



Title/Subject: Attendance and Absence Policy

Applies to: faculty students staff Other

Policy System Process/Procedure Guideline/Standard Position Description

● **Introduction**

- **Historical/Contextual Overview:** The College of Medicine recognizes the need to achieve a balance between students’ personal and academic lives. As a result, an attendance and absence policy that reinforces learning, while providing students some degree of flexibility is important.
- **Reason for the Policy:** Regular attendance is expected of all students studying to be physicians. Students are encouraged to ask questions and to seek clarification of points covered by the instructor during an event. Advanced preparation, regular in-person attendance and interaction with instructors will aid students in their medical education.

LCME Element 12.4: A medical school provides its medical students with timely access to needed diagnostic, preventive, and therapeutic health services at sites in reasonable proximity to the locations of their required educational experiences and has policies and procedures in place that permit students to be excused from these experiences to seek needed care.

- **Scope:** This policy applies to all TAMU-COM medical students.

● **Policy/Procedure Statement:**

General

Students are expected to seek necessary health care to maintain their physical and mental well-being. Examples of necessary health care include preventative health services, visits for acute illness, ongoing care for chronic illnesses, physical therapy, and counseling and psychological services. Consistent with their rights under University policies and the law, students have a right to privacy when seeking care. Students need not disclose the specific type of healthcare that is being sought.

Student participation in local and national meetings of interest to the College and student body is encouraged. In order to represent the College of Medicine at any meeting or conference, a student must be in good academic standing. Approval for absences should be obtained from the course/clerkship directors and the Office of Academic Affairs. As with all absences, an online request must be submitted and approved.

Pre-Clerkship

The Office of Academic Affairs administers the attendance and absence policy. Requests for excused absences, including requests for healthcare, must be submitted through the Pre-Clerkship Absence Request Form. Students need not disclose the specific type of healthcare that is being sought. Course directors, teaching faculty, and educational support staff do not handle attendance or absence related matters, nor can they adjust decisions. Students with recurring absences (excused or unexcused) or late arrivals to events will be required to

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meet with Academic Affairs.

It is the student's responsibility to provide documentation to substantiate an excused absence within 3 days of returning to school. Confidential information may be redacted from this documentation. Documentation may be required for repetitive absences even if excused.

Excused absences/tardies may be requested in the case of:

1. Necessary health care to maintain physical and mental well-being.
2. Physician-documented illness serious enough to prevent attendance. (Students with chronic or recurring medical condition may contact Student Affairs to document their condition. This will preclude repetitive doctor's notes.)
3. Participation in legal proceedings with documentation
4. Death or illness of a family member
5. Observance of a religious holy day**
6. Presenting or serving as a College of Medicine delegate in a local, state, national medical/science conference
7. Other situations may qualify as excused absences and will be evaluated by Academic Affairs on a case-by-case basis

Attendance Recordkeeping:

It is the student's individual responsibility to check-in to all mandatory events. Checking-in for another student, or circumventing the check-in geolocation technology, is considered academic dishonesty and will subject the student(s) to disciplinary action up to and including dismissal.

Attendance (including tardy information) is recorded using one of two methods -- paper sign-in or electronic check-in. Most events utilize electronic check-in. Some events (exams, OSCEs, etc.) disallow electronic check-in or have additional security protocols which require paper sign-ins.

Students are required to document any missed check-in, or check-ins later than 10 minutes after a mandatory event's scheduled start time (T+10), using the Pre-Clerkship Absence Request Form within 24 hours of the event. Academic Affairs will determine if the request is excused or unexcused and communicate the decision to the student and the course directors.

Consequences of unexcused absences/tardies:

- An unexcused absence will result in a 1-point deduction from the student's individual final course grade per occurrence. o If a graded activity was missed during the event, the student may contact the course director to determine if the graded activity can be made up for non-graded educational purposes. Any graded activities missed will incur a grade of zero (0).
- An unexcused tardy will result in a .5-point deduction from the student's individual course grade per occurrence. If a student arrives tardy, but in time to take an assessment, the student may complete the scheduled assessment for a grade.
- A student with more than 2 unexcused absences/tardies will be ineligible for honors designation in that course.
- A student with 3 or more unexcused absences/tardies per semester will be referred to the Student

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Promotions Committee. The Student Promotions Committee, at their discretion, may provide additional consequences, including but not limited to, placement on the early concern list, placement of the student on probation and possibly may include dismissal.

The Practice of Medicine (PoM) courses have separate attendance policies. Consult course syllabi for these specific policies.

Clerkship

Each clerkship will establish an attendance policy that meets the requirements of the curriculum. However, as a general rule, students will be required to attend all rounds, lectures and clinic duty.

Absences, with approval of the clerkship director, will be allowed for the following reasons:

1. Necessary health care to maintain physical and mental well-being.
2. Physician documented personal illness (of more than 2 days); however, an absence from a major exam or OSCE due to an illness must be documented by a physician. Primary source verification may be required for any doctor's note received.
3. Legal proceedings with documentation
4. Death or critical illness of an immediate family member
5. Participation in local and national meetings where the student is representing the College of Medicine (generally, this is considered to be students holding some office but other forms of representation may also qualify)
6. Personal Days for personal business, weddings, etc. (maximum of two personal days for the entire clerkship curriculum –*see below for further details)
7. Observance of a religious holy day (**see below for details)
8. Other extraordinary circumstances may be excused in consultation with Academic Affairs.

**Personal Days* - Students are allowed up to two personal days off during their 1.5 year clerkship curriculum to tend to personal business, weddings, reunions, or other events that may not fall in the list of the routinely recognized excused absences. Students need to submit the online Clerkship Absence Form to the Clerkship Director to request these personal days, and the request must be approved by the Clerkship Director. Please note that these personal days may not be taken during an OSCE exam, NBME, or other scheduled exam. No half days or hour counts are permitted. While a specific reason for one's personal day is not required, these must be approved in advance and approval is not guaranteed but will depend on the activities of the team and the number of students off on any given day.

Documentation may be required for repetitive absences even if excused. Students with a chronic or recurring medical condition may contact Student Affairs to document their condition. This will preclude repetitive doctor's notes.

A student's decision to seek healthcare during a clerkship should have no impact on his or her performance evaluation.

Scheduled classes and conferences are mandatory and take precedence over any clinical or surgical activity.

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Students are responsible for learning what the respective clerkships require of them on the holidays at any clinical venue. Students should not assume that a national holiday allows them to be away from scheduled rotations. The faculty physician supervising the rotation will be the final authority in deciding whether or not students are required to be present on any calendar day, holiday or otherwise.

Consequences of absences:

Absences, regardless of being excused or unexcused, totaling 10% or more of the days for a clerkship will require counseling and the development of a remediation plan. If absences exceed 20% of the days required for a clerkship, the student may be required to repeat the clerkship before being promoted to the fourth year. If absences exceed 20% of the days for two clerkships, the student may be required to repeat the entire year, as determined by the Student Promotions Committee. Unauthorized absences may result in failure of the clerkship, academic probation, or dismissal by the Student Promotions Committee.

Students who are representing the college (generally considered to be in an elected office or presenting a paper) will not be charged personal days during the third year, however, they may be requested to make up days missed in excess of 10%.

Note: For Bryan-College Station students in the Aggie Integrated Medicine (AIM) program, the 10% and 20% rules will be applied to each quarter of their third year. This will be the equivalent of how the policies are applied to a traditional third year student on fixed length rotations.

M4 Year

The Office of Academic Affairs will approve absences and notify the elective director and coordinator. The student and/or the coordinator will notify the individual attending faculty. Unauthorized absences may result in failure of the rotation, academic probation, or dismissal, as recommended by the Student Promotions Committee.

Absences, with approval of the clerkship director, will be allowed for the following reasons:

1. Necessary health care to maintain physical and mental well-being.
2. Physician documented personal illness (of more than 2 days); however, an absence from a major exam or OSCE due to an illness must be documented by a physician. Primary source verification may be required for any doctor's note received.
3. Legal proceedings with documentation
4. Death or critical illness of an immediate family member
5. Participation in local and national meetings where the student is representing the College of Medicine (generally, this is considered to be students holding some office but other forms of representation may also qualify)
6. Observance of a religious holy day (**see below for details).
7. Interviews
8. Other extraordinary circumstances may be excused in consultation with Academic Affairs.

Students do not have personal days while in the 4th year and are expected to use vacation time for personal business.

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Documentation may be required for repetitive absences even if excused. Students with a chronic or recurring medical condition may contact Student Affairs to document their condition. This will preclude repetitive doctor's notes.

It is understood that students will frequently require time off during the 4th year to participate in residency placement interviews. Students are encouraged to anticipate this need and to schedule their off-time during the peak interview times of November through January. However, it is understood that this time may not be adequately or appropriately placed to meet all interviewing needs. Students that require time off from mandatory activities to interview for residency placements should notify their elective administrator and/or attending as well as Academic Affairs at least two weeks in advance if at all possible. Students may be granted an excused absence for two weekdays during a two-week rotation and four weekdays during a 4-week rotation for interview purposes. Students must notify the Office of Academic Affairs in advance for all scheduled interviews that involve being absent from a mandatory activity. If additional time off is needed, a remediation plan should be developed by the student and the elective administrator.

M4 Students must use the online Elective Absence Form to request an absence from a mandatory activity.

****RELIGIOUS HOLY DAYS** - As defined in the Texas State Law, a "religious holy day" means a holy day observed by a religion whose places of worship are exempt from property taxation. The College of Medicine will excuse a student from attending classes or other required activities, including examinations, for the observance of a religious holy day, including travel for that purpose. A student who is absent from classes for the observation of a religious holy day will be allowed to take an examination or complete an assignment scheduled for that day within a reasonable time after the absence. A student must request absence from the class for observance of the holy day. Request for absence must be submitted online to the Office of Academic Affairs. A student who is excused for holy day observance may not be penalized for the absence, but the instructor may appropriately respond if the student fails to satisfactorily complete the assignment or examination in a timely manner.

Consequences of absences:

Students who miss more than 20% of a 4th year elective for any reason (2 weekdays during a two- week rotation or 4 weekdays for 4 week rotation) will require a remediation plan or repeat of the elective.

- **Resources and Tools:**

- **Forms/Links:**

- Pre-Clerkship Absence Request Form - <https://medicine.tamhsc.edu/current/absence-forms/pre-clerkship-absence.html>

- Clerkship Absence Request Form -

- <https://medicine.tamhsc.edu/academics/students/absence-forms/m3-absence.html>

- Elective Absence Request Form -

- <https://medicine.tamhsc.edu/academics/students/absence-forms/m4-absence.html>

- **Definitions:**

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Non-mandatory Events – Events not designated as “mandatory” in a course syllabus/schedule. Attendance is not recorded at non-mandatory events. In-person attendance at these events is strongly encouraged, but students may choose to view the recording (if available) later. Students are responsible for learning the content of all non-mandatory events as it may be testable material.

Mandatory Events – Events designated as “mandatory” in the course syllabus/schedule that require in-person attendance. Attendance (including tardy information) is recorded at all mandatory events. Students are expected to arrive on time and attend mandatory events to their completion.

Absence – Failure to attend a mandatory event, or checking-in to a mandatory event > 10 minutes after the event’s scheduled start time

Tardy – Arriving at a mandatory event after the scheduled start of the event (T=0) up to 10 minutes after the event’s scheduled start time (T=+10)

Semester – For the purposes of the College of Medicine, Fall semester runs from July through December, and Spring semester runs from January through June. There are 3 semesters in the Pre-Clerkship medical curriculum.

Graded Activity – Any activity designated in the grading component of a course’s syllabus.

Excused Absence/Tardy – An absence/tardy in which students are allowed to make up missed course work without penalty.

Unexcused Absence/Tardy – An absence/tardy in which students *are NOT allowed to make up missed course work and* may also encounter a grade penalty in that course.

RELIGIOUS HOLY DAYS - As defined in the Texas State Law, a “religious holy day” means a holy day observed by a religion whose places of worship are exempt from property taxation.

Related Policies, Processes, and Guidelines: Click or tap here to enter text. *List any policies, processes, guideline, etc. Include related SACS or LCME standard.*

- Other - Click or tap here to enter text. *Can include flowcharts, diagrams, org charts, etc.*

- **Revision History:** *Do not delete any revision history.*

Date of Change	Authority	Summary of Changes	Document Location
Sept 1, 2019	Academic Affairs	Updated to include access to healthcare and converted to new format.	COM Policies and Procedures Team Drive in Google

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