Dartmouth
GEISEL SCHOOL OF MEDICINE

Leave of Absence Policy

Summary of Purpose

The purpose of this policy is to define the Leave of Absence (LOA) status and explain the procedure for approval for going on and returning from LOA.

Scope and Applicability

This policy applies to all Geisel medical students.

Definitions

Leave of Absence (LOA): A status where the student has been approved for a leave from the Geisel MD program for a period of up to one academic year, during which the student is not enrolled in the MD program, is not registered for courses, and is not earning academic credit towards the MD degree.

Policy Statement

- The Geisel MD program must be completed in 7 consecutive academic years, as outlined in the **Geisel Policy on Separation, Suspension, or Mandated Leave of Absence of a Geisel Medical Student**, inclusive of LOA. Students should plan voluntary LOAs and reduced course loads carefully to allow time for possible unavoidable events. Note that the requirement to complete the Doctor of Medicine degree within 7 consecutive academic years does not apply to students accepted as candidates for the dual degree MD-PhD program.

- LOA is typically granted for a period of up to one academic year, and students are typically approved for only one LOA from the MD program. In unusual circumstances, additional LOAs or extension of a single LOA beyond one academic year may be permitted on a case-by-case basis. LOAs that extend for more than two academic years will be converted to withdrawal status.

- Students on LOA are **not considered enrolled students and are not covered by liability insurance**. Accordingly, students on LOA may not engage in shadowing or other forms of clinical care under the auspices of being a Geisel medical student while on LOA.

- Students have access to course materials from courses that they have **completed** to review course materials and maintain engagement with the curriculum during the period of the LOA. Students on LOA may not audit MD courses (i.e., courses may not appear on the transcript as being audited) or earn credit towards the MD degree.

- All students on LOA have an Active Student Status in the Banner Student System, which allows them to be eligible for most non-curricular privileges of a student not on LOA (e.g., use of Dartmouth email address, access to Dartmouth buildings and library with ID, as examples).

- The LOA status will impact student status in Dartmouth Health systems such that **ID badges and access to Dartmouth Health systems will be disabled during the LOA**. If a student requires continued access to Dartmouth Health systems related to a non-student role they will be engaged in while on LOA, for example, conducting mentored research, the student will need to officially request this access from Dartmouth Health as an employee, while stating that they will **not** be acting as a Geisel medical student.

- It is the student's responsibility to meet with a member of the Office of Student Life to understand how the LOA status will impact them with regard to various Dartmouth and Geisel support services, including but not limited to, campus billing, financial aid, eligibility for student health insurance, payment of student fees, and access to personal counseling services. If the student has questions regarding the services offered by any Dartmouth or Geisel student services office, the student is expected to engage with the office(s) for clarification.

- The student's transcript and official academic record will indicate that the student was on LOA for the time period approved. The record will not indicate the reason for the LOA nor the type of LOA (personal, medical, for example) unless the LOA was mandated as an administrative requirement, in which case the LOA will be designated as Mandatory Leave of Absence.

- A student on LOA who needs to register for the United States Medical Licensing Examination (USMLE) Step exams must contact the Geisel Registrar's Office.

- Students enrolled in Geisel-approved dual degree programs are continuously enrolled and are not on LOA from the school.

- See the Tuition Refund Policy for details on billing policies for LOAs.

Procedure

A. Initiating LOA

There are two broad categories of LOA:

1. LOA initiated by the school (Administrative or Mandatory LOA):
   This type of LOA typically occurs in response to student academic difficulty or conduct concerns and can be initiated by either an administrative office or the Academic Progress Committee (APC) or Professional Standards and Conduct Board (PSCB), aligned with school policies. LOA initiated by the school is a required/mandatory LOA.

2. LOA initiated by the student (Personal LOA):
   A student may request a personal LOA for a variety of reasons which could include pursuit of an additional degree not part of a Geisel-approved dual degree program or individual or family needs.

Regardless of the type of LOA (whether initiated by the school or the student), the student is responsible for the steps outlined here to initiate the process of a change in status to LOA.

1. Students initiate the process by meeting with and seeking guidance from the Associate Dean for Student Life or designee to discuss the impact of the LOA on career planning and residency applications.
2. Students are required to seek guidance from the appropriate curricular phase dean to discuss the impact on curriculum or reentry to the curriculum following the LOA.
3. The student initiates the change of status by completing the Status Change Form available on the Geisel Registrar's Office website. The form includes providing the reason for the LOA and a plan for the completion of the MD degree.
   a) The Geisel Registrar's Office will route the status change to the appropriate deans and Chair of the APC/PSCB for review and approval, as indicated.
   b) The Geisel Registrar's Office will take appropriate action in all student-related databases, which includes posting the mandated LOA information to the transcript. The Geisel Registrar will also notify Dartmouth and Geisel departments with a need to know.

B. Returning from LOA

1. Students must return from an LOA on the start date of a billing term. The only exception to allow a student to return **earlier** than the start date of a billing term is when the student is required to participate in coursework at the start of a curricular Phase that begins before the start date of the billing term (ex. Phase 2 curriculum starts **earlier** than the start date of the Banner billing Fall term).
2. A student planning to return from LOA must notify Geisel School of Medicine by completing the Status Change Form on the Geisel Registrar's Office website as soon as possible

following the decision to return, and in all cases no less than **30 days** in advance of the start of term in which they will return to enrollment. ***This requirement for timely notification applies to all types of LOA, whether initiated by the school or the student***.

3. The Status Change will be routed to and must be approved by the appropriate deans.
4. Students who were required to take an LOA by the APC/PSCB may be required to appear before the same board if their official notification of required LOA indicated appearance in front of the board as a condition of return.
5. ***If the student does not request to return to the curriculum by completing the Status Change Form by 30 days before the start of the term for planned return, the student may be considered withdrawn***.

C. Medical LOA

Initiating Medical LOA:

A Medical LOA (LOA based on a medical condition) can be initiated by the student or as specified in the **Healthy for Clinic/Class** policy. There are specific steps a student must follow to initiate a Medical LOA, as outlined in the Time Away for Medical Reasons (TAMR) process, at Dartmouth. https://student-time-away.dartmouth.edu/taking-a-leave/
Students are strongly encouraged to contact Geisel's Office of Student Life for guidance on the TAMR process.

In addition to the steps outlined in the TAMR process, students must also complete the Status Change Form available on the Geisel Registrar's Office website, indicating the LOA is medical. A student must provide a letter from their physician or counselor supporting a Medical Leave. Once the College approves the TAMR request, the student will proceed with a status change request as outlined above in section A.

Returning from Medical LOA:

The requirements for return from Medical LOA are the same as outlined above in section B, with the addition of a requirement for medical **clearance for return,** as outlined in the TAMR policy. https://student-time-away.dartmouth.edu/planning-a-return/
Students are strongly encouraged to contact Geisel's Office of Student Life for guidance on the TAMR process.

D. Medical Student Performance Evaluation (MSPE) notation for LOA

The school will note the LOA on the student MSPE in the Academic History section, aligned with AAMC guidelines and school processes. Administrative/Mandatory LOA will be listed accordingly. The reason for a personal LOA will not be specified in the MSPE. Designation of LOA as medical is for internal purposes only. Students are encouraged to speak with the Office of Student Life regarding notation of LOA on their MSPE.

LCME Standard

Standard 10.3 – Policies Regarding Student Selection/Progress and Their Dissemination

The faculty of a medical school establish criteria for student selection and develop and implement effective policies and procedures regarding, and make decisions about, medical student application, selection, admission, assessment, promotion, graduation, and any disciplinary action. The medical school makes available to all interested parties its criteria, standards, policies, and procedures regarding these matters.

Related Information: Documents, Policies, Links, Etc.

Fees and Insurance: https://students.dartmouth.edu/health-service/

Status Change Form: https://geiselmed.dartmouth.edu/registrar/status_change/

TAMR: https://sites.dartmouth.edu/timeaway/

Tuition Refund Policy: UME-OSA-FA-0001

Geisel Policy on Separation, Suspension, or Mandated Leave of Absence of a Geisel Medical Student: UME-CNTRL-0018

Eligibility for Graduation Policy: UME-REG-0003

Policy Administration

Policy Number	UME-REG-0010		
Reviewed By:	Geisel Registrar, Associate Deans for Medical Education and Student Life	**Effective Date:**	July 5, 2017
Approved By:	Dean of Educational Affairs	**Last Date Approved:**	April 3, 2026

Policy Contact Information

Geisel Registrar
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History

Date	History
July 5, 2017	Policy was created, approved by the Senior Associate Dean for Medical Education, and put into effect.
January 4, 2018	Policy was revised.
October 15, 2018	Policy was reviewed.
April 1, 2022	Policy was revised to add Appendix.
May 11, 2023	Policy was reviewed and revised to change Committee on Student Performance and Conduct (CSPC) to Academic Progress Committee (APC) and Professional Standards and Conduct Board (PSCB).
June 23, 2025	Policy was reviewed and revised to include reference to TAMR process and to clarify that students are typically approved for only one LOA from the MD program. The LOA is typically granted for a period of one academic year. Appendix also updated.
July 11, 2025	Policy was reviewed and revised to update the process for students to request access to Dartmouth Health systems while on LOA and to describe the process for students to request access to Canvas while on LOA.
April 3, 2026	Policy was reviewed and revised to clarify return timing of students and align with Tuition Refund Policy and Eligibility for Graduation Policy.

Background

None.