



### **Policy Title:**

Voluntary Leave of Absence Policy and Procedure

### **Policy Identifier:**

PA101

<b>Prepared by:</b> PA Program Faculty	Creation Date: 01/01/2026
<b>Reviewed by:</b> PA Program Executive Committee	Review Date: 01/01/2026
<b>Approved by:</b> PA Program Executive	Effective Date: 01/01/2026
<b>Category:</b> Academic Policies and Student Progression	

### **Related ARC-PA Standards**

A3.14a, b, d

### **Scope**

University of South Carolina School of Medicine Columbia (USC SOMC) PA students.

### **Policy Statement**

A Voluntary Leave of Absence (LOA) may be granted to a student who must temporarily step away from the program due to extenuating personal, financial, or medical circumstances that affect attendance or academic progress. Each request is reviewed individually by the Student Progress and Promotions Committee (SPPC) and the Program Director to determine eligibility, academic implications, and the terms of the leave. LOAs are intended to support student well-being while maintaining the academic integrity and continuity of the PA Program.

### **Reason for Policy**

To ensure compliance with ARC-PA Standards by establishing clear and consistent policies and procedures governing student leaves of absence. This policy provides guidance to ensure that all LOAs are administered equitably, documented appropriately, and implemented in a way that supports both the student's needs and program requirements.

### **Definitions**

- **Leave of Absence (LOA):** A temporary, approved break in enrollment granted to a student for medical, personal, or financial reasons.
- **Student Progress and Promotions Committee (SPPC):** The committee responsible for evaluating student progress and reviewing LOA requests.
- **Deceleration:** Adjustment of a student's academic progression, typically requiring them to join a subsequent cohort to complete remaining coursework or clinical requirements.

### **Procedures**

## **1. General Conditions**

- LOAs are not typically granted for academic reasons.
- Each student may request only one LOA during their enrollment in the program.
- A LOA may not exceed one calendar year.
- Depending on the timing and duration of the LOA, the student may be required to decelerate and join the next cohort upon return.
- Any student unable to complete a Supervised Clinical Practice Experience (SCPE) due to extenuating circumstances (e.g., illness or injury) will be required to repeat the entire SCPE at the end of the clinical year.
  - This may delay graduation and result in additional tuition or fees.
  - An absence exceeding the duration of three SCPEs will result in deceleration into the next cohort.

## **2. Procedure for Requesting a Leave of Absence**

1. Submit a written request for an LOA to both the faculty advisor and the Program Director, outlining the reason and estimated duration.
2. Meet with the SPPC to review eligibility, potential academic implications, and the impact on progression.
3. Meet with the Program Director following SPPC review to finalize recommendations.
4. A tentative return date will be established, not to exceed one year from the start of the leave.

## **3. Conditions for Return**

- Prior to returning, the student must notify the Program in writing of their intent to return.
- The student may be required to meet with the SPPC or designated PA Program faculty to develop a reintegration or academic transition plan.
- Before resuming coursework or clinical experiences, the student may be required to:
  - Complete a new background check and urine drug screen in accordance with initial enrollment requirements.
  - Submit updated medical clearance or documentation supporting readiness to return (if applicable).

## **4. Financial Responsibility During Leave of Absence**

- Students granted a Leave of Absence remain responsible for all tuition, fees, and other financial obligations incurred prior to the start of the leave, in accordance with university policies and deadlines.
- A Leave of Absence may impact tuition charges, financial aid, loan repayment status, and eligibility for refunds. Students are responsible for consulting with the appropriate university offices (e.g., Bursar, Financial Aid) to understand these implications.
- Students are responsible for all costs associated with returning to the program, including but not limited to:
  - Updated background check and urine drug screening
  - Required health clearances, immunizations, or medical documentation
  - Any additional tuition or fees resulting from deceleration, repeated coursework, or delayed progression
- The program is not responsible for covering or reimbursing any costs incurred as a result of



the Leave of Absence or return-to-program requirements.

**Enforcement and Accountability**

- The Program Director and SPPC are responsible for reviewing and approving all LOA requests.
- Students who do not return within the approved timeframe or fail to complete reinstatement requirements will be administratively withdrawn from the program.
- Extensions beyond one year are not permitted and will require reapplication to the program via CASPA.

**Contacts**

Program Director  
USC School of Medicine Columbia  
Physician Assistant Program

**History**

Date of Change	Change
01/01/2026	Policy drafted into new template.