations, advanced degrees, and research enrichment. A standardized approach across all campuses of the Medical College of Georgia (MCG) ensures a uniform manner to address leaves of absence and promotes consistency and comparability. For the purposes of this document, 1) the title Class Dean (Augusta) and Campus Associate Dean for Student Affairs (Athens and Savannah) will be used synonymously for conciseness and given similar roles with regards to LOAs on the three four-year campuses; 2) the Student Academic Promotions and Professionalism Conduct Committee will be referred to as the Student Promotions Committee. There are two common ways that LOAs are initiated at MCG: Student Affairs-initiated and Student Promotions Committee-initiated. This document will outline Student Affairs' involvement in both. Student failure to comply with the terms of this policy may lead to repercussions including, but not limited to, administrative withdrawal, referral to the Student Promotions Committee, and/or dismissal from the Medical College of Georgia at Augusta University. Students who plan to be out of the curriculum for a semester or more are encouraged to go on an LOA. Students who have not participated in any courses for two consecutive semesters and are not LOA will be administratively withdrawn.

A. Student Affairs Initiated Process

1. Class Dean is made aware that student may benefit from leave of absence (LOA).
 - a. This may be student-initiated or through reports received through academic, professional, or other avenues.
2. Class Dean meets with student.
 - a. Risks/benefits/alternatives regarding LOA discussed.
 - i. Specific policy areas that are necessary to discuss (See Appendix B for checklist):
 1. Requirement to stay in contact with Student Affairs
 - a. Monthly is standard, but may be adjusted per discretion of Student Affairs
 2. MCG six-year graduation rule (eight-year if MD/PhD)
 3. Failure to return by specified date can result in administrative withdrawal
 4. Notation of LOA on MSPE
 5. Health insurance financial aid, loan repayment and scholarship funds may be impacted- it is responsibility of student to review and account for these changes



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- b. Meeting is documented in writing and placed in student's confidential Student Affairs file.
 - i. If LOA involves professionalism, academic matters, or promotions committee to any extent; other faculty/personnel/scribe, in addition to documentation, required
3. MCG Student Promotions Committee can be consulted at any point in the process if Class Dean or Associate Dean for Student Affairs feels it is warranted. However, Student Affairs reserves the right to grant a LOA for up to six months without Student Promotions Committee input for personal, health, research enrichment, and dual degree reasons. The Curriculum Office must be consulted for all dual degree experiences.
 - a. At baseline, a one semester LOA should be seen as the "standard" initial LOA
 - i. Student can return sooner with appropriate notification All conditions imposed by the Student Promotions Committee must have been met before they can return.
 - b. If a LOA is going to exceed one semester, the student must meet with respective Student Promotions Subcommittee/Committee if warranted by prior history
 - c. The Preclerkship curriculum is structured such that students in that phase who go on LOA may need to restart the curriculum with a subsequent class year. Because of that, the LOA period may be as long as one year. The six-year rule still applies in these cases.
4. Associate Dean for Student Affairs is notified– modifications to LOA made as appropriate
5. Formal letter summarizing academic performance, describing provisions of LOA, and stipulating the requirements for continued enrollment at the Medical College of Georgia at Augusta University generated and sent to student by Class Dean (see Appendix A for draft)
 - a. Two copies sent- one for signing and one for student's records
 - b. Student has five business days from receipt of letter to sign and return
 - c. CC of letter sent in secure email to:
 - i. MCG Associate Dean for Student Affairs
 - ii. Appropriate Campus Dean or Campus Associate Dean
 - iii. MCG Associate Dean for Curriculum and, if applicable, Campus Associate Dean for Curriculum
 - iv. If applicable, the appropriate Academic Advising or Academic Success leadership
 - v. Promotions Subcommittee Chair
 - vi. Promotions Committee Chair
6. Class Dean notifies curriculum office, which generates withdrawal/drop/incomplete form that is signed off by Student Affairs and submitted to registrar through Curriculum
7. It is the responsibility of the Class Dean to track students on LOA to ensure consistent return into curriculum, make alterations to LOA if necessary, and/or refer to Student Promotions Subcommittee/Committee if warranted



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8. If student does not comply with LOA provisions and stipulations, the following actions may occur:

- a. Referral to MCG Student Promotions Subcommittee/Committee
- b. Administrative withdrawal

B. Promotions and Professionalism Committee Initiated Process

1. The MCG Student Promotions Subcommittee/Committee reserves the right to recommend and implement a LOA as part of their processes
 - a. This letter would be generated by the subcommittee chair or the full committee chair with appropriate CC's based upon the Student Promotions Committee policies and procedures
2. In the event of a Student Promotions Committee Initiated Process, the appropriate Class Dean must have a follow-up meeting with student in order to ensure the student is understands:
 - a. Requirement to stay in contact with Student Affairs
 - b. MCG six-year graduation rule
 - c. Failure to return by specified date can result in administrative withdrawal
 - d. Notation of LOA on MSPE
 - e. Health insurance may be impacted- it is responsibility of student to look further into this
 - f. Financial aid may be impacted- it is responsibility of student to look further into this
 - g. Loan repayment- it is responsibility of student to look further into this
 - h. Scholarship funds may be impacted

This meeting should be documented and filed into student's private Student Affairs file. A witness to meeting, pending reasoning for LOA, is strongly encouraged.

3. If student does not comply with LOA provisions and stipulations, the following actions may occur:
 - a. Immediate referral to Promotions and Professionalism full committee

C. Return from LOA

1. Student must notify the Class Dean in writing of the intent to return to the curriculum at least six weeks prior to the return to the curriculum
2. Upon receipt of this notification, a meeting will be arranged between the student, a member of the Student Affairs faculty, and a member of the Curriculum faculty for all students and regional campus leadership if the student is a regional campus student.
3. If necessary (Promotions Committee initiated LOA), Student Promotions Subcommittee/Committee Chair will send notification to appropriate committee members for vote regarding the leave



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D. Administrative Withdrawal – Students who are not on LOA or registered in any courses for two consecutive semesters will be administratively withdrawn. Prior to withdrawal, every attempt will be made to contact the student to ascertain the situation and place the student on LOA if appropriate.

*Note on student-initiated withdrawal: It is not uncommon for students with extended or multiple LOAs to recognize they may wish to withdraw from medical school completely. Student-initiated withdrawals during or after a LOA are appropriate as long as they are not under duress. If a full MCG Student Promotions Committee meeting is scheduled to discuss student, a student-initiated withdrawal will not be honored.



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Appendix A: Sample Student Affairs LOA Letter



AUGUSTA UNIVERSITY

**MEDICAL COLLEGE
OF GEORGIA**

[Date]

Dear [Student Name],

The purpose of this letter is to (1) summarize your academic performance to date, (2) describe the provisions of your leave of absence, and (3) stipulate the requirements for your continued enrollment at the Medical College of Georgia at Augusta University.

Academic Background:

- Matriculation date:
- Academic Deficiencies:

Leave of Absence Stipulations:

Per our conversation on [insert date], you have been granted a leave of absence. Your request of leave absence will be granted effective [insert date] and ending no later than [insert date]. The purpose of this leave is to [insert FERPA-appropriate reason].

A leave of absence is approved based upon your conditions of the leave, as outlined below:

- You will keep your Class Dean informed of your current address, email, and phone number.
- You will keep in contact with your Class Dean by phone and email as requested at least monthly, or sooner if necessary or as stipulated in our discussions.
- You will be expected to return to medical school no later than [insert date]. In the unlikely event that you do not return by the specified date and in the absence of any extenuating circumstances, you may be administratively withdrawn.
- In the unlikely event that your leave of absence needs to extend beyond twelve calendar months, you will be required to meet with the MCG Student Promotions Committee/Subcommittee to discuss next steps.
- You will provide [names of curriculum deans], and myself with a written request to return to the curriculum by [insert date six weeks prior to return date].

*DISCLAIMER: Printed version of this document is unofficial for reference only; official version can be found online: <https://www.augusta.edu/mcg/coffice/curriculum/policies.php>



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- You may request to return sooner than this letter stipulates by contacting [names of curriculum deans] and myself.
- After notification of return a meeting will be scheduled with between you, Student Affairs, Curriculum and if you are on a regional campus, leadership from that campus.
- You must complete your medical education by [insert date] to comply with the Medical College of Georgia's six-year time rule for completion of the MD degree.

Failure to comply with the terms of this leave of absence may lead to repercussions including, but not limited to, administrative withdrawal, referral to the promotions and professionalism committee, and/or dismissal from the Medical College of Georgia at Augusta University.

Please understand that:

- The leave of absence will be noted in your Medical School Performance Evaluation (MSPE) as [insert wording].
- Your leave of absence may impact your health insurance, financial aid, and loan repayment. It is your responsibility as the student to contact the appropriate entities to fully understand what impacts and effects your leave of absence will have in these areas. Thus, you are strongly encouraged to contact student health and financial aid. If you are on Augusta University student insurance, the contact information is: UHC Customer Service at 866-403-8267.
- If you are currently receiving scholarship funds, you may no longer be eligible for these funds, which will likely not be available upon your return.

Please keep a copy of this letter for your records. If you agree with the terms of this letter, please sign and return one copy no later than *FIVE BUSINESS DAYS FROM THE RECEIPT DATE OF THE LETTER*. Please retain a copy for your records. Please feel free to contact me if I can be of further assistance.

Sincerely,

Name

Title

cc:

Name degree, Associate Dean for Student Affairs

Name, degree, Associate Dean for Curriculum

Name, degree, Chair, Year Promotions Subcommittee



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Name, degree, Char, Full Promotions Committee Chair

Appendix B: Checklist for Student Affairs Discussion with Student going on LOA

- ☐ Requirement to stay in contact with Student Affairs
 - At least monthly
- ☐ MCG six-year graduation rule
- ☐ Failure to return by specified date can result in administrative withdrawal and/or Promotions
- ☐ Notation of LOA on MSPE
- ☐ Health insurance may be affected- it is responsibility of student to look further into this
 - Student should contact student health center
 - If on student insurance: UHC Customer Service at 866-403-8267.
- ☐ Financial aid may be affected- it is responsibility of student to look further into this
 - Augusta University Financial Aid: 706-737-1524
- ☐ Loan repayment- it is responsibility of student to look further into this
- ☐ Scholarship funds may be affected
- ☐ Form for registrar