

TITLE: Attendance in Clerkship—Policy

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MANDATORY ATTENDANCE

Professional programs, such as medicine, utilize experiential learning and clinical experiences to provide hands on learning in a variety of clinical environments to better understand the impact of the disease process on an individual, their family, and their community. It also allows students to apply and consolidate their medical knowledge prior to their transition to residency. The longitudinal aspect of clerkship provides opportunities for direct observations and assessment in the clinical environment in a graduated responsibility to the end of the student's fourth year. As such, a high volume and variety of clinical experiences are required to ensure safe care of patients and the student's ability to meet the program objectives. The University of Ottawa MD program does recognize that there are instances that may require a medical student to take time away from their core mandatory activities.

- Attendance is mandatory for all clinical placements (e.g. including but not restricted to: Transition to Clerkship Part 1 and 2, Core Rotations, Electives, and Selectives) during the 3rd and 4th year of UGME. These include orientation sessions, didactic teaching and small group bed-side teaching sessions (e.g. Problem Assisted Learning, Academic Days, Skills Sessions and Simulated Sessions).
- Students may be scheduled to participate in curricular activities on Saturdays, Sundays and holidays which can include but not limited to, in house on call, home call and or emergency room shifts.
- For virtual learning activities, students must log in with their UOttawa account and properly identify themselves on screen with their legal name. If more than one student is in a room, all names of students must be listed on the screen and visual confirmation with their teacher must be done at the beginning and end of activity.

UNPLANNED ABSENCES

Unplanned absences are unpredictable, unforeseen and often critical or emergent circumstances, including illness or injury, personal crisis, family emergency, funeral or memorial service, travel or transportation emergencies or any other unpredictable and unforeseen circumstance affecting the ability of the student to attend mandatory activities. Unplanned absences must be **IMMEDIATELY** reported.

Mandatory notification of absence

The following people must be notified by the student or their delegate of the unplanned absence on the day of the absence:

- The UGME Office
- The hospital coordinator of the respective rotation
- The clinical team leader and/or preceptor with whom they are working with. This is to ensure that the care of their patients is handed over appropriately. If they are unable to

do so because of the critical nature of their absence, they must ask the hospital coordinator to do so.

Please see procedure note on communicating unplanned absences.

Health Care provider note requirements

- Black out periods: Students are required to submit a verification note for all unplanned absences during blackout periods, regardless of the number of days of absence. The verification note must be submitted to the UGME office within 7 days of the reported absence.
- All other periods: students are required to submit a verification note for health-related absence of more than two (2) consecutive days of mandatory learning sessions to the UGME office within 7 days of the reported absence.
- If the matter is sensitive, the student may elect to first consult with the Student Affairs Office for immediate support and help with the notification process.

PLANNED ABSENCES

Planned absences are due to known or anticipated circumstances and require prior approval by the Undergraduate Medical Education (UGME) office. Some examples include health care appointments, Religious observance, significant event such as an invited athletic or musical competition, participation at a conference as either an academic presentation or in an official leadership role. Further documentation may be requested.

Please see procedure on requesting a planned absence.

All planned absences requested outside of the defined timeframe below will be automatically declined.

BLACKOUT PERIODS

The UGME calendar has blackout periods when excused absences will not be granted unless for exceptional circumstances. The use of Personal Days (PD), Conference Days (CD) or Medical Leadership Days by a student is NOT permitted during this period.

The following are blackout periods during clerkship:

- Transition to Clerkship Part 1 (during Pre-Clerkship)
- Transition to Clerkship Part 2
- Day of examination and seven (7) days prior to an examination
- Transition to Residency: any scheduled in person simulation educational session and any mandatory session

UTILIZING SEQUENTIAL DAYS FOR PLANNED ABSENCES

- The maximum number of sequential days that may be used for Conference Days is **THREE** (3).
- The maximum number of sequential days that may be used for Personal Days is **TWO** (2).
- The maximum number of sequential days that may be used for a combination of Conference Days and Personal Days is **THREE** (3).

MAXIMUM NUMBER OF STUDENTS RECEIVING APPROVAL FOR PLANNED ABSENCES

- For any specific date within a rotation, a maximum of **TWO** (2) Anglophone stream students and **ONE** (1) Francophone stream student in a given Clerkship Rotation group will be granted approval of a CD, PD or Medical Leadership Day.
- When there are multiple students requesting the same day of absence, approval will be granted on a first come, first served basis as determined by the date that the UGME receives the request.

Approval of planned absences

Until written confirmation is received of the approval of the excused absence, students are encouraged to NOT commit to their activity or incur any financial investment. Students should be aware of any cancellation policies for the event if required.

Once a personal day (PD), Conference Day (CD), Religious Holiday or Medical Leadership activity is approved, students must inform their team (physician/supervisor and/or resident) of their approved absence at the beginning of the week in order to ensure appropriate patient hand over.

TYPES OF PLANNED ABSENCES

ABSENCES FOR PERSONAL DAY

Definition

“Personal Day” (PD) is defined by a planned absence attend a personal activity without justification.

Number of Personal Days per Academic Year

- Students are permitted two (2) Personal Days (PD) during Year 3.
- Students are permitted two (2) Personal Days (PD) during Year 4.
- Personal days are non-transferrable between years, must respect blackout periods and cannot be used during a planned mandatory component.

Timing of the requests

- All requests for a PD must be submitted at least 6 weeks prior to the start of the affected rotation.

- Permission may be considered for a request submitted no later than 4 weeks prior to the absence as long as the following is respected:
- When planning a PD, students cannot request a day: where there are mandatory components where they are scheduled for a call shift once the schedule is out be more than 2 students off at the same time during a blackout period Shift/Calls for certain rotation dependant activities may be rescheduled or require exchanges between students if it is deemed essential to the rotation.

Please see procedure on requesting a planned absence.

ABSENCES FOR PRESENTING AT MEDICAL CONFERENCES

Definition

“Conference Day” (CD) is defined by a student receiving a confirmed invitation to present at an approved medical conference. The student must be the presenter (podium, workshop or poster presentation) to be eligible for a Conference Day.

Conference days apply to in person and virtual conferences. A full day must be used.

Number of Conference Days per academic year

- Students are allocated three (3) Conference Days per academic year during their third year of the program and three (3) Conference Days during their and fourth year of the program. These days includes travel.
- Students who are presenting research at more than one conference per academic year may be granted one (1) more day per academic year.
- Exceptions may be granted by the Assistant Dean Academic Affairs, in consultation with the Clerkship Directors, if the activity provides enrichment to the students educational, career goals or within the student’s leadership roles.

Timing of the request

- A conference day must be requested as soon as there is intent of presenting at a conference. The request must be made as soon as conference dates are known, even if the abstract has not yet been submitted or accepted.
- Students must submit their request, in writing, as per procedure, a minimum of six (6) weeks prior to the start of the rotation.

Please see procedure on requesting a planned absence.

ABSENCES FOR RELIGIOUS HOLIDAYS

Absence for Religious Holidays are considered planned absences.

Students must comply with the [University of Ottawa regulations, section 15](#). Clerkship students must send their request in writing to UGME Office at least SIX (6) weeks prior to the start of the rotation to facilitate the planning of clinical duties.

Most religious holiday calendars are available well in advance.

Please see procedure on requesting a planned absence.

ABSENCES FOR MEDICAL LEADERSHIP REPRESENTATION

Students who are representing the Faculty of Medicine in an approved leadership role (e.g. Aesculapian Society duties; CMFS duties) may be granted excused absences on a case-by-case basis. Requests for absences due to approved leadership activities must be submitted six (6) weeks prior to the start of a rotation to the Year 3 or Year 4 Liaison officer. They will consult with the Clerkship Director for approval.

UNEXCUSED ABSENCE

An unexcused absence is defined as an absence without approval by the UGME Office. This is not the same as an unplanned absence.

An unexcused absence will be considered a lack of professionalism and will be brought to the attention of the Vice-Dean of the Undergraduate Medical Education (UGME) Office or a delegate. Unexcused absence may be grounds for failure. The following is considered unprofessional behaviours:

- Failure to attend a mandatory learning activity for an unplanned absence without providing notification within 24hours.
- Failure to attend a mandatory learning activity for a reason that was known or anticipated or can reasonably be expected to have been known or anticipated, but for which a planned absence was not submitted.
- Disregarding the decision of the MD program regarding a planned absence request.

These unprofessional behaviours will be reflected in the student's professionalism assessment for the rotation and may be reflected in the final evaluation. It can be used for grounds for failure of the rotation.

THRESHOLD FOR REVIEW OF CUMULATIVE ABSENCES, ALL SOURCES

To ensure that the students continue to meet with the MD Program's objectives while minimizing the disruptions to learning and patient care, the following thresholds will be used to facilitate early identification, in a safe and confidential manner, students who may require supports.

- All absences (unplanned, planned, unexcused) will be recorded and monitored.
- Every absence must be reported and documented. This ensures that the UGME office can support the student through their educational journey and is able to provide accurate assessment of the student through the program.
- The cumulative maximum number of days of absences per academic year is TEN (10). The names and files of students exceeding ten (10) absences will be brought to the attention of the Clerkship Director.

- Individual cases will be reviewed by the Students Promotions Executive committee (SPEC). Possible outcomes for exceeding the maximum number of allowable absences may include, but not limited to, further assignments, completion of mandatory requirements, and/or course/rotation failure and/or repeating the clinical year.
- Any staff or faculty member concerned about a student with fewer than a total of ten (10) yearly absences for all causes may bring this to the attention of the Clerkship Director. These concerns may include the student's ability to meet the rotations clinical objectives and/or professionalism.
- To be eligible for academic credit, absences for all causes (planned, unplanned and unexcused) cannot exceed 20 percent of a clinical rotation.
 - In Year 3, absence of more than 20 percent of a clinical rotation will require a remediation plan to be completed at the end of year 3 and prior to commencing year 4.
 - In Year 3, absence of more than 20 percent of two (2) core clinical rotations may result in the repetition of those clinical rotations during an additional academic year. This will be discussed at the Student Promotion Executive Committee (SPEC).
 - In Year 4, absence from a core mandatory activity of more than 20 percent will require repetition of that activity prior to graduation. If that is not feasible, then the student may be required to repeat Year 4.
 - In Year 4, absence from a core mandatory activity of more than 20 percent of two (2) core mandatory activities will require repetition of Year 4.

A prolonged absence or series of absences that affects the ability of students to complete a course or curricular component may be better supported by a Leave of Absence (LOA). Please see section below for information regarding LOA.

- A check-in meeting may be required with students if a recurrent or problematic absence history is identified, such as: 5 or more full day unplanned absences in an academic year or;
- 10 or more full day total absences in an academic year;
- 2 or more unplanned and/or planned absences on days on which mandatory components are scheduled in an academic year.

If a situation is identified, the Clerkship Director will review the student's absence history and determine any next steps. This may include a check-in meeting. Students will be encouraged to invite a support person to this meeting.

The check-in meeting goal is to:

- Provide students with an opportunity to discuss their absences in a confidential and safe environment.

- Help ensure they are aware of the various supports available to them, and Determine if the student can complete the curriculum components.

CLERKSHIP EXAMINATIONS AND UNPLANNED ABSENCES

- Clerkship examinations include end of rotation written examinations and OSCEs.
- To request a deferral of an examination, a written request must be submitted to the Supervisor Academic Services—Clerkship, and Year 3 Liaison Officer. In consultation with Clerkship Director and Vice-Dean UGME, the request will be reviewed. Additional documentation may be requested. Confirmation of deferral will be communicated by the UGME office.
- Students who complete an examination during the period of disability specified on the medical certificate cannot later plead illness to appeal their examination results.

See policy [Summative Written Examination Policy—3rd Year Clerkship](#) for information on rescheduling and completing deferred examinations.

LEAVES OF ABSENCE

A leave of absence is an official, temporary withdrawal from studies.

Acceptable reasons for leave:

- Health related reasons (self, family);
- Personal nature (e.g. death of a family member, separation of divorce).
- Academic enrichment year.
- Parental leave

Approval of Short and Long Term Leaves

SHORT TERM LEAVE OF ABSENCE (STLA)

SHORT TERM LEAVE OF ABSENCE: is defined as a pre-approved absence lasting less than 20% of a course or rotational component.

Request for a STLA must be submitted to the UGME office.

Approval is made by the Vice-Dean UGME or their delegate. Students may request guidance from the Student Affairs Office during this time.

LONG TERM LEAVE OF ABSENCE (LTLA)

LONG TERM LEAVE OF ABSENCE: is defined as a pre-approved absence lasting greater than 20% of the course or rotational component to a maximum of one full academic year at a time.

Request for a LTLA must be submitted to the UGME office.

Approval for LTLA is reviewed by SPEC

Students are requested to seek guidance from the Student Affairs Office.

Please see procedure on requesting a STLA or LTLA.

Reintegration and re-entry into the UGME Program following a Leave of Absence

The goal of a reintegration and re-entry plan is to provide the student with support to meet the UGME program objectives.

When a student is approved for a LTLA, the following will occur:

- SPEC will determine the re-entry point to the curriculum.
- A contract of return will be provided to the student.
- A plan will be formulated for reintegration which may include but is not limited to: plan(s) of assessment, accommodation(s), remediation, repetition of curriculum elements, repetition of clinical rotations, mandated health programs and examinations.