

Leave of Absence Procedure User's Guide: How to Implement the Procedure

The purpose of the SMU procedure for Leave of Absence (LOA) is to provide a formal process to monitor those students who "Stop Out" of SMU either for voluntary or involuntary reasons. Typically, a leave of absence is generally for a temporary departure from the institution. Following is a revised and abbreviated step-by-step guide for each office to follow in the administration of this policy. Offices in **bold** require mandatory visits. Offices in *italic* are visited if applicable to the student's status. The possible exception to this policy will be for those students who are processed for a medical withdrawal or other involuntary withdrawal from SMU, e.g., suspension for disciplinary reasons

Procedures/Process:

Student Information:

The student must complete all of the Personal Information fields on the LOA including signing it. In addition to the reasons listed for taking a LOA, students who are participating on non-approved SMU Education Abroad or study programs or will be a visiting student at another institution should also complete the LOA. Additionally, students who are participating in an internship or cooperative education program should also complete the LOA. Lastly, students who are transferring from SMU should complete the LOA.

The student will be informed that the completion of the LOA will effectively withdraw them from currently enrolled courses and cancel future term enrollment. In effect, the completion of the LOA will serve in a similar capacity as the Student Petition for Withdrawal/Cancellation Form.

Required Signatures:

The following signatures are required to process the LOA as a completed authorized document.

Academic Advising:

The first formal and initial step is for the student to meet with his/her adviser to discuss their intentions. The student will need to complete both the LOA form and the *Student Petition for Withdrawal/Cancellation* form. The LOA does not withdraw a student from SMU nor does it cancel a student's current class schedule or advanced registration. Once the adviser has signed and dated the LOA form, the student should then be directed to meet with the remaining applicable offices to complete the leave of absence process.

Student Financial Services (Student Accounts):

Before leaving SMU, the student should be aware of any outstanding charges owed to SMU. These include tuition and fees, housing (if applicable), meal plan, health insurance and any other miscellaneous charges, i.e., Park "N Pony, library fines, etc.

Retention and Strategic Planning:

Whenever possible, the Director of Retention will plan to meet with students to process this phase of the LOA procedure. If the student is transferring, the director will also conduct an exit interview with the student and have the student complete the Non-Returning Student Survey. The director will also record any additional information the student shares about their decision to leave SMU. When the Leave of Absence Form is received in this office from the student or via mail, it will be forwarded to the Enrollment Manager for processing before the LOA status is added to the student's record.

Applicable Signatures:

The following signatures are necessary if the student meets any of the descriptive criteria. However, the student is not precluded from visiting any of these offices if she/he believes there is information they will need from these offices during their return to SMU from their leave period. For example, a student may decide it prudent to have a conversation with a Financial Aid Advisor to discuss potential strategies and options to receive funding when they return.

Dean of Students:

The student will meet with the Dean of Student Life, (DOSL), if she or he has received a conduct sanction from this Office or has one that is pending. **If neither applies to the student, then she or he does not need to visit with the DOSL.**

Financial Aid:

Due to the complexities associated with financial aid, any student who is a recipient of grants, scholarships, or loans should meet with a financial aid adviser to discuss their intentions to leave SMU. The financial aid adviser will discuss available options with the student if reasons for leaving are associated with financial concerns. The financial aid adviser will also discuss the implications their LOA will have on the status of their financial aid. Lastly, the financial aid adviser should inform the student of important filing dates for consideration to receive financial aid upon their return. **If the student is not a recipient of federal, state, or SMU financial assistance, then the student does not need to visit this office.**

Residence Life and Student Housing:

SMU students who reside in campus housing will be processed per RLSH policies to check out of their assigned room. Students should be directed to go to the Residence Life and Student Housing Office in Boaz Hall. The RLSH staff member should inform the student of important deadlines regarding consideration for future campus housing. **If the student does not reside in student housing, then this office does not require a visit by the student.**

International Center:

A SMU student on an international student visa has to adhere to specific enrollment guidelines and regulations of the United States Immigration and Customs Enforcement Agency, (ICE). **Only students at SMU with Visa credentials need to visit the International Center.**