

University of Pittsburgh School of Medicine

Policy on Absence and Attendance

I. PURPOSE

Medical students and their supervising faculty benefit from having a well-defined set of expectations of when students may be absent from the curriculum, and the associated requirements for making up or repeating missed coursework. This policy defines the policies governing medical student attendance and absence at UPSOM.

II. SCOPE

This policy applies to:

- Medical students

III. POLICY

General Guidelines

Students are expected to be present at all required-attendance sessions and examinations throughout the curriculum. It is the student's responsibility to be aware of the attendance expectations for each part of the curriculum.

Students must follow the school's procedures for notification of anticipated and unanticipated absences (see "Procedures" section below). In the case of unanticipated absences for illness or emergency, the notification must be submitted as soon as possible.

Students are responsible for the content of any curricular units missed for any reason (see below for details).

The Student Affairs and Medical Education Deans will track student absences over time. The following may be considered attendance issues that may result in a notification of the Advisory, Student Affairs, and Medical Education Deans and referral to the Promotions Committee (when appropriate) in accordance with the school's Code of Professionalism:

- Absence for personal reasons from four or more required sessions within one academic year in the MS1-2 segment
- Absence from a required session without obtaining advance approval or notifying the school as soon as possible.
- Failure to communicate with the course/clerkship/elective director about any unexcused absences
- Failure to complete the online absence notification

- Increasing trend in number of absences across courses

Excused Absences

The following are approved reasons for an excused absence from a required session:

- Personal illness or to seek health-related care (refer to the policy on Healthcare-related Absence)
- Death or severe illness of a family member
- Religious holiday observances
- Legal (e.g., jury duty)
- Participation in a scientific conference where the student is the lead author/presenter and directly participating in the conference presentation
- Participation in an academic conference where the student is in a leadership role (i.e., has a formal position as an officer in an organization)
- Match-related activities (residency interviews, SOAP process, match day)

Note that the length of the excused absence in the above references situations will be determined on a case-by-case basis taking into account the individualized circumstances. See below for information regarding Lengthy Absences.

Disability Accommodations – Additional Excused Absences

Students seeking disability-related accommodations should contact The Office of [Disability Resources and Services](#) (DRS), as soon as possible. DRS will verify your disability and determine reasonable accommodations as appropriate.

Flex Days

Students may also request to be excused from the curriculum for occasional “personal time”— events or activities other than those listed above as “excused” absences. This might include family events, weddings, or other personal activities. These will be known as “flex days.”

Required Courses

Year 1 and 2 students may be excused from a course for a flex day:

- In each academic year, students may request two flex half-days during coursework.
- No more than one flex half-day will be permitted during a single course.

Required Clerkships and Acting Internships

Year 3 and 4 students may be excused from a clerkship or acting internship (AI) for a flex day:

- No more than two flex days (or four flex half-days) will be permitted per academic year.
- No more than one flex day (or two flex half-days) will be permitted during a single clerkship/AI.

Limitations on Flex Days

Students will not be excused for flex days/half-days at the following times:

- During a one-week course (e.g., Clinical Focus Course)
- During orientation for a clerkship
- During the first or final day of a clerkship or acting internship
- During curriculum sessions that are not feasible to recreate, such as clinical skills sessions with patients, a skills lab, standardized patient session, or hands-on simulation program
- On the day of scheduled exams

Elective Courses

The general clerkship requirements for attendance, acceptable reasons for absence, requirements for notification about anticipated and unanticipated absence from clerkships, and requirements to make up missed work also apply to electives.

In addition, with advance permission from the responsible course faculty, students may arrange time away from an elective for up to five days. All electives will adhere to the maximum of five

days. A course director may stipulate that students may be away from the elective for fewer days, which supersedes the five-day general guideline; if so, this must be approved in advance by the Office of Medical Education, listed clearly in the elective course catalogue, and discussed with students at orientation.

Exceptions to this policy to permit more than five absence days may be approved by special arrangement with the elective course director or the Dean of Student Affairs.

Academic Consequences of Absences

Students are responsible for the content and work associated with all missed sessions; such make-up work must be reasonable, non-punitive, commensurate with missed time, and designed to help students reach learning objectives. Under no circumstances will an absence relieve a student of meeting all of the academic requirements of the course or clerkship. If the absence conflicts with a session or sessions that cannot be otherwise made up or completed, the student is advised that the absence may affect his or her performance evaluation in the course. Failure to satisfactorily complete the remedial/make-up assignments in a timely manner may result in an overall course failure. Students who complete make-up work in a timely fashion and satisfactorily should not face any grading penalty for excused absences.

Students who miss more than 10% of the total duration of the clerkship or segment of a clerkship – for any reason – will be required to make up missed time.

Students who miss more than 25% of the total duration of a clerkship – for any reason – will be required to reschedule the entire clerkship.

Students who miss between 10% and 25% of a clerkship — for any reason – will need to make up missed time in the manner determined to be appropriate by the clerkship director, which may include rescheduling the entire clerkship.

If a student has missed 50% or more of the required sessions within a single course (including electives and Integrated Life Sciences courses) –for any reason – the student will be reviewed by the Promotions Committee. The student may receive a grade of Unsatisfactory and may be required to repeat the entire course.

Lengthy Absences

A lengthy absence is defined as equivalent to or greater than 50% of a course in the MS1-2 phase. A lengthy absence is not considered a Leave of Absence. If a student is interested in seeking a Leave of Absence, they should refer to the Leave of Absence policy for details]. A lengthy absence may be granted by the Associate Deans for Student Affairs and Medical Education, only for medical reasons or a family emergency. A student is expected to either attend sessions remotely and/or complete make-up work for all required sessions that are missed, based on the specific course affected and the student situation. Remote sessions may be offered only if:

- The documented family need or student medical condition does not preclude active participation in the required sessions
- It has been determined by the Assistant Dean for Medical Education, in consultation with a course director, that remote participation is both equivalent or nearly equivalent to onsite participation, and superior to written remediation
- The student is physically distant from the medical school and unable to readily return within 24 hours

Students missing all or most required activities in more than one consecutive course may be advised to take a leave of absence. These recommendations will be made by the Academic Success Team in consultation with course directors and the Associate Dean for Medical Education.

This guidance does not include missing activities in courses shorter than two weeks, or in courses that are longitudinal in nature (e.g., one half-day per week).

IV. POLICY AUTHOR(S)

- Office of Medical Education

V. RELATED POLICIES AND PROCEDURES

- [Policy](#) on Leave of Absence
- [Policy](#) on Healthcare-Related Absence
- UPSOM Code of Professionalism
- Non-Discrimination [Policy](#)

VI. REFERENCES

None

VII. APPROVALS

Dean, School of Medicine, 12/22/17; revised 12/16/19.

Revision approved by:

Curriculum Committee, approved February 7, 2022.

Education Policy Council, approved February 15, 2022.

Executive Committee, approved June 24, 2022.

Dean, School of Medicine, approved August 5, 2022.

VIII. PROCEDURES/NOTES

MS1-2 students requesting flex days should use UPSOM's official request [form](#).

https://pitt.sharepoint.com/sites/nav365/Pages/MS3_4_UPSOM_Absence_Request_Form.aspx

MS3-4 students requesting flex days off must communicate with course/clerkship directors at least two weeks in advance to request days off, using the school's official request [form](#) for absences.

https://pitt.sharepoint.com/sites/nav365/Pages/MS3_4_UPSOM_Absence_Request_Form.aspx

If a student is ill they must notify the school as soon as possible to let people know—in MS1-2, they should notify the OMED Assistant Dean and the appropriate Course Director. In MS3-4, they should notify their clerkship or elective director.

The duration of time allowed for excused absences will be determined based on discussions between the OMED Assistant Dean responsible for that segment and the appropriate course, clerkship, or elective director, based on a student's individual circumstances.

Students who have scheduling conflicts with sessions in courses or clerkships that are "blacked out" for flex days should notify course/clerkship leadership in advance. It may be possible to switch assigned sites or days to prevent the conflict. For instance, if a student in the Advanced Physical Examination course has an important research activity on an afternoon that might be a course day, they can ask the course administrator before the start of the course if they can have a different afternoon.

Students are advised against taking flex days during curricular units when they have had other excused absences.

Students who need to negotiate with the course/clerkship director to make up time on clerkships or electives must schedule during flexible time (e.g., vacation days) or during upcoming periods of the schedule.

If a student doesn't use all their allotted flex days in a year, they are allowed to "roll over" the days to the next year. Other than the use of extra days in the following year, all other rules will apply—blackout restrictions, notifications, maximum days used per unit of curriculum, etc.

If a student has a situation that requires a different approach, they can seek an exemption to any of these specific policy guidelines, by meeting with the Assistant Dean responsible for that particular curricular segment.

For disability accommodations, students should contact the Office of Disability Resources and Services (DRS), at <https://www.diversity.pitt.edu/disability-access/disability-resources-and-services>,

140 William Pitt Union, (412) 648-7890, drsrecep@pitt.edu, (412) 228-5347 for P3 ASL users.