

University of Pittsburgh School of Medicine

Policy on Absence and Attendance

I. 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. In the case of unanticipated absences for illness or emergency, the notification must be submitted as soon as possible after the absence.

The following constitute acceptable reasons for 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

Students are responsible for the content and work associated with all missed sessions. 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 do complete make-up work satisfactorily should not face any grading penalty for their excused/acceptable absences.

The Student Affairs and Medical Education Deans will be provided with periodic reports on student absences.

The following are considered professionalism issues that may result in a referral to the Promotions Committee; notification of the Advisory, Student Affairs, and Medical Education Deans; and issuance of a Behavior Observation Form:

- Absence for personal reasons from 4 or more sessions within one academic year
- Absence from a required session without obtaining advance approval
- Failure to communicate with the course/clerkship/elective director
- Failure to complete the online absence notification
- Increasing trend in number of absences across courses

Planned Absences

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 planned absence:

- 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.

If a student misses 50% or more of the required sessions within a single course —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.

Required Clerkships and Acting Internships

Year 3 and 4 students may be excused from a clerkship or acting internship (AI) for a planned absence.

- 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.

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.

Limitations on Planned Absence 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 course or clerkship
- During the first or final day of a course or clerkship
- During a week that is shortened by a course/clerkship examination or a holiday
- when SOM classes are cancelled
- The day immediately preceding or following vacations (“bookending”)
- 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. The specific teaching events that are considered ineligible for a planned absence day are described in the Procedure on Absence and Attendance.

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.

Consequences for missing excessive time from a course also apply to elective and Integrated Life Science courses.

In addition, with advance permission from the responsible course faculty, students may arrange time away from an elective for up to 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.

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

Refer also to the document, Guidance on Elective Absence for Residency Interviewing and to the Policy on Healthcare-Related Absence.

II. 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.

III. SCOPE

This policy applies to:

- Medical students

IV. POLICY AUTHOR(S)

- Office of Medical Education

V. RELATED POLICIES AND PROCEDURES

- Policy on Healthcare-Related Absence
- Guidance on Elective Absence for Residency Interviewing
- Procedure on Absence and Attendance
- Student Code of Professionalism

VI. REFERENCES

None

VII. APPROVALS

Dean, School of Medicine, December 22, 2017

Revision approved by:

Curriculum Committee, approved May 6, 2019

Education Policy Council, approved September 27, 2019

Executive Committee, approved December 10, 2019.

Dean, School of Medicine, December 16, 2019.