

Undergraduate Medical Education

Attendance and Absences in Undergraduate Medical Education Policy



Student Assessment Component: Policy #SA-07 v4

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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. 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 attend 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

Mandatory learning events are identified in the learning event 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 and religious holidays and other duties as scheduled by individual clinical rotations, is mandatory.

2.4.3 Examinations and Assessments

- Examinations, and assessment activities, including OSCEs, are not easily replicated and therefore attendance is mandatory.
- Unapproved absence from examinations may be considered unprofessional behaviour and the examination may be assigned a grade of zero.
- Plans for alternate assessment will be developed by the Year Director.

Final Examinations and OSCEs

- Absence from final examinations and OSCEs may be approved by the Associate Dean UGME, Assistant Dean Academic Affairs and Programmatic Quality Assurance, or the Progress and Promotions Committee.
- Absence from OSCEs and final examinations will only be approved under exceptional circumstances.
- In cases of a missed final examination or OSCE, the plan for alternate assessment will be approved by the Assistant Dean Academic Affairs and Programmatic Quality Assurance.

Other Assessments

Absence from other assessments may be approved by the Year Director, Associate Dean UGME, Assistant Dean Academic Affairs and Programmatic Quality Assurance, or the Progress and Promotions Committee.

3.0 Sanctioned Absences

3.1 Short term or extended 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 for the absence. In all cases, the Progress and Promotions Committee and the Assistant Dean Academic Affairs and Programmatic Quality Assurance will be notified of the dates and nature of all approved leaves of absence, and any plans for re-integration or make up.

3.1.1 Short-Term Leave

A short-term leave is defined as a pre-approved or emergency 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 Assistant Dean Academic Affairs and Programmatic Quality Assurance or Associate Dean UGME. A short-term leave of absence may be considered by the Progress and Promotions Committee where the matter is complex or significantly alters the curriculum.

3.1.2 Extended Leave

Extended leave is defined as an absence lasting greater than 7 consecutive or cumulative calendar days in a Term, or that is indefinite in length. Extended leaves are approved by the Assistant Dean Academic Affairs and Programmatic Quality Assurance, the Associate Dean UGME, or the Progress and Promotions Committee.

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 at 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 Committee, the Associate Dean UGME or the Assistant Dean Academic Affairs and Programmatic Quality Assurance
- Other unusual circumstances

3.2.1 Parental Leave

Students who wish to take a leave of absence after the birth or adoption of a child will be granted the opportunity. The length of the leave will be determined in consultation with the student, will ordinarily be less than one year, and will take in to account the needs of the student, timing of reintegration into the curriculum, and opportunities to make up for missed material.

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, or late return from, 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 Assistant Dean Academic Affairs and Programmatic Quality Assurance or Progress and Promotions Committee will determine the appropriate course of action in consultation with the Year Director .

4.4 When a student is ready to return from an extended leave of absence, the student will make a request to the Assistant Dean Academic Affairs and Programmatic Quality Assurance or Associate Dean UGME for permission to return.

4.5 A plan for return after an extended leave of absence will include consideration of a re-

entry point to the curriculum and a plan for re-integration. This 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.

4.6 While on an extended leave of absence, students will be required to provide periodic updates to the Assistant Dean Academic Affairs and Programmatic Quality Assurance on their status. After 12 months of continuous leave, and at least every 6 months thereafter, the Progress and Promotions 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.

5.2 The MD Program will make every effort avoid scheduling events requiring mandatory attendance, with the exception of clinical duties in clerkship, during major religious observances.

5.3 Students must inform UGME at least 6 months in advance of any religious observances 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 Year Director.

5.5 In accordance with the requirements for patient care and professional duty, students in clerkship are expected to be available for clinical work, in an equitable fashion, during religious holidays and observances, regardless of whether or not the observance is recognized as a statutory holiday. However, where a religious observance is not a statutory holiday, students will be given every opportunity to observe the day as a holiday, and to make up the time on a different day.

5.6 In the case of missed assessments or examinations, other than final examinations, the Year Director will determine whether alternate examinations or reassignment of grade values to other assessments will be considered. In the case of final examinations, the Assistant Dean Academic Affairs and Programmatic Quality Assurance 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 request personal days in clerkship.

6.3.1 Students should make every effort to schedule medical or dental appointments at times that do not interfere with their attendance at mandatory learning events or during scheduled clinical activities.

6.3.2 For clerkship, students must notify and seek approval from the appropriate Clerkship Course Director or delegate and notify their clinical team. 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 the Undergraduate Medical Education Office, the clerkship coordinator for the rotation and their clinical team that they will be absent due to illness

7.1.2 Notify the Undergraduate Medical Education Office when ready to return to duties and, when requested, supply evidence that they are well enough to participate in clinical activities prior to returning to work

7.1.3 Make-up, at the discretion of the Clerkship Year Director, any missed time or material

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 rotations
- 8.2 Personal Days will not be approved for days that include NBME examinations, end of rotation meetings, or other examination dates.
- 8.3 Personal Days will not require justification, 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 10% of a rotation or sub-rotation's scheduled clinical weekdays, and no more than 2 consecutive days, may be requested as 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, unless otherwise approved by the Progress and Promotions Committee.

10.0 Dispute Resolution

- 10.1 Disputes that arise under this policy will first be directed to the Associate Dean, UGME for resolution. In the event that resolution by the Associate Dean is not possible, the matter may be referred to the Progress and Promotions Committee for decision. Progress and Promotions decisions may be 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.