



TEXAS TECH UNIVERSITY HEALTH SCIENCES CENTER EL PASO

Operating Policy and Procedure

HSCEP OP: 77.05, Student Leaves of Absence and Suspensions

PURPOSE: The purpose of this Texas Tech University Health Sciences Center El Paso Operating Policy and Procedure (HSCEP OP) is to ensure understanding and a standardized approach regarding interruptions in student enrollment. This HSCEP OP applies to all schools of the Texas Tech University Health Sciences Center El Paso (TTUHSC El Paso, also referred to in this policy as the University).

REVIEW: This HSCEP OP will be reviewed by May 1 every even-numbered year (ENY) by each school's Dean or designee, with recommendations for revisions forwarded to the vice president for academic affairs or designee by May 15.

DEFINITIONS:

Enrollment: Registration in credit bearing course(s) as a student in a school or degree program.

Interruption of enrollment: A temporary break in a student's enrollment and participation in academic activities at the University for a specific period, after which the student may be eligible to re-enroll.

Suspension: A school-imposed interruption in a student's participation in coursework and other curricular activities, including clinical rotations, based on non-fulfillment of academic performance standards or misconduct. A suspension may or may not be associated with an interruption of enrollment depending upon its duration and whether the student is expected to complete the affected academic term as originally enrolled. A suspension does not affect a student's admission status, though that status may be affected by the student's non-compliance with the terms/conditions of the suspension.

Leave of absence (LOA): A school or student-initiated temporary interruption in a student's participation in coursework, including clinical rotations, and other curricular activities. A student – initiated request for a LOA must be approved by the school. A LOA may or may not be associated with an interruption of enrollment depending upon its duration and whether the student is expected to complete the affected academic term as originally enrolled. A LOA does not affect a student's admission status, though that status may be affected by the student's non-compliance with the terms/conditions of the LOA, including failure to return as planned.

A LOA without interruption of enrollment (LOA-NI) may be issued only by the dean of the school in which the student is enrolled, or their designee. A LOA-NI may be granted for health, personal, or professional reasons.

A leave of absence with interruption of enrollment (LOA-IE) may be requested by a student due to compelling personal circumstances or may be imposed by the institution based on academic performance, conduct, health, or safety concerns as defined in the Institutional Student Handbook and/or in the relevant school-level student handbook. In all cases, such decisions shall comply with applicable institutional policies and procedures.

POLICY/PROCEDURE:

1. Suspension:

- a. Students may be suspended for non-fulfillment of academic performance standards as

established for the college and degree or certificate program in which they are enrolled.

- b. Students may be suspended for misconduct as outlined in the TTUHSC El Paso Student Handbook: Code of Professional and Academic Conduct.
2. **Performance standards:** Students must meet specific departmental/program performance standards. Individual departments or programs within each school may apply higher academic and performance standards than those established in each school. Each student is responsible for maintaining awareness of the performance and academic standards for the program(s) in which they are enrolled.
 3. **Grading and academic and enrollment status:** Grading standards, grading symbols, grade point scales, GPA determinations, and other considerations regarding the quality of work of students are the prerogative of the faculty of the programs, as are issues of promotion and advancement. Each student is responsible for ongoing awareness of their academic and enrollment status. See also HSCEP OP 59.05.
 4. **Summary suspension:**
 - a. A student may be summarily suspended (i.e., suspended with immediate effect) due to any of the following:
 - i. Misconduct related to possible violations of local, state, or federal law may be subject to a summary suspension, whether or not the alleged violation occurs on University property or in connection with any University-sponsored activity;
 - ii. Misconduct involving physical harm or threat of harm to any person, including any conduct that endangers the health or safety of any person;
 - iii. Behavior that disrupts the normal operation of TTUHSC El Paso, including the ordinary activities of its students, employees, volunteers, or visitors;
 - iv. Conduct that otherwise interferes with, or creates a hostile or intimidating environment for, the expected activities and progression of any TTUHSC El Paso student, employee, volunteer, or visitor; or,
 - v. Egregious violations of the TTUHSC El Paso Student Code of Professional and Academic Conduct, as defined in the Institutional Student Handbook.
 - b. Summary suspensions shall be issued only by the dean of the school in which the student is enrolled (or their designee), or by the assistant vice president for student services. The assistant vice president for student services shall issue summary suspensions only under conditions and terms specified in the Institutional Student Handbook: Code of Professional and Academic Conduct.
 - c. Summary suspensions may be communicated to the affected student verbally (in person, by phone, or video conferencing platform) or in writing (by certified mail and email). The issuing official is responsible for delivering this notification within 24 hours. Subsequently, typically within one week, the student shall be provided with an additional notification outlining the reason for the suspension, the effect of the suspension on their enrollment status and academic transcript, and any stipulations relating to their return or, if indicated, their re-enrollment. This notification shall occur via the student's institutional e-mail account and by registered mail to the student's address on file with the registrar. In addition, this notification shall be copied to the relevant dean, the assistant vice president for student services, the registrar, and the vice president for academic affairs.
 - d. Any substantial changes in the terms of a student's suspension shall result in the issuance of updated notifications as described in paragraph 4.c above.
 - e. The issuing official shall collect all relevant documents, eye witness and corroborative testimony and contact information, and artifacts pertaining to a summary suspension. All documentation, including eye witness and corroborative witness testimony and contact information, and artifacts shall be securely retained by the relevant school as directed by the dean or their designee. All files must be stored and maintained according to University policies and applicable State and Federal laws concerning maintenance and disclosure of

student records, protection of a student's right of privacy, and the disclosure of personal student information.

- f. A student may appeal a summary suspension by sending a letter or email within two business days of their notification to the relevant dean. If no appeal is received within two business days, the suspension shall be considered uncontested. The dean shall have two business days to confirm or retract the suspension. If the suspension is upheld, the student may appeal to the president (or the president's designee) via letter or email within two business days of the decision by the dean (if no appeal is received within two business days, the right to appeal shall be considered waived). The president (or designee) shall have two business days to confirm or retract the suspension, and the president's (or designee's) decision shall be final.
 - g. Following issuance of a summary suspension and the resolution of any appeals under paragraph 4.f above, the university and the relevant school(s) shall initiate formal administrative processes as indicated by their student policies to address the academic and/or conduct issues underlying the suspension. Those processes may modify the terms of the suspension as indicated by their findings and discretion under policy.
5. **Leave of Absence with Interruption of Enrollment (LOA-IE):** A student may request and/or a school may recommend an LOA-IE due to compelling personal circumstances. Students seeking to request an LOA-IE, shall contact the Office of Student Affairs of the school in which they are enrolled.

LOA-IEs refer to, and are limited to students in a program for which continuous enrollment is expected, who have completed a minimum of one academic term of program course work, who are in good academic and conduct standing, and who are compelled to temporarily withdraw due to reasons beyond their control (such as illness, military service, or other personal reasons justifying an interruption of the degree program). The maximum duration of an LOA-IE is typically limited to one year, except when related to a military service obligation. The following restrictions apply:

- a. Students receiving federal financial aid may be subject to restrictions and should contact the Financial Aid Office for applicable enrollment requirements.
 - b. The student must meet with the relevant dean, or their designee, for approval to end their LOA-IE status and re-enroll.
 - c. If a student on a LOA-IE does not re-enroll on or before the end date designated by the School (except if due to military service), then the student shall be considered to have withdrawn and they must be formally re-admitted to be eligible to re-enroll and resume their intended program of study.
 - d. Students subject to an LOA-IE who are participating in clinical rotations shall not take part in any assigned clinical rotation or any other University-sponsored programming while the LOA-IE is in effect.
 - e. A student's eligibility to participate in co-curricular activities, student leadership roles, and other school-sponsored extracurricular activities shall be suspended during an LOA-IE.
6. **Leave of Absence without Interruption in Enrollment (LOA-NI):** LOA-NIs generally apply to situations which are expected to last no longer than one month, and in which the student is expected to complete the affected academic term as originally enrolled. They are administered entirely within the relevant school until or unless the student's status changes to an LOA-IE or suspension (in which case the stipulations related to those situations immediately apply).

7. Administration of de-enrollment and re-enrollment

- a. Each school, in collaboration with the Office of the Registrar (see paragraph 7.b below), shall define program-specific procedures for managing student LOA-IEs and suspensions, including exit ("check-out") and re-entry ("check-in") processes, as well as the notifications and updates required per paragraphs 4.c and 4.d above). These procedures should

address the school-level actions necessary to ensure the integrity and security of their programs, including the notifications of the course directors, other faculty, and staff with a need to know based on a legitimate educational interest under the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA).

- b. The Office of the Registrar shall define the information and procedures required to administer de-enrollments and re-enrollments in the student information system.