



Clerkship Absence Policy

Office of Accountability:	Associate Dean, Undergraduate Medical Education
Office of Administrative Responsibility:	Undergraduate Medical Education
Approver:	MD Program Committee
Scope:	Compliance with Undergraduate Medical Education policy extends to all members of the Undergraduate Medical Education community.

Overview

The *Post-Secondary Learning Act* of Alberta, as amended, provides General Faculties Council (GFC) with responsibility, subject to the authority of the Board of Governors, over “academic affairs” (Section 26(1)). Further, the *PSLA* gives the Board of Governors authority over certain admission requirements and rules respecting enrolment (Sections 60(1) (c) and (d)). The Board has delegated its authority over admissions requirements and rules respecting enrolment to GFC. GFC has thus established an Academic Standards Committee (GFC ASC).

University of Alberta Policies

University of Alberta Calendar, Section 23.3, Attendance

“Since presence at lectures, participation in classroom discussions and projects, and the completion of assignments are important components of most courses, students will serve their interests best by regular attendance. Those who choose not to attend must assume whatever risks are involved. In connection to this students should review the following sections.

The University recognizes that occasionally life events occur that require a student to miss term work, term examinations, or final examinations. However, excused absences are not granted automatically and will be considered only for acceptable reasons such as incapacitating mental and/or physical illness, severe domestic affliction, or for circumstances as described in the University’s Discrimination, Harassment and Duty to Accommodate Policy (including religious belief). This policy is available on the [University of Alberta Policies and Procedures Online \(UAPPOL\) website](#). An interfaith calendar is available on the Office of the Registrar [University Calendar page](#).



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Unacceptable reasons include, but are not limited to personal events such as vacations, weddings, or travel arrangements. When a student is absent without acceptable excuse, a final grade will be computed using a raw score of zero for the work missed. Any student who applies for or obtains an excused absence by making false statements will be liable under the code of Student Behavior. Students should consult their Faculty for detailed information and requirements.”

Clerkship Absence Policy

PURPOSE:

The Faculty of Medicine & Dentistry operates under a unique contract with society in which students are required to attend and directly participate in all components of the educational program. When the Faculty confers the MD degree, the Faculty attests not only that the student has achieved a level of competency as measured by performance on tests, but that the student has shown a commitment to professional

Responsibility and has also participated in the entire educational experience that is defined by the curriculum.

Attendance and participation will be assessed throughout all four years of the undergraduate medical education curriculum and will contribute to the students' Medical Student Performance Record (MSPR) and Academic Record. Non-compliance with the Absence Policy may result in consequences. These consequences may include: an unsatisfactory grade on the basis of attendance, required make-up work or repeating of a course, documentation in the summative comments section of a course evaluation, or comments in the MSPR attesting to any unprofessional behavior.

PRINCIPLES:

A student pursuing the degree of Doctor of Medicine is responsible to meet the Faculty's expectations regarding professionalism and participation in all aspects of the curriculum. This absence policy is designed to enable medical students to be self-directed adult learners while respecting their professional obligations.

- 1) Attendance at all required clinical learning experiences is considered mandatory.
- 2) Students are expected to be punctual and attend all clinical learning experiences barring illness or extenuating circumstances.
- 3) Attendance will be monitored and is considered a significant component of professionalism.
- 4) All absences must be excused. An unexcused absence could be considered a lack of professionalism.



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- 5) Student Professional/Personal Days have been allocated to provide students with the ability to attend to personal and/or professional development and commitments that would otherwise not be excused
- 6) Students absent for reasons of illness or unexpected exceptional circumstances must inform the UME office, course/clerkship coordinator, and preceptor (if applicable) as soon as possible in writing. In all other instances students must request an advanced approved absence from the UME office.

A student with personal or professional obligations which prevent them from attending their clerkships should follow procedures to notify the UME of absences through MedSIS. In addition to notifying the UME Office, the student should submit a learning plan to cover missed material.

- 1) Students should promptly notify those who are affected by their absence including, but not limited to clinical preceptors, course/rotation administration and instructors.
- 2) Informal agreements, where the student will be away for only part of the day, can be formed between students and instructors, if the instructor agrees to an absence. These informal agreements do not need to be approved by the UME Office but should include the expectation that the student's learning plan addresses their understanding to cover missed objectives, or extra clinical experience if they have not met required course objectives due to their absence.

Students recognize that all their clerkship rotations (including mandatory sessions) have objectives that are vital to their development as a physician and assessment for competency in the MD Program. Therefore, the student absent from their clerkships bears the responsibility to learn all objectives and competencies assigned by the MD Program. They may be expected to undertake independent learning or extra work.

Students requiring arrangements or particular considerations are recommended to speak with the Assistant Dean, Academics. Students may also be requested to meet with the Assistant Dean, Academics to discuss their absences. A student's privacy and confidentiality will be respected.

POLICY:

SECTION I: LOGISTICS

1. ABSENCE FORM SUBMISSION
 - a. Absence forms must be completed by the student with details of all curriculum components that will be missed due to the absence to the best of their knowledge



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- b. Due to the complexity of scheduling learning activities, forms must be submitted to UME via MedSIS at least 30 days in advance of the start of clerkship being requested for approval. Forms can be submitted less than 30 days prior to start for approval at the discretion of the clerkship coordinator after deciding whether learning activities will be adversely affected. There is an expectation that a minimum of 80% satisfactory attendance to meet minimum clerkship requirements.
 - c. Absence forms submitted less than 14 days from the requested date may be denied, unless:
 - i. In cases of illness or emergent situation, students are expected to submit an absence form within a reasonable timeframe.
 - ii. In such cases, forms will be reviewed on a case-by-case basis under the discretion of Assistant Dean, Academic.
 - d. There are unique deadline dates for Student Professional/Personal days.
 - i. See Section II.3 for details.
2. ABSENCE FORM APPROVAL
- a. Approval of absence requests can only be made by the UME office.
 - b. Previous requests and academic performance may be reviewed for all absences including student Professional/Personal days.
 - c. Outcome of application process will be communicated to the student via their University of Alberta email address
 - d. Travel arrangements (flights, hotels etc.) should be booked **ONLY AFTER** an excused absence is granted to the student by UME.
 - e. Students may request to meet with the Assistant Dean, Academic to discuss specific requests with the knowledge that said policies will be adhered to and exceptions will only be made in extenuating circumstances.

SECTION II: TYPES OF ABSENCES

1. ALL ABSENCES
 - a. It is the student's responsibility to ensure that they make up any missed work for an absence.
 - b. Clerkship students are encouraged to review their absences with their preceptors to establish a mutually agreed upon plan. An effort must be made to take the time off when it is least likely to disrupt the functioning of the clinical teaching team.
2. EXCUSED ABSENCES
 - a. Students that are granted an excused absence may be given the opportunity to make-up missed exam/work where feasible and resources are available. Ultimately the responsibility to make up for missed learning objectives lies with the student as outlined in their curriculum.



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- b. Excused absences may be granted in the following circumstances:
 - i. University of Alberta Varsity athletic commitments will be approved given that appropriate documentation from coach/manager outlining circumstances is provided. Students may be asked to meet with the Assistant Dean, Academic to discuss these types of absences
 - ii. Academic presentation at a conference. At the time of the request, the itinerary, confirmation of start and end time of presentation must be submitted. Approval may be granted for the day of the presentation. Additional travel time may be granted. The total leave granted for the presentation at a conference will be restricted to no more than 10 days per academic year.
 - iii. Official Indigenous and religious events and commitments
 - iv. Student representing the Faculty of Medicine and Dentistry in a Medical Student Association (MSA) designated or approved role.
 - v. Medical appointments
 - 1. Students are encouraged to schedule elective appointments at the time that does not interfere with mandatory pre-clerkship and clerkship experiences.
 - 2. UME recognizes that this is not always possible and will accommodate as necessary.
 - vi. Medical illness
 - 1. To ensure that students have adequate support, UME may offer support or direct the student to the Office of Advocacy and Wellbeing.
 - vii. Family and/or Personal Emergency
 - viii. Maternity and Paternity Leave
 - 1. Students will automatically be granted up to two weeks of leave with the expectation that they will still be expected to complete all of their learning requirements. Should the student require additional leave they can apply for an extended leave of absence of up to one year.
 - c. Students requesting an excused absence during the following days may be required to meet with the Assistant Dean, Academic:
 - i. Summative Exams including but not limited to, OSCE and Comp Exam
3. STUDENT PROFESSIONAL/PERSONAL DAYS
- Student Professional/Personal Days are excused absences which are granted for reasons that are not listed above. Student Professional/Personal Days will be granted if there are no concerns surrounding the student's academic and/or professional standing and the request meets the following criteria:



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- a. Maximum Number of Student Professional/Personal Days Per Academic Year
 - i. Medical students will be granted 4 student Professional/Personal days per academic year.
 - ii. Student Professional/Personal days are not cumulative between academic years.
 - b. Maximum Number of Student Professional/Personal Days Per Course/Rotation
 - i. Students may request up to 2 Student Professional/Personal Days in an 8 week course/rotation.
 - ii. Students may request up to 1 Student Professional/Personal Day per course/rotation less than 8 weeks in duration.
 - c. A student must make up all required call-time.
 - d. If students on the same rotation request the same day off for a Professional/Personal Day, approval will be granted on a first come, first served basis.
 - e. Absence Form Submission
 - i. Medical students must submit an absence request 10 business days before the requested date.
 - f. Students may not request a Student Professional/Personal Day during the following days:
 - i. Summative Exams including but not limited to, OSCE and Comprehensive Exam
 - ii. Clerkship Final Exam
 - iii. First day of Clinical Rotation
 - iv. LINK Block
 - g. Weddings and Family Events – students will be expected to use their Professional/Personal Days.
4. UNEXCUSED ABSENCES
- a. Unexcused absences on dates of mandatory sessions where grades are assigned (e.g. exam) will result in an automatic grade of zero.
 - b. Students may be requested to meet with the assistant dean, academic affairs to review the situation.
 - c. Unexcused absences may result in the assignment of make-up work and/or a major professionalism lapse.



DEFINITIONS

Any definitions listed in the following table apply to this document only with no implied or intended institution-wide use.	
Attendance	The presence during the entire scheduled activity or until the student has completed a quiz or examination.
Excused Absence	approved absence, planned non-attendance
Examination	An examination includes any formative or summative assessment or evaluation which may or may not be graded. It may also be called a quiz or test.
Mandatory session	Any learning encounter noted as “mandatory” on the MedSIS schedule and includes lectures, discovery learning, small group teaching, clinical skills sessions, teaching OSCE clinical patient encounters and clerkship rotations.

APPROVAL HISTORY

APPROVER	STATUS	DATE
MD Program	Approved	March 26, 2015
MD Curriculum & Program Committee (MDCPC)	Approved	19 May 2022