

STANDARD OPERATING PROCEDURE

MANAGING LEAVE OF ABSENCE (LOA) APPLICATIONS

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1. The application

- 1.1. A completed LOA application form must accompany all LOA applications. The application form is available on the [Registrar's Division website](#) under "Useful Links" or via [this direct link](#):
- 1.2. The student is solely responsible for submitting a leave of absence application timeously and for keeping all stakeholders informed of their leave application and/or leave arrangements.
 - 1.2.1. A third party leave of absence submission will only be considered if the student is medically incapacitated (with evidence of the medical incapacity).
- 1.3. The student must submit the LOA form with the relevant officer in the Centre for Academic Administration (CAA) without delay, except if the absence was for one to two days only, in which case the relevant academic staff member or the staff member designated by the Faculty/programme/module should handle the leave of absence application.
- 1.4. The contact details for the relevant Centre for Academic Administration (CAA) office are:
 - 1.4.1. Stellenbosch Campus programmes contact STBLOA@sun.ac.za;
 - 1.4.2. Programmes of the Faculty of Medicine and Health Sciences, contact tygexams@sun.ac.za; or
 - 1.4.3. Programmes the Stellenbosch Business School and School of Public Leadership on the Bellville Park campus contact bpcassessments@sun.ac.za.
- 1.5. Planned LOA applications and supporting documents must be submitted to the relevant Centre for Academic Administration (CAA) office at least 7 working days in advance of the absence, except if leave is taken due to illness or unforeseen circumstances, then the application must be submitted within 2 working days after the absence commenced.
- 1.6. The University reserves the right to allow academic environments, the Registrar or their delegate to deny applications for leave of absence where such applications are not lodged in good time, or where such applications are not practically feasible.
- 1.7. Applications and associated supporting documents that are illegible or that have been altered may be rejected and if it can be proven that the student altered such a supporting document, it could lead to disciplinary action.

2. Verification of leave of absence for co-curricular activities by the Division of Student Affairs and sport activities by Maties Sport

- 2.1. LOA applications for participation in representative co-curricular activities must be verified by the Division for Student Affairs (DSAf) before the LOA application is submitted by the student or on behalf of the student to the Centre for Academic Administration
 - 2.1.1. Each application for leave of absence for recognised co-curricular activities should be accompanied by a recommendation from the Senior Director: Student Affairs or their delegate, with a clear identification of the category of leave of absence being requested, e.g. Category A 12.1.1.5.1 or Category B 12.1.2.2.
 - 2.1.2. For co-curricular activities not offered at the university, or events not facilitated by officially recognised or regulated organisations, applications for leave of absence must be supported by the Senior Director: Student Affairs or their delegate, with a clear identification of the category of leave of absence being requested, e.g. Category A 12.1.1.5.1 or Category B 12.1.2.2.
- 2.2. LOA applications for participation in representative sport at an international, national, provincial or inter-university level must be verified by Maties Sport before the LOA application is submitted by the student or on behalf of the student to the Centre for Academic Administration
 - 2.2.1. Each application for leave of absence for sport activities should be accompanied by a recommendation from the sport manager concerned and, in the case of applications for Category A leave of absence, also from the Chief Director: Sport or their delegate, with a clear identification of the category of leave of absence being requested, e.g. Category A 12.1.1.4.1 or Category B 12.1.2.2.
 - 2.2.2. For sporting codes not offered at the university, or events not facilitated by officially recognised or regulated sport organisations, applications for leave of absence must be supported by the Chief Director: Sport or their delegate, with a clear identification of the category of leave of absence being requested, e.g. Category A 12.1.1.4.1 or Category B 12.1.2.2.
- 2.3. To process an application in good time, after it was submitted to and processed by DSAf or Maties Sport, it should reach the Centre for Academic Administration at the latest 7 working days before the period of absence to finalise the recommendation and submit it to the academic environment concerned,
 - 2.3.1. Urgent requests that do not comply with the 7-day submission requirement will be handled case-by-case on the merits of the request.

3. Processing the application in the Registrar's Division and the Academic Environment

- 3.1. LOA applications must be considered by the module lead, or the academic department must delegate consideration and approval of such LOA requests to a designated departmental official, document this delegation in the relevant structure's reports and communicate this in the relevant module guide
- 3.2. If the application is for 1-2 days only:
 - 3.2.1. The designated official in the academic environment reviews the application form and ensures that relevant sections are completed, and the relevant supporting documents accompany the application,
 - 3.2.1.1. if relevant sections are not completed and/or supporting documents are not included, the application is returned to the student by the relevant official with a request for the required information, which includes a due date for the return of the updated form.
 - 3.2.1.2. if relevant sections are completed and supporting documents are included, the relevant official decides on the applicable leave category according to the LOA rules published in the General Yearbook and relevant rules of the module, programme or faculty.

- 3.2.1.3. The decision and specific arrangements must be captured by the academic environment, signs it and returns this to the student for implementation.
- 3.3. If the application is for 3 days or more:
 - 3.3.1. The relevant officer in the Centre for Academic Administration (CAA) processes the application within 2 working days as follows
 - 3.3.1.1. The officer reviews the application form and ensures that relevant sections are completed, and the relevant supporting documents accompany the application,
 - 3.3.1.1.1. If relevant sections are not completed and/or supporting documents are not included, the application is returned to the student by the relevant CAA officer with a request for the required information, which includes a due date for the return of the updated form.
 - 3.3.1.1.2. if all sections are completed and supporting documents are included, the relevant officer in the Centre for Academic Administration (CAA) makes a recommendation on the applicable leave category according to the LOA rules published in the General Yearbook.
 - 3.3.1.2. The relevant CAA officer completes the "Registrar's Division recommendation" section on the LOA application form, stamps it and sends this onto the academic environment and copies the student for further processing.
 - 3.3.1.2.1. This will be sent on email with instructions on the next steps to complete the LOA application.
 - 3.3.2. The relevant academic environment/s must further process the LOA application with the RD recommendation prior to the commencement of the absence.
 - 3.3.2.1. If the LOA application applies to different modules, approval from each academic environment must be sought.
 - 3.3.3. The designated official in the academic environment reviews the application form and ensures that the Registrar's Division (RD) has made a recommendation on the applicable leave category according to the LOA rules published in the General Yearbook, and that the form is stamped.
 - 3.3.3.1. if RD recommendation is not included, return the form to the student and instruct them to submit the application to the RD or submit the application with all supporting documents to the RD for processing.
 - 3.3.3.2. if RD recommendation is included, the relevant official in the academic environment determines whether they can accommodate the leave request based on the applicable leave category according to the LOA rules published in the General Yearbook and relevant rules of the module, programme or faculty.
 - 3.3.3.3. The decision and specific arrangements must be captured on the LOA form by the academic environment, signs it and returns this to the student for implementation.
 - 3.3.4. When a student's recommended application for leave of absence is of an extended nature i.e. where the reasons for leave are legitimate and in line with the LOA stipulations in the yearbook but if catching up and completing the relevant academic responsibilities is impossible within the normal time allowed for the specific module, year or programme, the academic environment should consider
 - 3.3.4.1. the possibility of approving an extended leave of absence by extending the curriculum programme or
 - 3.3.4.2. to advise the student to apply to interrupt the studies for a full year or
 - 3.3.4.3. to advise the student to consider discontinuation and returning at a later stage.

4. Managing extended leave of absence requests

- 4.1. Examples of leave of absence for extended periods could include but are not limited to students having to take maternity leave, extended medical leave or extended absence due to sporting events and tournaments or in the event of repeated approved absences in the same module or programme.
- 4.2. Extended LOA applications must be considered by an appointed official in the academic department to advise the student on the academic justifiability and practical impact of such a concession (practical feasibility).
 - 4.2.1. Problems are usually experienced regarding practicals or activities with set deadlines and dependency on external stakeholders or in the case of research programmes, where certain progression milestones cannot be achieved, as these are not always possible to catch up during the academic year
- 4.3. If accommodating an extended leave of absence is an option in the academic environment, an adapted academic programme or an extended curriculum programme (i.e. extending the academic year over 2 or more years) can be considered and approved by the faculty board concerned provided that such a concession will not place a student at risk of exceeding the relevant programme or faculty's progression rules.
- 4.4. The faculty board must delegate consideration and approval of such requests for extended leave of absence to the faculty committee, another committee, the dean and/or faculty administrator and document this delegation in the relevant structure's reports
- 4.5. If the extended LOA is approved, the approval must formally be communicated to the student, in writing and the relevant CAA officer by the academic environment which must include all concession arrangements afforded to the student.
 - 4.5.1. The relevant CAA officer or their delegate or should enter the approved outcomes of the requests for extended leave of absence under Academic Topics/Student Notes on the student's golden record in SUNStudent. This entry must include the exact starting and end dates of the extended leave of absence, as well as a short summary of the concession arrangements afforded to the student.
 - 4.5.2. In such cases, each student's academic record and class fees will be managed on an ad hoc basis.
 - 4.5.3. Any amendment(s) to a student's class fees is subject to the approval by the faculty's Director Business Management in collaboration with the Student Fees Division of SU.
- 4.6. Students are solely responsible to and must timeously consult their funder/sponsor to determine the impact of an adapted academic programme or an extended curriculum programme on the continuation of their funding.
- 4.7. If leave of absence because of extended periods cannot be accommodated by the faculty concerned, the student should be advised to consider applying for interruption of study or discontinuation of study and returning to the programme at a later stage.

5. Deviations and Dispute Resolution

- 5.1. Every faculty has the right to make faculty-specific rules regarding leave of absence and for 2025, these faculty-specific rules must be communicated to students on an appropriate platform, e.g. in study guides. From 2026, the updated faculty-specific rules on leave of absence must be reflected in the relevant faculty's yearbook.
- 5.2. If there should be any uncertainty, on whether to approve a LOA application or not, first the Head of department of the academic environment must be consulted
- 5.3. If there is still uncertainty, the Registrar's Division must be consulted, and borderline cases are finalised by the Registrar or their delegate in consultation with the dean or their delegate concerned

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