STUDENT PROCEDURE
SA104 – Leave of Absence and Withdrawal Policy

POLICY
UTHSC recognizes that absences may be necessary during a portion of an academic program and strives to accommodate such absences to enable students to continue in, and complete their academic programs. Students should be aware, however, that it may be difficult for colleges to provide suitable options for makeup of missed assignments/activities even with short term absences, given the intensity, complexity and fast pace of UTHSC programs, as well as the ongoing requirement to meet the essential eligibility requirements and the technical standards of the college/program.

Students are advised to review the attendance policies of their colleges/programs carefully when an absence is necessary and consult with college officials when an absence will be prolonged. College processes for approval of leaves differ depending on the duration, timing and reason for the proposed absence. Prolonged absences may result in a requirement to repeat a significant portion of the program and/or to petition for readmission. Prolonged absences also affect eligibility for loan deferment and may require that students be listed as withdrawn. If students are unable to complete a term for which aid has been received, he/she may also be required to repay some or all of the aid received for that term. Students are advised to consult with the Office of Financial Aid regarding financial obligations related to prolonged absences.

POLICY RATIONALE AND EXPLANATION
Colleges have absence policies and procedures describing actions that must be taken related to

1 UTHSC must report any student who is not in attendance for 30 days as “withdrawn,” whether the individual is on a college-approved leave or not.

2 Exceptions may be made for students whose academic programs were disrupted by military service obligations.
various types of leave. These policies and procedures generally adhere to the
guidelines/definitions for the types of absences listed below and define:
1. the types of short term personal leave that will normally be ‘excused’ and
   expectations as to any documentation required by the college;
2. the steps needed for approval of longer term leaves;
3. options for making up coursework/experiences missed during absences (if
   feasible);
4. the effect of an extended leave, or an unauthorized extension of an
   approved leave, on academic progression (e.g. the need to repeat coursework,
   apply for readmission);
5. the role of Student Academic Student Services and Inclusion (SASSI) and the ADA
   accommodation process for students with disabilities, if applicable;
6. consequences for loan deferrals and the need to consult with the Office of
   Financial Aid regarding financial obligations/liabilities.

**College procedures for approval of absences should also describe:**

1. Maximum allowed length of leave without a requirement for readmission with the dean’s
   approval and/or for re-application for admission;
2. Definition of long term versus short term leave (if different from that defined below);
3. Procedures for coordination with SASSI and determination of ADA reasonable
   accommodations, if applicable;
4. Basis for requiring a student to repeat or remediate coursework during a subsequent
   term, a situation that would likely involve disruption of course sequencing, necessitating a
   long term leave and formal ‘withdrawal’ from the institution;
5. Information as to any steps needed for re-admission;
6. Options for making up missed coursework and tests, as well as any clinical experiences
   to the extent feasible;
7. Written or electronic notification required by the college and the Registrar.

Note that it is the college’s responsibility to inform the Office of the Registrar as soon as possible
when a student begins a long-term leave by completing and submitting a “Change in Student
Status Form” to assure appropriate documentation of student status.

**Types of Absences**

1. Short Term Leave (e.g. illness, accidents, bereavement, other personal matters, etc. as
   acknowledged by the college)
2. Extended Leave of Absence (college recommended medical, family leave, military leave,
   etc.)(students seeking voluntary leave related to a disability are encouraged to consult
   with SASSI for guidance and ADA accommodation procedures)
3. Involuntary Medical Leave of Absence (note: All colleges must follow the below UTHSC
   procedures for any involuntary medical leave).
Short term vs. Long term leave

1. The definition of a short term leave may vary by college but generally involves an absence no longer than a week during an official school term. Students are to be advised to review and to adhere to their college’s attendance policy and promptly inform college officials of their absence.

2. The duration of long term/extended leaves may vary depending on the reason for the leave. Normally an extended leave is longer than a week and not more than 6 months. In certain circumstances, such as in cases in which a student is required to repeat an academic year (see college sections of the academic catalog dealing with academic progression), the actual leave period may be greater than 6 months.
   a. Return after an extended leave requires approval of the dean or designee. For absences longer than 6 months, the student may be required to reapply for admission. Such admission is not granted automatically and is dependent on the student’s academic record, consultation with SASSI regarding ADA reasonable accommodations, disciplinary records, and space availability.
   b. Students returning from a long term absence for any reason, including absences involving a disability or chronic medical condition, are encouraged to work closely with SASSI on their return to aid their transition back into the academic environment.
   c. Special consideration is given to veterans and military personnel requesting return after military service consistent the applicable DOD Memorandum of Understanding.

Involuntary Medical Leave of Absence

UTHSC is concerned for the general safety, health and well-being of the campus community as well as the safety and well-being of patients and staff encountered during clinical training. On occasion, a student may experience a medical situation that significantly limits their ability to function successfully or safely as a student, or the student no longer meets the minimum technical standards of the program, or the student is so severely disruptive as to interfere with the academic pursuits and other activities of the academic and/or clinical community. Although a voluntary leave is preferable, a college’s Dean (or designee), with the concurrence of the Vice Chancellor for Academic, Faculty and Student Affairs, may place such a student on an involuntary medical leave of absence.

Prior to placing a student on an involuntary medical leave of absence:

(i) UTHSC shall conduct an individualized assessment of the student and will give careful consideration to the opinions and recommendations of the student’s treating physician or mental health professional, if available, along with the opinions and recommendations of the healthcare professionals consulted by UTHSC.
a. UTHSC will encourage the student to provide any other additional information that the student believes is relevant to the determination.

b. UTHSC will respect the student’s confidentiality, and only require the student to provide a medical release for access to the student’s medical and mental health records as reasonably necessary to complete its individualized assessment.

(ii) Based on that individualized assessment, UTHSC will determine whether, and what, reasonable modifications can be made that would be effective to allow such student to continue to attend classes or engage in clinical training and otherwise participate in its educational programs while seeking treatment for, or recovering from, any related medical or mental health conditions.

(iii) However, in the event that UTHSC also considers whether the student poses a direct threat to the health or safety of others, UTHSC will make an individualized assessment based on reasonable judgment that relies on current medical knowledge or on the best available objective evidence, to ascertain the nature, duration, and severity of the risk; the probability that the potential injury will actually occur; and whether reasonable modifications of policies, practices, or procedures or the provision of auxiliary aids or services will mitigate the risk.

(iv) UTHSC will require an involuntary medical leave of absence for a student only if:

a. after the individualized assessment, consultation with SASSI, and careful review and consideration, UTHSC concludes that the student’s continued participation in its educational programs would require modifications that would be unreasonable or would fundamentally alter the nature of those programs;

b. the student rejects all reasonable modifications offered by UTHSC and the student cannot meet UTHSC’s essential eligibility requirements and technical standards to continue to participate in its educational programs, or

c. even with the provision of all of the reasonable modifications offered by UTHSC, the student cannot meet UTHSC’s essential eligibility requirements and technical standards;

d. if UTHSC decides to impose an involuntary leave of absence, UTHSC will advise the student in writing (via: official UTHSC email) of the leave and duration, any restrictions from coming on campus or entering a clinical site, and available academic appeals procedures; UTHSC shall document the decision as well as the underlying facts, assessments and determinations;
e. an involuntary medical leave is an academic decision and is not a disciplinary action, however, separate disciplinary action may result from the underlying behavior of the student pursuant to the Student Rights and Responsibilities.

**IMPORTANT NOTE:** In emergency situations, the college Dean/designee and Vice Chancellor, in the exercise of reasonable judgment, may bypass some or all of the above steps and considerations [except for (iv)(d)], in order to ensure campus or clinical safety and/or the safety of students or patients. Nothing in this or other policies shall be construed to prevent UTHSC from requiring students to, at all times, meet the college/program essential eligibility requirements and technical standards.

(v) Return from Leave of Absence

A student placed on voluntary or involuntary medical leave of absence may request to return/reapply to UTHSC and may be required, as part of an individualized evaluation, to provide evidence that the student is ready to resume studies and academic responsibilities. Such evidence may include, for instance, documentation of attempts to resolve issues that led to the leave, release of academic records to inform the treating physician, release of treatment records, consultation with or clearance from University Health Services, consultation with SASSI to determine if reasonable accommodations are available, as well as a demonstrated ability to safely handle the stresses that arise from an intense, complex, and fast paced advanced course of study at UTHSC and clinical sites. All returning/reapplying students must meet the essential eligibility requirements and technical standards of the college/program. The student will be notified of the readmission decision, conditions, and appeal rights.

**Withdrawals Due to Long Term Leave**

For reporting purposes, any student who does not participate in coursework at UTHSC for 30 days is considered **withdrawn**, whether the leave is approved by the college or not. The college must complete a Change in Student Status form, providing additional information as to the reasons for withdrawal, options for return, date of anticipated return and access to institution assets prior to the student’s return. There are two major categories relating to such leave: those initiated by the student (for academic, medical or personal reasons) and those due to nonattendance.

**Withdrawal Based on Student-Requested Change in Status**

In instances in which a student needs to withdraw from an academic program for an extended period, the student must provide written notice to the dean or designee of the college in which they are enrolled. The college of record then completes the Change of Student Status form, indicating whether the withdrawing student is leaving in good standing. On receipt of this form, the Bursar’s office determines whether the student is eligible for refund of some or all of their tuition and fees (see Bursar’s web site for refund policy - [http://www.uthsc.edu/finance/bursar/pdfs/refundsrepay_2010_2011.pdf](http://www.uthsc.edu/finance/bursar/pdfs/refundsrepay_2010_2011.pdf)). Colleges are advised
that withdrawals must be processed in a timely manner. Otherwise, the student and/or the respective college will stand accountable for any fees/tuition charged.

Withdrawal due to Non-Attendance
A student who ceases to attend courses without formal approval from his/her college will be considered to have withdrawn. Colleges must notify the Registrar as soon as such students are identified and initiate a change of student status that triggers notification of all supporting offices. If the student has received Title IV Aid, the Financial Aid Office will perform a Return to Title IV calculation and the Registrar’s Office will report the change of student status to the US Department of Education. The grade point average for the student will be reported as zero during this period of enrollment. The date recorded for the change in status will be used to determine whether the student is eligible for repayment of a portion of their refunds of tuition and fees. It is the responsibility of the student to repay all loans in accordance with his/her loan agreements.

ACADEMIC DISMISSALS
Each college has a defined policy and procedure for academic progress and promotion. Students should refer to the college section of the Academic Catalog for College specific progress and promotion requirements and policies.

If a student is dismissed from a program for unsatisfactory academic progress and initiates the college level appeals process, the college must await the outcome of the college appeal before initiating the process to change student status. Once a final decision is rendered by the Dean, the Student Status Change Workflow should be submitted by the College. A copy of the Dean’s final appeal decision letter should be forwarded to Office of the Registrar.

Assigned Grade
The grade(s) recorded for coursework for a student on an official Leave of Absence (LOA) will be determined by the timing of the leave relative to the end of the term, the anticipated return date, and realistic options for completion of coursework in a timely manner.

If, in the opinion of the dean/designee, there is a reasonable likelihood that the student can complete all remaining assignments, exams, and tests in all affected courses prior to the beginning of, or during, the next term such that academic progress would not be adversely affected, the student will be assigned a grade of “R” (Retake) or “I” (incomplete) on his/her transcript for each of the affected courses.

Consistent with the UTHSC Repeat and Remediation Policy and college policies, the Instructor of Record may notify the dean/designee that a student requesting an official LOA has received approval to remediate a course or core clerkship. In the case of remediation, the student will receive a “R” grade. Upon satisfactory completion of the
course or core clerkship, the “R” grade will be replaced with a final grade. Failure to remediate the “R” grade as outlined by college policies will result in a failing, “F” grade.

Students receiving an “I” grade will be required to complete all remaining course requirements by the end of the term following that in which the ‘incomplete’ was received; otherwise the ‘I’ will be changed to an ‘F’ for the permanent record. Alternatively, if it is deemed unlikely that the student can make up the required coursework within the next term following the leave such that the student would be required to repeat the affected course(s), the dean/designee will record one of the following notations on the student’s transcript:

- If withdrawal occurred before the midpoint of a course, the grade for the uncompleted course(s) will be recorded as a ‘W’ on the official transcript.
- If withdrawal occurred after the midpoint, but before the course(s) was (were) 70% completed, the grade for the uncompleted course(s) will be recorded as either ‘WP’ (withdrawn passing) or ‘WF’ (withdrawn failing) depending on the student’s grade point average in the course at the time of withdrawal.
- Once a course is > 70% completed, a withdrawal is not normally permitted except under extenuating circumstances, thus the student will receive zero(s) for any uncompleted assignments and tests during that term. The final course grade will incorporate those zero(s) into the grade calculation.

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