

ABSENCES & LEAVES

Achieving the goal of Doctor of Medicine demands a great deal of time and attention. Many components of a medical education program cannot be made up or remediated. Interruptions during the educational schedule will create undesirable breaks in the continuous learning process that will be of concern to medical licensure boards and can affect financial aid eligibility and loan repayment status. Medical students will frequently be required to make tough choices concerning the competing demands of educational and personal interests. Therefore, students should give serious thought and consideration before making a decision to request an LOA from the program.

In general, LOA's should be requested only under extraordinary circumstances where significant and unavoidable conflicts have developed requiring a leave from the program. Students are advised to consult with the Dean of Students to discuss plans for any interruption of their studies prior to making a formal request. Taking an LOA may also have financial implications; including placing loans in repayment and requiring AUA to return unearned loan proceeds credited to their AUA accounts to the U.S Department of Education. In addition, students who take a leave of absence, in some circumstances depending on the length of the leave and whether the student had been required to repeat a semester or had previously taken an extended leave of absence, may not be eligible for further federal student loans for some or all of the remaining portion of their medical school education at AUA. Students are advised to consult with AUA's Office of Financial Services to better understand how taking an LOA may impact their private and/or federal loans.

Basic Sciences Semester I-V

There are two types of Leaves of Absence available for students in BS semesters I-V:

- A Short Term Leave of Absence (SLA) begins at a point in time during a semester, but can only be in effect for a maximum of two weeks. Students are expected to make up any activity missed during their SLA. Certain restrictions will apply.
- An Extended Leave of Absence (ELOA) begins at a point in time either during a semester or at the end of a completed semester. An ELOA during the semester remains in effect until the start of the following semester. An ELOA at the end of a completed semester starts on the last date of the semester and continues through the next semester. Students can only take one semester off throughout their basic sciences.

Grading During an Extended Leave of Absence in BS semesters I-IV:

Students who are granted an Extended Leave of Absence (ELOA) during a semester and who do not complete the semester will receive a grade based on the following structure:

- If the ELOA is taken before the Block 1 exam, the student will receive a grade of "Withdrawn" ("W") for all courses.

- A student may only be approved to take an ELOA after Block 1 and/or Block 2 if the student is passing all courses. If this is the case, the student will receive a grade of “Withdrawn Passing” (“WP”) for all courses. Any student who has failed any block exam will not be approved for an ELOA.
- If the ELOA is taken immediately prior to Block 3, the student will receive a grade of “Incomplete” (“INC”) for all courses and will be required to sit for the Block 3 make-up exams prior to the beginning of the following semester. If the student fails to sit for the make-up exam, the final grade will be calculated based on the scores earned from the Block 1 and 2 scores and a grade of ‘zero’ for Block 3. The grade of ‘INC’ will be changed to the grade received for all courses.

Any student who applies for an ELOA but received any failing grade for his/her block exams will not be eligible for an ELOA.

Clinical Sciences Semesters VI-X

Upon completion of BSIC, students may wish to take time off to study for the NBME Comprehensive Basic Science Examination (CBSE) and/or USMLE Step 1 exam. AUA allows a student 12 months from the last date of BSIC to pass the CBSE and the USMLE Step 1 exam. Once they pass Step 1, students will be completing clinical rotations on individualized schedules. Due to the nature of clinical rotation scheduling, it is possible that students may have brief breaks between their scheduled rotations. Breaks of 4 weeks or less will have no impact on the student’s enrollment status and their federal student loans, if any, will not be impacted. If a student plans on taking more than 4 weeks off to study for the CBSE/Step 1 or, plans to take more than four weeks off during clinical rotations, he/she will be required to apply for a Clinical Leave of Absence.

The Clinical Leave of Absence (“CLOA”) is the only type of leave of absence available for students once they complete BSIC. A CLOA may be taken for a period of more than four weeks but no longer than 180 days within any 12 month period. A CLOA satisfies the requirements of an “Approved Leave of Absence” under the regulations governing Federal Financial Aid. An Approved Leave of Absence is a U.S. Federal Financial Aid policy that allows a Direct Loan borrower to temporarily leave attendance at the university and to return to the same point where the academic program was interrupted (For this reason an “Approved Leave of Absence” is not applicable for students in semesters I-IV).

With the exception of students who have completed BSIC but have not yet passed Step 1, students who do not return to their coursework immediately upon the expiration of an CLOA will be administratively withdrawn retroactive to their last date of attendance (please see the “*Administrative Withdrawal*” section for additional information). Students who have completed BSIC but have not passed Step 1 prior to the expiration of their CLOA will be automatically placed in a Temporary

Withdrawal (TWD) status. If after the time afforded them under this status expires and the student has not yet passed Step 1, the student will be dismissed from the University.

Students who wish to take a CLOA during their clinical rotations must proactively work with their clinical coordinator to discuss their intent to take a CLOA and arrange their clinical schedule to reflect their planned time off. CLOA applications must be submitted to the Office of the Registrar well in advance to allow time for review and approval prior to the start of the student's break. CLOA forms that are submitted after a student's last date of attendance will not be approved and in that circumstance, the student will be considered Temporarily Withdrawn for the duration of their break.

Temporary Withdrawal (TWD)

Students who wish to have more time off from their coursework upon completion of BSIC and prior to passing Step 1 than a CLOA will afford them (that is; up to 180 days from their last day of attendance in BSIC), may have up to an additional 180 days off. In these cases, once a student's time under his/her CLOA is exhausted the student's status will automatically change to a Temporary Withdrawal (TWD) status for up to an additional 180 days from the last date of his/her CLOA. Students who do not pass the USMLE Step 1 within one year of the last day of the BSIC will be dismissed from the University.

TWD status will also be assigned to a clinical student who has a break during his/her clinical rotations of more than four weeks and has not been approved for a CLOA. A student who is required to repeat a clerkship but is not able to do so within four weeks of the last date of the failed clerkship will also be assigned a TWD status. Once a student has been assigned a TWD status there are not eligible to apply for a CLOA.

Important information regarding ELOA's, Temporary Withdrawals & Federal Financial Aid:

Students in an ELOA or Temporary Withdrawal status who are receiving Federal Financial Aid are considered withdrawn by the U.S. Department of Education and AUA is bound to report them as such (effective their last date of attendance as determined by the Office of the Registrar.). Students reported to the National Student Loan Data System (NSLDS) as withdrawn will enter repayment unless and until they are once again enrolled at AUA or another participating institution. AUA will be required to return to the Department federal loan proceeds that have not been earned by the "withdrawn" students as of the last day of their attendance. Students in these circumstances are advised to contact their loan servicer either to make arrangements to start making monthly payments or, if a student is unable to repay their loans while in this status, to discuss with their loan servicer the possibility of postponing or reducing their loan payments. Students should contact the school's financial aid office and the federal servicer of their loans to discuss postponement of repayment options that may be available to them such as: economic hardship deferments, unemployment deferments and forbearances.

Once a student returns from ELOA or TWD and resumes his or her studies, his/her enrollment status will be updated to Enrolled (full-time). Generally the student will not have to submit an in-school deferment form to their servicer. However, students should contact their Federal Loan Servicers to verify in-school status. If an enrollment verification letter needs to be requested from the school, please submit a request to the Office of the Registrar. Students who have questions about their Title IV program funds should call the Federal Student Aid Information Center at 1-800-4-FEDAID (1-800-433-3243). TTY users may call 1-800-730-8913. Information is also available on the Web at www.studentaid.gov.

Effect of an ELOA or a Temporary Withdrawal on Tuition Account:

Refunds are not given for Leaves of Absence; however, AUA may be required to return to the U.S Department of Education the proceeds of federal loans that have not been earned by a student as of the date that the ELOA begins and that AUA has credited to the student's account and/or has not disbursed to the student.

An ELOA during a semester or a TWD will have no effect on tuition account balances except in cases in which AUA was required to return unearned federal loan proceeds to the Department of Education. In such cases, students will be required to reimburse AUA the amounts refunded to the Department at the time that they resume their studies at AUA. Students may be eligible to obtain these funds from the Department when they resume their studies; students will not be eligible for a loan to cover non-institutional charges (that portion of the students' "Cost of Attendance" for expenses other than tuition, fees and charges due directly to AUA). Any account balances owed at the time that an ELOA or TWD begins will still remain due and payable and late fees will apply until the account is paid in full. Any portion of tuition paid for the semester in which the ELOA or TWD begins and that has not been applied to other obligations owed by the student to AUA or returned by AUA to the student's lender will be carried over to the semester in which the student returns to his/her studies.

If the student withdraws, is administratively withdrawn or is dismissed from the school and the school is holding funds of the student that it has not yet earned or is required to return to the student's lender, the student will be entitled to a refund of those funds. *Non*-tuition charges, such as insurance, bus service, parking permits, late fees, etc., will be posted to the student's account when appropriate and will be due prior to the start of the semester in which the student returns.

ELOA's that begin after a completed semester:

An ELOA that begins in between semesters will have no immediate effect on the student's tuition except that late fees will apply to any outstanding balance until the account is paid in full.

Short Term Leave of Absences (SLA) and a Clinical Leave of Absence (CLOA):

An approved SLA or CLOA will have no immediate effect on the student's tuition except that late fees will apply to any outstanding balance until the account is paid in full.

Procedures and Policies for obtaining an LOA:

Leaves of Absence, regardless of the type, must meet the following criteria and will not be granted unless the following procedures are followed:

- Students must obtain and complete a Short Term, Extended or Clinical Leave of Absence Application form as appropriate, stating the specific reasons for the leave and providing the date that the student will return from the leave.
- Basic science students must submit the form to the Dean of Students whose determination as to whether the leave will be granted will be in the Dean's sole discretion. Students seeking a Clinical Leave of Absence must submit their forms to the Office of the Registrar, which will forward the form to the Dean of Students. Students must receive final approval in writing from the Dean of Students and/or Office of the Registrar before the request for the LOA is deemed granted.
- Except in the case of students who are granted a Clinical Leave of Absence upon completion of BSIC, if a student does not resume his or her studies on or before the last date that leave has been approved, he/she will be administratively withdrawn retroactive to his/her last date of attendance. Students who are granted leaves of absence upon completion of BSIC and who do not return to their studies within 180 days from the end of BSIC will be placed in a Temporary Withdrawal status for an additional 6 months (please see *Temporary Withdrawal* section for additional information).
- Students may not be on academic probation and may not be failing any course (including block exams or clinical rotations) at the time of application or at the time that the leave commences. A student who has received any failing grades from their block exams or from a clinical rotation cannot request, and will not be granted an LOA. In such cases, students in need of time away from their studies must withdraw from the school (see the section below on *Withdrawals*). Students who must repeat a semester or a clinical rotation are on academic probation and are not eligible to take an LOA.
- A student who is granted an LOA must provide written documentation supporting the stated need for the leave and under certain circumstances, may have to satisfy other previously set conditions prior to their return to classes. Students applying for a CLOA upon completion of their BSIC are not required to provide documentation to support their request for the LOA.
- Applications for CLOAs during clinical rotations must be submitted to the Office of the Registrar after students have arranged their official clinical schedule to reflect their planned time off. CLOA applications must be received, reviewed and approved prior to the start of the break.

Upon return to AUA from a Leave of Absence students:

- Must present hard copy documentation to the Dean of Students (1 week prior to returning to Antigua) that sufficiently substantiates the original reason for the LOA request. Students whose CLOA was approved to begin upon completion of their BSIC are not required to provide this documentation.
- If the provided documentation is considered insufficient the student may be given extra time to provide additional documentation or the LOA may be disapproved by the Dean of Students. In the latter case the student is considered to have been on an unauthorized leave of absence (see section on *Unauthorized Leave of Absences*). If documentation is not provided or deemed insufficient upon return, the LOA will be converted into an Administrative Withdrawal.
- Once a student returns from an LOA and resumes his or her studies, a student whose enrollment status was reported to NSLDS as withdrawn will again be reported to the Department as Enrolled (full-time) and the student will be eligible for an in-school deferment. Students should contact the Office of the Registrar if their loan servicer requests an enrollment verification form/letter from the school.
- A basic science student who takes an LOA is not permitted to enroll at another medical school and take Basic Sciences courses for credit during the time of the LOA. Any student who wishes to take Basic Science courses for credit at another medical school must withdraw from AUA. At a later date, the student may apply for readmission to AUA by following the procedure for transfer applicants. It is at the discretion of the Admissions Committee whether to accept or deny admission and/or transfer credits.

Ultimately the Dean of Students has complete discretion to give or deny the final approval for all LOA requests. Under extreme circumstances, an SLA not exceeding two weeks may be granted by the Dean of Students.

Unauthorized Leave of Absence

Unauthorized Leave is defined as a student-initiated leave from AUA or overstay of an approved leave of absence **without** going through the proper protocol. Students who are on an unauthorized leave of absence may not receive consideration for missed coursework, exams, quizzes, etc. In all cases the student will be administratively withdrawn from the University. Students wishing to return to AUA after an unauthorized leave must submit a letter of appeal. The past performance of these students will be reviewed by the Appeals Committee to determine whether they can be readmitted, and if so under what conditions (such as academic probation).

Pending Graduation (PGR)

Once students complete the clinical science portion of the curriculum they will automatically be placed on a pending graduation status (PGR). PGR students are typically waiting to pass the USMLE Step 2 CK and/or CS exams or, are waiting to clear their degree audit. PGR students are encouraged to be mindful of AUA's policies and deadlines to pass the USMLE Step 2 CK and CS. Failure to comply with these deadlines may result in administrative withdrawal or dismissal.

The Office of the Registrar is required to report PGR enrollment status of students who have received federal financial aid to NSLDS as "withdrawn" as of the last day of their last clinical rotation and should:

- Contact their Federal Servicer to make arrangements to make either monthly payments or obtain an economic/unemployment deferment or forbearance. If eligible, deferments and forbearances will postpone the necessity of making payments.
- Complete an Exit Interview by logging into their account at www.studentloans.gov. The results will be sent to the National Student Loan Database System.

PGR students are not eligible to apply for an LOA. Once a student has met all degree requirements and has cleared the degree audit, their status will change to graduated.

WITHDRAWALS

Student Withdrawal from AUA

A student who withdraws from AUA must complete a Withdrawal Form, which is obtained from the Office of the Registrar. As the curriculum is integrated, withdrawal from individual courses/modules is not permitted. Students wishing to return to AUA after having withdrawn or been withdrawn by the school must then apply for readmission. They will be subject to the tuition policy for withdrawals and university refund policy. Readmission is not guaranteed but applications will be reviewed by the Admissions Committee. Readmitted students will be subject to all academic policies and tuition and fees in effect at the time of re-enrollment, without any "grandfathering" provisions based on their original admission. Student withdrawals are governed by the following policies:

- Students may not withdraw from a single course during a semester; they must withdraw completely from AUA.
- Students withdrawing from AUA before all block 1 exams would receive a grade of "W" for all enrolled courses. If a student withdraws after any block exams, the student will receive a grade of "WF" (withdraw failing) or "WP" (withdraw passing) in each enrolled course.
- Refund calculations, if required, are based on the Official Withdrawal Date as determined by the Office of the Registrar.

- Students who receive “WF” in any course at the time of withdrawal will be reviewed by the Admissions Committee to determine whether they are eligible for readmission.
 - Students who were failing one or more courses at the time of withdrawal will be put on academic probation if they are readmitted.
- Any student who applies for an Extended Leave of Absence but received any failing grades for their block exams must withdraw from the University.

A student withdrawal (WD) is a full termination of the student’s enrollment at the University. The Office of the Registrar is required to report WD enrollment statuses to NSLDS. Students on a WD status are considered Withdrawn for Financial Aid purposes, effective their last date of attendance as determined by the Office of the Registrar.

Administrative Withdrawal

Administrative withdrawal (ADWD) is a full termination of the student’s enrollment at the University. Students are subject to administrative withdrawal under the following circumstances:

- Complete a semester and do not return to the following semester, without receiving approval for an Extended Leave of Absence
- Failure to register for the following semester
- Failure to return from ELOA, SLA, CLOA or TWD status
- Have a gap of 6 months or more during clinical sciences or, after passing USMLE Step 1 exam

Students who are administratively withdrawn may appeal this decision by submitting a formal letter of appeal to the Appeals Committee. Please see the *Appeals Committee* section for additional information.

Administrative withdrawal (ADWD) is a full termination of the student’s enrollment at the University. The Office of the Registrar is required to report ADWD enrollment statuses to all lenders. Students on an ADWD status are considered Withdrawn for Financial Aid purposes, effective their last date of attendance as determined by the Office of the Registrar.

Student borrowers on WD or ADWD status should:

- Contact their Federal Servicer to make arrangements to make either monthly payments or obtain an economic/unemployment deferment or forbearance. If eligible, deferments and forbearances will postpone the necessity of making payments.
- Complete an Exit Interview by logging into their account at www.studentloans.gov. The results will be sent to the National Student Loan Database System.

READMISSION

A student who has filed a student withdrawal and who wishes to continue his/her medical education at AUA must formally apply for readmission to the Admissions Committee through by submission of an application for readmission to AUA's U.S. agent, Manipal Education of Americas, in New York. Readmission is not guaranteed. However, if a student is readmitted, the student is subject to all academic policies, tuition and fees which are in effect at the time of re-admission.

Students who are ineligible for readmission will not be considered by the Admissions Committee. Students who have been dismissed or administratively withdrawn are NOT eligible to apply for readmission to the University; they must submit an appeal to the Appeals Committee. Please see the *Appeals Committee* section for additional information.

If a student is re-admitted (RADM) and returns to his/her approved basic science semester/clinical rotation, his/her status will once again be reported to the U.S Department of Education as Enrolled (full-time) and he/she will once again be eligible for an in-school deferment of student loan(s). Students should contact the Office of the Registrar if the loan servicer requests an enrollment verification form/letter from the school. Students will remain in repayment while on RADM status.