

UNDERGRADUATE MEDICAL EDUCATION
SCHULICH SCHOOL OF MEDICINE & DENTISTRY
ATTENDANCE AND ABSENCE

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PURPOSE

Participation as a student in the Doctor of Medicine program (MD Program), Schulich School of Medicine & Dentistry, Western University requires active engagement in all learning modalities. Students are required to attend all educational experiences. Attendance at scheduled learning demonstrates professionalism and support for peers, faculty and the MD Program.

This statement outlines information and processes related to attendance in the required MD Program learning.

DEFINITIONS

Academic Leave

Academic Leave is defined as an approved absence from MD Program learning for further academic enrichment. Approvals are adjudicated by the Undergraduate Medical Education (UME) Office and/or the Vice Dean UME (or delegate).

Examples of Academic Leave during the academic year include:

- Participating in an official administrative session as a representative of the student body
- Presenting scholarship at a national or international meeting or conference
- Representing the School in an official capacity at a provincial, national, or international meeting or conference relating to medical education.

Non-Academic Leave

Non-Academic Leave is defined as an approved absence from MD Program learning for reasons not officially related to a student's medical education and/or academic career. Approvals are adjudicated by the Learner Experience Office (LEO) and/or the Undergraduate Medical Education (UME) office in accordance with the Assessment and Appeals policy, Schulich School of Medicine & Dentistry and Western University Rights and Responsibilities [Rights and Responsibilities - University Secretariat - Western University \(uwo.ca\)](https://www.uwo.ca)

Examples of Non-Academic Leave during the academic year include:

- Personal health issues
- Religious holidays
- Unplanned personal and family emergencies
- Flex days
- Personal / Professional Development
- Performance at selected approved arts, political, or sporting events
- Writing a required exam for an external program
- UME approved workshop, seminar, or another educational event
- Planned personal / family events or celebrations e.g., wedding, convocation
- Health related appointments or sessions

Flex Day

Flex days are a form of non-academic leave that does not require an explanation for the absence.

Deferral

Formal notification that an assessment has been temporarily delayed or rescheduled.

PROCESS

In adjudicating issues related to student attendance, the following process will be used by the UME Office, the LEO and/or the Vice Dean UME (VD UME) or delegate in reaching a decision on a student-requested absence or deferral from required Program educational experiences. Documentation for a leave of absence (academic and non-academic) and issues of attendance are the responsibility of the UME Office and will be recorded in the electronic student record.

The final decision for a requested absence or deferral lies with the VD-UME (or delegate) and/or the Associate or Assistant Dean Learner Experience Office (AD LEO) (or delegate). Persistent program absences will be discussed, and decisions rendered at the MD Program Competence Committee. A pattern of absence may impact student progression in a course and may result in documentation on the student's academic record. Lapses of professionalism may result in remediation, probation or dismissal from the Program.

Attendance and Requested Leaves

Attendance

- Progression toward achieving the MD Program Competencies requires student attendance for educational experiences. It is expected that students will attend all scheduled educational experiences.

- Students are expected to arrive on time and not leave before an educational experience or shift ends (e.g., *Clerkship* or *Clinical Electives*).
- Students granted an Academic or Non-Academic Leave for an educational experience are expected to inform facilitators or faculty leads of their approved absence in advance electronically, to make up all the work missed, and to complete all assessments.

Leaves, Absences and Deferrals

In requesting absences, leaves or deferrals involving the MD Program required educational experiences, students must:

Complete the online request process in the Hub in advance at: [Schulich Medicine & Dentistry Hub - Login \(uwo.ca\)](#).

Non-approved leaves or absences will prompt a review by the course faculty lead and the MD Program Competence Committee. This may result in a recommendation of non-progression for Professionalism.

Multiple leaves or absences from clinical educational experiences (even if approved by LEO or UME) in Clerkship or Clinical Electives may require additional clinical time to complete clerkship or elective rotations. This may require additional time in the Program, notwithstanding the maximum time to completion of 6 years.

For each year that the student is in the MD program, they are granted the following number of absences:

- Academic Leave (5)
- Non-academic Leave (3)
- Flex Days (3)

These absences are tracked within the [Schulich Medicine & Dentistry Hub](#) and re-set at the start of the academic year as specified in the [Sessional Dates](#) calendar.

Academic Leave:

Students are eligible to take up to five (5) days of Academic Leave during each year of their program, provided they comply with the other clauses in this policy, including but not limited to:

- Students will not receive permission to present at more than two national or international meetings or conferences.
- Students will not receive permission to present the same project at more than one national or international meeting or conference.
- All requests must be submitted to the Hub for approval: [Schulich Medicine & Dentistry Hub - Login \(uwo.ca\)](#).

- Students must **not** request permission for Academic Leaves from rotation/academic directors, preceptors, or administrative staff.

Students may request half-days of Academic Leave. These will be counted as half-days towards total time away.

Non-Academic Leave:

Students are eligible to take up to three (3) days of Non-Academic Leave and this does not impact the Academic Leave. This includes significant personal events and absences due to illness or compassionate reasons.

- Students may use Non-Academic Leave to attend conferences or meetings related to student leadership roles in provincial, national, or international organizations.
- All non-academic requests must be submitted to the Hub for approval: [Schulich Medicine & Dentistry Hub - Login \(uwo.ca\)](https://www.uwo.ca/hub/)

Once a student has taken three (3) days of Non-Academic Leave, they will not be eligible for any additional Non-Academic Leave during the year unless the absence is due to illness or compassionate reasons.

- Although illness or compassionate absences in excess of three (3) days may be designated as approved by LEO, no further absences for other Non-Academic personal events will be approved by UME. Even with approval by LEO, the student may be asked to make up missed time.

Students may request half-days of Non-Academic Leave. These will be counted as half-days towards total time off.

Flex Days:

- Students may take up to 3 Flex days each year in the program which do not require an explanation but must be logged into the Hub with the following advance notice requirements:
 - Received by the UME Office at least one (1) week in advance for mandatory educational experience in Years 1, 2, and 4.
 - Received for *Clerkship* or *Clinical Electives* at least six (6) weeks before the start date of the relevant core rotation or elective.
- Flex days do not count toward Non-Academic or Academic Leave.
- Flex days cannot be used to attend other educational experiences (e.g., Optional Clinical Learning Opportunities [OCLOs])
- Flex days may not be taken on “grey days” which include but are not limited to:
 - The day before and after:
 - a summative assessment;
 - the end of a rotation;
 - the CaRMS interview break;
 - a statutory holiday.
 - The last scheduled day of in-person educational sessions for each course
 - Mandatory Teaching Observed Structured Clinical Exam (TOSCE) post-exam take-up sessions
 - Simulations (e.g., Transition to Clerkship Simulations, Transition to Medicine Simulations, Foundations of Medicine Pharmacology interviews)

- Any other dates otherwise indicated in the schedule.

Absences Not Counted Towards Totals:

Time off for health appointments will not count towards a student's total Non-Academic Leave, provided that the release time to attend the appointment is less than 4 hours. Students must ensure they provide both a start time and end time in their Hub request for the appointment not to count towards their total time off. Students who will need longer release time or frequent/recurrent appointments should plan for accommodation directly through LEO.

Time off to participate in Schulich governance committee meetings will not count towards a student's Academic Leave or Non-Academic Leave totals.

- Students are encouraged to participate via teleconference or videoconference in order to minimize time required away from service.

Mandatory Educational Experiences

Mandatory educational experiences are designed purposefully to promote the successful achievement of the MD Program Graduation Competencies. Group learning is a powerful modality that supports small ratio coaching and formative peer feedback. Large group consolidation sessions are designed for application of knowledge and provide opportunities for students to identify opportunities to address gaps in their learning. Persistent absence by students to attend educational sessions without approval may result in remediation of Professionalism and/or a grade of failing to progress or fail. As per MD Program requirements, attendance is mandatory for all educational sessions provided during the MD program.

Years 1, 2, 4:

Attendance is mandatory for all educational experiences, including small and large group learning, during Years 1,2 and 4

Students assigned to groups must attend the group sessions they are assigned to. Joining an alternative group is not permitted unless granted by the course faculty lead UME or the Learner Experience Office for compassionate or accommodation reasons.

All assessments are mandatory and must be completed as scheduled.

NOTE: *There will be no deferral of scheduled summative assessments. Requests for Academic Leave during these time periods only must be approved by the authorization of the Assistant Dean (Undergraduate) LEO or the Vice Dean UME.*

Years 3, 4: Required Clinical Learning (Clerkship and Clinical Electives):

Clerkship is a single Year 3 course and Clinical Electives is a single semester course in Year 4 of required MD Program educational experiences. For both, the learning context demands mandatory attendance as outlined below:

Year 3 Clerkship and Year 4 Clinical Electives:

Year 3 students are expected to punctually attend all educational experiences in the schedule set by the rotation/academic directors, including call duty, rounds, assessments, etc. for the full period of the rotation and to inform supervisors of any approved absences.

Year 4 students are expected to punctually attend all educational experiences as outlined by the elective rotation.

For a requested absence to be approved, the time absent must be limited and not interfere with clinical learning. Persistent or multiple absences from scheduled clinical obligations may result in remediation of and/or a failure on a Clerkship rotation, the Clerkship course or Clinical Electives. This may delay graduation.

Requests for Academic or Non-Academic Leave which conflict with orientation sessions or high-stakes assessment such as end-of-rotation summative assessments and exit interviews will be reviewed on a case-by-case basis but will usually **not** be approved.

Absence Limits by Rotation Length:

Time away is limited to a maximum of 10% of the rotation/educational experience length (i.e. one day for a 2-week rotation; 2 days for a 4-week rotation; 3 days for a single 6-week rotation). Additional time away must be made up later as approved by the rotation/academic or elective director.

Students who miss 25% of a rotation or an elective, for any reason, will be given an Incomplete for that rotation and the rotation/academic/elective director will recommend a learning/remediation plan to Clerkship & Electives Committee for approval by the Competence Committee.

Notification Requirements for Short-Notice Absences in Clerkship or Clinical Electives:

Students are required to notify via three discrete channels if they must miss clinical time or educational sessions on short notice:

- Notify the clinical team (residents, consultants) as soon as possible before the learning event or scheduled shift begins that they will be unable to make it in.
- Notify the rotation/elective administrator.
- Log the absence in the Hub [Schulich Medicine & Dentistry Hub - Login \(uwo.ca\)](https://www.uwo.ca/hub).

Failing to notify all three groups may be considered a breach of professionalism.

Sanctioned Absenteeism or Deferral

Students may be granted absence from Mandatory learning by the UME or LEO Offices under the following categories:

Academic Leave

Academic Leaves will be reviewed on a case-by-case basis by the UME Office and/or the VD UME. The Session Dates for an academic year are set in advance. Learners should select the conferences they wish to attend with these dates in mind.

Requests for Academic Leave must be:

- Received by the UME Office at least six (6) weeks in advance for mandatory educational experience in Years 1, 2, and 4.
- Received for Clerkship or Clinical Electives at least six (6) weeks before the start date of the relevant core rotation or elective.
- Substantiated with documentation provided by the student to the Program upon request (e.g., copy of presentation, invitation to attend conference, conference agenda).
- Academic leaves in Clinical Electives and Transition to MD electives must be approved in advance by the elective supervisor with whom the student elective takes place before making the request in the Hub.
- Approval of academic leave must be communicated by the UME office prior to the start of the leave.

Approval will be contingent upon the student ensuring that the leave request does not:

- Overlap a summative assessment
- Occur within a pattern of documented significant or unexplained missed time.
- Violate the rules for requested timelines.
- Occur with issues of Professionalism evident in the student request.
- Duplicate a presentation of the same project or paper at a previous national or international meeting. If required, one day of travel before and after the event for leave may be permitted in granted academic leave.

NOTE: Students will have no more than two academic leaves approved in an academic year. The exception to this will be students enrolled a dual degree program (i.e., MD/PHD or MD+ Program) who are required to present their work at an academic national or international conference with the approval of their research supervisor and the Vice Dean, UME.

Non-Academic Leave (including Flex Days)

- All requests must be made prior to the leave via the Hub. Any request received after the start of a mandatory session or scheduled assessment/assignment deadline/presentation will be recorded as unapproved. All MD Program assessments missed on the leave will be required to be completed at a future date determined by the UME office.
- Requests for Non-Academic Leave based on personal health, or family must be requested via the Hub to the LEO and are adjudicated by the Assistant Dean (Undergraduate) LEO. All other outlined reasons will be requested via the Hub to the

UME Office and decided by the Associate Director UME in discussion with UME staff and the VD UME (or delegate). Emergency requests for Non-Academic leave may be (under exceptional circumstances) granted by the VD UME (or delegate).

- Where possible, notification must be given to LEO at least six (6) weeks prior to the requested absence. For acute illness or emergency (personal or family), notification must be communicated as soon as possible electronically.
- *Any learner who is determined to have falsified a claim will be addressed under the Statement of Professionalism and Western University regulations of academic misconduct.*
- Repeated requests for compassionate, health or religious absences may be subject to a request for supporting documentation and a meeting with the LEO Office so that the student's situation may be assessed both from a personal and/or educational standpoint.
- A student who is returning to the MD Program from a prolonged medical or other leave, must satisfy the requirements for return to studies determined by the Competence Committee and the VD UME as outlined in the Assessment and Appeals Statement.

Requests for Non-Academic Leave (including Flex Days) must be:

- Received by the UME Office via the HUB at least 1 week in advance for Years 1, 2, and 4.
- Received for *Clerkship* or *Clinical Electives* at least six (6) weeks before the start date of the relevant core rotation or elective.

Approval will be contingent upon the student ensuring that the leave request does not:

- Overlap a summative assessment
- Occur within a pattern of documented significant or unexplained missed time.
- Violate the rules for requested timelines.
- Occur with issues of Professionalism evident in the student request.

Cross-Campus Attendance

Students are assigned to a campus by the MD Program purposely to ensure that there are adequate resources and learning opportunities for all students. Cross-campus attendance is prohibited without prior approval by the UME or LEO or the VD UME (or delegate) and is available on a limited basis only. Such requests are only granted for compassionate or academic reasons. If extenuating circumstances arise, students may make a written request to the VD UME for a change of campus assignment after the completion of the first semester of the first year. Students may connect with LEO for support of their request.

Students who attend learning at an alternative campus without permission will receive a caution for Professionalism and documentation on their student record.

Unapproved Absences

Students will receive a mark of incomplete on any assessment given during an unapproved absence. All assessments and course requirements must be satisfactorily completed for progression.

The Program will monitor attendance.

Professionalism is a term of progression for all MD Program courses. Unapproved absences from clinical learning will be considered a breach of professionalism.

Students recorded as absent from any educational experience without approval from either LEO or the UME Office will have the unapproved absence documented on their academic record.

Students recorded as absent from more than one session without approval may be required to meet with the VD UME (or delegate) or the AD Windsor (or delegate) and addressed under MD Program processes with a caution documented in their academic record. Ongoing attendance issues will be in violation of Western's Student Code of Conduct and may be recorded on the student's Medical Student Performance Record (MSPR) submitted during for the CaRMS application.

"Failure to sign-in" will not be considered a legitimate excuse for non-attendance at any educational session.

Students may not sign attendance documents on behalf of their peers. Students forging attendance documents for peers will be referred to the Vice Dean and dealt with under the relevant MD Program and Western University professionalism policies. Students must attend the small group session to which they are assigned. Attending an unassigned group will be considered an absence.

- During any clinical learning experience, immediate notification of absence due to illness or emergency is required for absences to be deemed approved.
- Unapproved absences will be noted on clerkship and electives assessment forms and may result in a grade of fail on a rotation in Clerkship or on Clinical Elective at the discretion of the course faculty lead and/or supervisor.

Leave for Academic Enrichment

A term of up to two (2) years may be granted providing the MD Program is completed within a six (6) year window from enrolment.

Such leave must be formally requested in writing and approved by the VD UME. Supporting documentation from the planned learning program is required to accompany this request.

Monitoring the conditions of the leave will be completed by the Undergraduate Medical Education Office.

Return to the Program will be at the end of the academic leave and timing at the discretion of the Vice Dean, UME. Most students will return at the start of a new academic year.