



**Medical Education Program Policy**

<b>Policy Name:</b>	<b>Student Leave of Absence and Delay of Graduation for Research</b>				
<b>Policy Domain:</b>	Undergraduate Medical Education	<b>Refers to LCME Element(s):</b>	Standard 10		
<b>Approval Authority:</b>	Curriculum and Educational Policy Committee (CEPC)	<b>Adopted:</b>	May 2024	<b>Date Last Reviewed:</b>	
<b>Responsible Executive:</b>	Associate Dean for Student Affairs and Associate Dean for Medical Education	<b>Date Last Revised:</b>			
<b>Responsible Office:</b>	Office of Student Affairs and Office of Medical Education	<b>Contact:</b>	Mirjana Babic, M.P.A. <a href="mailto:mbabic@tuhsc.edu">mbabic@tuhsc.edu</a>		

- Policy Statement:** Texas Tech University Health Sciences Center El Paso (TTUHSC EP), Paul L. Foster School of Medicine (PLFSOM) supports student’s efforts toward academic enrichment and discovery through pursuing research. This also can increase a student’s competitiveness for certain specialties. In addition to early career advising and coaching, a well-time research year and completion of USMLE Step 1 and Step 2 CK further delineates a student’s competitiveness and career choices. This policy further defines the process for medical students to request a research leave of absence from the curriculum for research that deviates from the on time four-year progression between the second and third year and between the third and fourth year. It also describes a delay of graduation during fourth year for research in the event that a student does not match in chosen specialty during the residency application process when the student is on target to graduate that same year.
- Reason for Policy:** This policy is intended to codify our established practices, consistent with LCME accreditation and existing institutional and school policies regarding the ability of a student to participate in research outside of TTUHSC EP, PLFSOM as it relates to the “six-year rule” for completion of the MD program. This policy works in conjunction with HSCEP OP 77.05, Student Leaves of Absence and Suspensions, the Grading, Promotion and Academic Standing Policy (GPAS), and the Common Clerkship Policies. Students should understand that completion of the MD program must be completed in six years, inclusive of all leave of absences.
- Who Should Read this Policy:** All PLFSOM medical students, education program leaders including the dean, vice president for academic affairs, all academic officers of the Office of Medical Education and the Office of Student Affairs, all course and clerkship directors, and all members of the following standing committees: the Committee on Curriculum and Educational Policy (CEPC), the Committee on Student Grading and Promotion (GPC), the Sub-Committee on Evaluation and Education Programs, and the Committee on Student Affairs.
- Resources:** officers and staff of the FSOM Office of Student Affairs and Office of Medical Education support this policy.
- Definitions:** A research-related leave of absence (LOA) is defined as a period of non-enrollment during which a student is not working on the requirements for completion of the MD degree but instead engages in research activities. A leave of absence is requested for various other reasons including medical, academic opportunities or personal reasons. Please see HSCEP OP 77.05.
  - Research Leave- students want to pursue an external structured research opportunity. Please see HSCEP OP 77.05
  - Dual/Degree Leave- is to pursue an MD/MPH, MD/MBA or MD/PhD. Student requires approval from the Office of Student Affairs if this option is considered at the end of year two of the medical program.

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- c. Medical Leave- may be necessary when there is a medical reason for the leave. Student must seek approval from the Office of Student Affairs. Please see HSCEP OP 77.05.
  - d. Other/Personal Leave- Student must be approved by the Office of Student Affairs on a case-by-case basis. Please see HSCEP OP 77.05.
- 6. The Policy:**
- a. Students are expected to have on time promotion and must meet with the Office of Student Affairs prior to accepting an external a one-year research position. Criteria for taking a research LOA is outlined below:
  - b. Pre-clerkship one-year research LOA between year 2 and 3:
    - a. The student must submit a letter or email of acceptance from the institution documenting the position title, and the goals and objectives of the research and the research mentor.
    - b. The student must be in good academic and professional standing and have completed all pre-clerkship requirements of the MD degree.
    - c. The student must achieve a minimum score of 63 on the CBSE, followed by registration and completion of USMLE Step 1 within two months after fulfilling all the requirements of year two, before participating in research. If the student passes Step 1 on first attempt, they will proceed according to the regular process. Failure to pass Step 1 will result in student being placed on Academic Warning as per GPAS policy. The student must seriously consider if they need to temporarily suspend their research to prioritize passing their USMLE Step 1 exam remediation. A second failure of USMLE Step 1 will result in the student being placed on Academic Probation and as per GPAS policy, they must withdraw from research activities.
  - c. Clerkship one-year research LOA between year 3 and 4:
    - a. The student must submit a letter or email of acceptance from the institution documenting the position, and the goals and objectives of the research and the research mentor.
    - b. Student must be in good academic and professional standing and have completed all third-year requirements towards the MD degree.
    - c. The student must take USMLE Step 2 by October 31 of the 4<sup>th</sup> year curriculum upon their return. Failure to take Step 2 CK by this date will result in a meeting with the associate dean of student affairs or referral to the Grading, and Promotions Committee (GPC) and a suspension from the curriculum until the student sits for the exam.
    - d. Students must participate in the 'check-out' and 'check-in' process as outline by the PLFSOM OSA.
      - i. OSA confirms that student is in good academic and professional standing, eligible for a yearlong research year, and collects student contact information.
      - ii. Students check with Student Business Services, Office of Financial Aid, the Registrar, Information Technology (eRaider access), SARP course directors, and Student Services Student Engagement regarding health insurance and library and parking.
    - e. Non-enrolled students do not pay student fees and must take into consideration:
      - i. They do not have malpractice liability insurance, financial assistance or health insurance provided by the school.
      - ii. They will not have access to UWorld test questions purchased by TTUHSCEP or Elenra, Banner or ePortfolio.
      - iii. May not participate in any TTUHSC EP FSOM sponsored organizations or activities such as student organizations, interest groups or volunteer activities.
      - iv. Students are not eligible for travel funds or any funding associated with the curriculum or electives offered to enrolled students.
      - v. Must maintain the same level of conduct expected of a medical student.
  - d. Request for research leave of absence > 1 year in duration
    - a. This must be presented to the Grading and Promotions Committee and can only be granted by the committee with approval of the dean.

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- b. If this is requested between year 3 and 4 of the curriculum, the timing of Step 2 must be addressed by the GPC with the deadline for the first attempt clearly outlined and approved by the dean.
  - i. First attempt failure of USMLE Step 2 CK will result in student placed on Academic Warning as per GPAS policy. The student will be required to suspend their research temporarily to focus on passing their USMLE Step 2 exam.
7. Requesting a delay of graduation during the 4<sup>th</sup> year to pursue research for an unsuccessful residency match.
  - a. If a student is on track to graduate during their year four and a student does not match into a specialty that they applied for, they student cannot delay on time graduation for research or a reapplication for a residency the following year.
8. Leave of absence for any other reasons, see HSCEP OP 77.05.
9. There will be a notation on the students Medical Student Performance Evaluation (MSPE) documenting and categorizing (personal, research, remediation) the LOA.

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