

Undergraduate Medical Education

Attendance and Absences in Undergraduate Medical Education Policy



Student Assessment Component: Policy #SA-07 v3

Supersedes: Policy #SA-07 v1 and v2; Examination Absence Policy (#SA-03); Religious Observance Policy (#SA-04); Absence from Clerkship Policy (#CC-07); and takes precedence over any previously approved policy on attendance

Lead Writer: Dr. R. Van Wylick

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1.0 Principles

- 1.1 Students in the MD Program must acquire and demonstrate the necessary skills, attitudes and competencies required to enter a residency program and, ultimately, independent practice. Full attendance at learning events, clinical duties and full participation in the curriculum demonstrates professionalism and respect for colleagues, faculty, staff and volunteers of the School of Medicine.
- 1.2 At times, attendance is not possible or a leave from medical school may be necessary. This policy sets out the conditions for absence or leaves.

2.0 Mandatory Attendance

- 2.1 It is expected that medical students demonstrate full attendance at all events and activities that are defined as mandatory as set out below. Absence from these events and activities must be sanctioned as set out in this policy.
- 2.2 Patterns of unsanctioned absenteeism may be considered evidence of unprofessional behavior.
- 2.3 Students who are absent are responsible for any material or time missed.

2.4 Mandatory Events and Activities

2.4.1 Designated Mandatory Events

Learning events for which mandatory attendance is required will be identified as such by the addition of the term 'Mandatory' at the end of the event title in MEdTech, unless already provided for in this policy.

2.4.2 Clinical Clerkship Rotations

During clinical rotations, attendance at clinical duties, including on call, weekends, statutory holidays and other duties as scheduled by individual clinical rotations, is mandatory.

2.4.3 Clinical Skills, Technical Skills, Simulations, Labs, Tutorials, and Small Group Learning Events

Clinical Skills, Technical Skills, Simulation sessions, Labs, and Tutorials may require the presence of patients, additional facilitators, tutors, and/or significant resources and are not easily scheduled or duplicated; therefore, attendance at all sessions is mandatory. The design and success of Small Group Learning events is dependent on the attendance of all group members and therefore, attendance at these events is also mandatory.

2.4.4 Examinations and Assessments

Examinations and assessment activities measure and provide feedback to students on their performance in achieving the necessary competencies of the curriculum. These activities are not easily replicated and therefore attendance is mandatory. Absences will be approved only under exceptional circumstances.

Absence from final examinations and OSCEs may only be approved by the Associate Dean UGME, Director of Academic Affairs or the Progress and Promotions Committee who will in all cases determine the plan for alternate assessment. Absence from OSCEs will only be approved for personal or family emergencies. Absence from final examinations will only be approved under exceptional circumstances.

Unapproved absence from examinations may be considered unprofessional behaviour and the examination may be assigned a grade of zero.

3.0 Sanctioned Absences

3.1 Short or long-term absences from the MD Program may be necessary and in the best interest of the student. Students who require a leave of absence will follow the procedures required and seek approval in advance of the absence.

3.1.1 Short-Term Leave

A short-term leave is defined as a pre-approved absence lasting less than 7 calendar days that does not include a final examination or OSCE. Short-term leaves are approved by the Year Director responsible for the affected part of the curriculum. The Year Director may delegate this responsibility as required or desired. The Year Director may request that a short-term leave of absence be considered by the Progress and Promotions Committee where the matter is complex or significantly alters the curriculum.

3.1.2 Long-Term Leave

A long-term sanctioned leave is defined as a pre-approved absence lasting greater than 7 calendar days or that is indefinite in length. Long-term leaves are approved by the Progress and Promotions Committee.

3.1.3 Emergency Leave

Emergency leave is defined as any leave required as the result of a personal or other emergency. Emergency leave is approved by the Director, Academic Affairs or the Associate Dean, UGME. An emergency leave becomes long-term leave on the 8th consecutive calendar day of absence.

3.2 Acceptable Reasons for Leave

As guidance, the following may be acceptable reasons for sanctioned leave from the MD Program, although acceptance is at the discretion of the School of Medicine.

- Health (personal or immediate family)
- Unexpected family or personal crisis
- Taking a course of study or program outside the MD Program
- Performance at an elite arts, or sporting event
- Sitting an examination for a postgraduate application in another country
- Presentation of research as first or major contributing author. Permission will ordinarily not be given to present the same research project more than one meeting.
- Representing the School of Medicine as student at a meeting at the request of Associate Dean or delegate

- Participation in events as a representative of the student body at the request of the Associate Dean or delegate.
- Participation in events as an executive representative of a recognized national organization of medical students
- Attendance at meetings with members of the faculty as mandated by the Progress and Promotions (P&P) Committee or undergraduate medical education
- Other unusual circumstances

3.3 Leave of absence is not ordinarily approved for matters of personal convenience, extended time to attend scientific or business meetings, early departure for vacation travel, CaRMS interviews outside the allotted time, or observerships.

4.0 Return and Make-Up

4.1 Students who have an approved leave are responsible for all missed work and/or examinations. For short-term leaves, how such work is to be made up will be approved by the Year Director in consultation with the appropriate Course Director(s).

4.2 For missed assessments or examinations, other than final examinations, the Year Director, in consultation with the appropriate Course Director(s) will determine whether supplemental examinations or reassignment of grade values to other assessments will be considered.

4.3 For final examinations, the Progress and Promotions (P&P) Committee will determine the appropriate course of action in consultation with the Year Director .

4.4 When a student is ready to return from a long-term leave of absence, the student will apply to the Progress and Promotion Committee for permission to return. In assessing such an application, the P&P Committee will consider the re-entry point to the curriculum and a plan for re-integration which may include catch up work, a plan of assessment, remediation, repeating elements of the curriculum or other such means that ensure a successful re-entry to the curriculum, including any necessary accommodation. In the event that a student's leave is less than one month long, the Director, Academic Affairs, may approve a plan of re-entry and inform the P&P Committee as soon as feasible.

4.5 While on a long-term leave of absence, students will be required to provide periodic updates to the P&P Committee on their status. After 18 months of continuous leave, and every 6 months thereafter, the P&P Committee will review a student's status in the MD Program, including likelihood of successful re-entry.

5.0 Religious observances

- 5.1 For the purposes of this policy, the MD Program recognizes religious observances as defined and published by Queen's University in the Multi-Faith Calendar <http://www.queensu.ca/chaplain/FaithDates.html>
- 5.2 The MD Program will avoid scheduling events requiring mandatory attendance during major religious observances.
- 5.3 By September 15th of each year, students must inform UGME of religious observances during the subsequent 12 months which will require their absence from the curriculum but which are not scheduled as statutory holidays.
- 5.4 Students absent from learning events for religious observances are responsible for all missed work and/or examinations. How such work is to be made up will be determined by the Course Director(s) and Year Director.
- 5.5 In the case of missed assessments or examinations, other than final examinations, the Course Director(s) and Year Director will determine whether supplemental examinations or reassignment of grade values to other assessments will be considered. In the case of final examinations, the P&P Committee will determine the appropriate course of action.

6.0 Medical Appointments

- 6.1 Medical appointments are defined as appointments with healthcare practitioners or for diagnostic testing or evaluation that are scheduled in advance and are expected to be less than one half day duration, including travel time.
- 6.2 Students who must repeatedly attend medical appointments will apply for academic accommodation.
- 6.3 In the event that a medical appointment is expected to be more than one half day in length, students should apply for sanctioned absence, or personal days in clerkship.
- 6.4 Students should make every effort to schedule medical or dental appointments at times that do not interfere with their attendance at learning events or during scheduled clinical activities. In the event that this is not possible:

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- 6.4.1 For pre-clerkship learning events and for Clerkship Curricular Courses (C1: MEDS 351, C2: MEDS 481, and C3: MEDS 491), students must apply for sanctioned leave for any session that has been designated for mandatory attendance.
 - 6.4.2 For clerkship, students must notify and seek approval from the appropriate Clerkship Course Director or delegate and notify any clinical areas where they are working. In the case of call, students must make arrangements for coverage.

7.0 Illness in Clerkship

- 7.1 Students may experience short-term illness in clerkship that requires leave from clinical activities. Such absences benefit not only the student but promote patient safety. Students who require leave for short-term illness during a clerkship clinical rotation or elective must:
 - 7.1.1 Notify directly all clinical areas, the Undergraduate Medical Education Office, the clerkship coordinator for the rotation and their preceptor or team (when applicable) that they will be absent due to illness
 - 7.1.2 Ensure appropriate replacement clinical coverage
 - 7.1.3 For absences of 48 hours or longer, or for more than 3 days of absence on any single clinical rotation, apply for sanctioned leave
 - 7.1.4 When requested, supply evidence that they are well enough to participate in clinical activities prior to returning to work
 - 7.1.5 Make-up, at the discretion of the Clerkship Year Director, any missed time or material
 - 7.1.6 Where cumulative absences due to illness or medical appointments from clinical rotations exceed a total of 8 over the course of the entire clerkship, the Clerkship Year Director shall advise the Progress and Promotions Committee, for approval of a course of action. This will include any make-up or remediation, taking into consideration the overall performance of the student during clerkship.

8.0 Personal Days in Clerkship

- 8.1 Students are permitted, subject to approval, to take no more than a total of 5 personal leave days in a flexible manner during the clerkship clinical rotation schedule (does not include Clerkship Curricular Courses C1: MEDS 351, C2: MEDS 481, and C3: MEDS 491).

- 8.2 Personal Days will not be approved for events requiring mandatory attendance such as NBME or other examination dates.
- 8.3 Personal Days will not require justification or make-up of missed material, however, approval will be required by the Clerkship Year Director or delegate in accordance with procedures established by the Clerkship Committee.
- 8.4 No more than 3 days may be requested off in any core clinical rotation, 2 days in any 3-week sub-rotation, 1 day in any 2-week sub-rotation or 4 days in the Integrated Clerkship. The Clerkship Committee may establish other restrictions on dates available for personal days.
- 9.0 Length of Program**
- 9.1 The MD Program will be completed within 7 years from admission to graduation, including all leaves of absence.
- 10.0 Dispute Resolution**
- 10.1 Disputes that arise under this policy will first be directed to the Director, Academic Affairs for resolution. This decision may then be appealed to the P&P Committee and may be further appealed in accordance with the Terms of Reference of that committee.
- 10.2 Where a student is not granted an absence and wishes to dispute the decision and a decision to allow the absence cannot be reasonably considered before the required date, the principle of “work now and appeal later” will apply.