

Deceleration (Leave of Absence) Policy A3.15c

Deceleration is the loss of a PA student from their entering cohort, who remains matriculated in the PA Program with a change in their graduating class. Only students who take a Leave of Absence are eligible for deceleration. **Under no other circumstances will a student be allowed to decelerate.** The Rowan-Virtua SOM PA Program curriculum is designed to be delivered and completed sequentially on a full-time basis. **The PA Program does not allow part-time status.**

Decelerated students must abide by any updated curriculum or policies as outlined their new graduating class, regardless of previous curriculum, policies or procedures.

Medical or Personal Leave of Absence

1. A leave of absence (LOA) is a pre-approved leave from the institution that suspends a student's course of study for a definite period of time. An LOA from the PA Program may be granted at the institution's discretion under extraordinary medical or life circumstances for up to a total of 52 weeks during a student's enrollment as a student at SOM. An LOA is generally reserved for acute and/or time limited events or transitions that could significantly impact the student's ability to engage in academic responsibilities. Typical circumstances warranting an LOA include:
 - Serious health condition or illness of the student or an immediate family member;
 - Death of a family member;
 - Military obligation;
 - Childbirth or adoption.
2. **Requesting a Leave of Absence**

A student must submit a written request for an LOA on Starfish. The request must describe the circumstances underlying the request and the period of leave sought. All medical records must be submitted to the Director of Student Health. Student's should not include medical records as part of their initial written request.

The Director of Student Affairs will meet with the student to discuss the circumstances underlying the requested LOA and intended LOA period. It is within the discretion of the Director of Student Affairs to grant a student's request for an LOA if both of the following conditions are met: the requesting student is (1) is in good academic standing, and (2) has demonstrated circumstances warranting an LOA. The Director of Student Affairs may consult with the Director of Student Health or other administrators as needed, and/or may request additional information or documentation from the student prior to making a determination.

Leaves of Absence cannot be requested if a student is expected to fail one or more courses (i.e. calculations of completed work demonstrate it numerically impossible for the student to pass the course) or to avoid dismissal for academic or disciplinary reasons.

Students who are on Academic Warning or Academic Probation, or who have failed one or more courses at the time of the requested LOA, will be required to have their record reviewed by the SPC to understand the implications of a LOA within 30 days of the request. Students who have appeared before the SPC prior to the request, but within 30 days may be considered to have fulfilled this requirement. This is to ensure academic progress is reviewed and considered prior to LOA determination by the Assistant Dean of Student Affairs.

It is strongly recommended that the student meet in advance with the Registrar's office, to understand impact on student records and transcripts, and Financial Aid to understand the financial impact of taking an LOA, including the potential need to repay student loans.

Within 7 business days of the LOA request, the Director of Student Affairs will notify the student by email as to whether the LOA has been approved. If the LOA is approved, the letter will detail the start and end dates, the reason for the LOA, as well as any requirements of return. The letter also details information on ID card, educational program, email, facilities and campus access during LOA. After this letter is received, the SOM Registrar changes the student registration status and provides notification to the student. This is the final notice that the LOA has been activated.

3. Additional Information on Military Leave from Academic Programs

Rowan-Virtua SOM has established a policy regarding academic credit and tuition and fee refunds for students called to partial or full mobilization for state or federal active duty as a member of the National Guard or a Reserve component of the Armed Forces of the United States.

Students who suspend their enrollment in an academic program in response to a call to active military are provided options in consultation with the Student Affairs Dean or equivalent of the school.

It is the practice of Rowan-Virtua SOM Academic Affairs to provide maximum flexibility allowed to military students to allow them to engage in military rotations and military obligations, as needed and within reason.

4. Return from Leave of Absence*

1. By thirty (30) days prior to returning from an LOA, the student must complete the Return from LOA Survey in the Starfish system, to confirm the intended date of return and begin the registration process.
2. Students returning from a medical LOA must also make an appointment with the Director of Student Health, School of Osteopathic Medicine, for evaluation of readiness to re-enter the program. As part of this evaluation for clearance to return, the student must submit documentation from a treating healthcare provider confirming that the student is cleared to return to the medical education environment, which is collected and reviewed by the Director of Student Health.

3. The Director of Student Health will present a report and recommendation to the Director of Student Affairs for review and approval prior to the return date.
4. A student's failure to provide confirmation of intent to return 30 days prior to the intended return date will result in delays in processing the return and will not guarantee return by the intended date. This may lead to delays in student curriculum, change of class year, academic progress, and graduation from SOM. The Director of Student Affairs will utilize Rowan email and the Starfish Access Network as the official modality of communication around LOA details and returns. If a student fails to submit the confirmation of intent to return, the Director of Student Affairs will make every effort to contact the student using email, phone, emergency contacts and wellness checks. Lack of contact and confirmation of return may result in administrative withdrawal from SOM.

***PLEASE NOTE:** Clinical-year students taking any LOA from clerkships may not be able to return to their original placement upon their return; if the original site cannot accommodate them, the student will be placed where there is availability.

Deceleration (Leave of Absence) General Notes

1. Deceleration secondary to a university-approved temporary separation (leave of absence) request. Depending on the terms of the request, a student may be able to take a leave of absence. If the temporary separation is approved, the student will join the following cohort at the beginning of the Fall 1 semester. It is required that the student audit ALL coursework that precedes the point in time of when a student takes a leave of absence within the next academic calendar year.
 - a. **Of note, an audit of a semester may require additional tuition and fees. Please discuss all financial considerations with a representative from the financial aid office.**
2. During the semester audit, the student is required to participate in new student orientation and complete all course work, exams, practicals, skills, OSCEs, assignments, and other assessments. The student must follow all required due dates/times and submit original work. Failure to comply with this policy may result in a professionalism review and recommendation for professional probation.
3. It is important to note, during a course audit no new grades will be submitted to the registrar based on the outcome of any assignments/assessments during an audited semester. During a semester audit, the student is not permitted to retake any course for a new grade. The Rowan-Virtua SOM PA Program does not participate in grade forgiveness or replacement under these circumstances.
4. Immediately prior to the official re-entry into the curriculum and to be eligible to restart the curriculum from where the student took the leave of absence, the student must successfully complete a comprehensive semester examination which demonstrates competency in all preceding coursework of the entire audited semester. If required, the student will be provided one attempt to remediate an initial failure of the comprehensive semester examination to demonstrate competency.
5. **PLEASE NOTE:** clinical year students taking any leave of absence from clerkships may not be able to return to their original clinical placement upon their return; if a clinical site cannot accommodate them, the student will be placed where there is availability.

