

**Attendance and Absenteeism:
Undergraduate Medical Education**

Approved by: Curriculum Committee
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I. PURPOSE

Participation as a student in the Doctor of Medicine program (“Program”) in the Schulich School of Medicine & Dentistry (“the School”) at Western University requires active engagement in all learning modalities.

Students in each Program year are expected to attend all courses and learning sessions. Attendance at scheduled learning demonstrates professionalism and support for peers, faculty and the Program in advancing the Program curriculum, faculty and quality.

This statement outlines all information and processes related to attendance in scheduled Program learning and assessment sessions.

II. DEFINITIONS

a. Academic Leave

An Academic Leave is defined as an approved absence from curricular learning for academic reasons which directly impact the outcome of a student’s medical education and/or career. Approvals are adjudicated by the Undergraduate Medical Education (UME) Office and/or Associate Dean UME (or delegate), subject to regulations of the Schulich School of Medicine & Dentistry and Western University.

Examples of Academic Leave include:

- Attending as a member of a Schulich Medicine & Dentistry governance committee
- 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

b. Non-Academic Leave

A Non-Academic Leave is defined as an approved absence from curricular learning for reasons not officially related to a student's medical education and/or academic career. Approvals are adjudicated by the Learner, Equity and Wellness (LEW) office and/or the Undergraduate Medical Education (UME) office, subject to regulations of the Schulich School of Medicine & Dentistry and Western University.

Examples include:

- Personal health issues
- Personal / Professional Development
- Cross-campus attendance
- Performance at selected approved arts, political, or sporting events
- Writing a required exam for an external program
- UME-approved workshop, seminar, or other educational event
- Planned personal / family events or celebrations e.g., wedding, convocation
- Health related appointments or sessions

c. Deferral

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

III. PROCESS

In adjudicating issues related to student attendance, the following process will be used by the UME Office and the Associate Dean UME (AD UME) in reaching a decision on a student-requested absence or deferral from Program curricular sessions. 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 AD UME (or delegate) and/or the Associate or Assistant Dean Learner Equity & Wellness (AD LEW). Decisions may be made by the Manager of the MD Program, LEW (or delegate).

Issues of student curricular attendance non-compliance will be discussed and decisions rendered at the MD Program Competence Committee. A pattern of non-compliance with attendance can impact student progression in a Program course under Professionalism and may be reviewed as a citation on the MD Program Professionalism Policy.

a. Attendance and Requested Leaves

Attendance

To progress toward demonstrating the MD Program Competencies, student attendance in learning sessions is required. As such, it is expected that students attend all scheduled learning sessions.

Attendance is mandatory for "Mandatory Learning Sessions" of the Program curriculum listed below. Attendance at non-mandatory sessions is strongly recommended to support a team learning environment.

Students are expected to arrive on time and not leave before a session or shift (*Clerkship* or *Clinical Sciences Electives* learning) ends. Issues with this expectation not being met will be reviewed as a Professionalism issue and may impact progression in the MD Program.

Students granted an Academic or Non-Academic Leave for a Program mandatory session are expected to inform facilitators or course leads of their approved absence in advance electronically and if possible verbally, make up all work missed, and complete all assessments.

Leaves, Absences and Deferrals

In requesting absences, leaves or deferrals involving Program learning or assessment, students must:

- Complete the online request process in Single Sign On (SSO).
NOTE: Requests submitted outside of Single Sign On will not be considered.
- NOT request permission directly from Course Chairs, facilitators, preceptors, tutors, or staff.
- Provide, for an Academic Leave, six (6) weeks notice. (For *Clerkship*, six weeks before the core block begins).
NOTE: For *Clerkship*, this refers to the start date of the core rotation.
For example, a student asking for time off during a Medicine subspecialty selective must submit the request at least six weeks before the start of their 12-week Medicine rotation (**not** six weeks before the subspecialty placement).
- Provide, for a Non-Academic Leave, six (6) weeks notice (whenever possible, see above for *Clerkship*).
- Register, for emergencies and unexpected illness, the absence and notify the UME and/or LEW Office as soon as possible electronically, particularly when an assessment will be missed.
 - For *Clerkship*, students must also notify their clinical team and rotation coordinator as soon as possible before the learning event or scheduled shift begins.
NOTE: For Program assessments, a mark of 0% is given for any assessment missed during unapproved absences. The LEW Office must receive notification through SSO in order to arrange for deferral of assessment. Except in extraordinary circumstances, it is expected that students will provide notice in advance for any possible missed assessments. Missed assessments due to illness or personal/family emergencies will be re-scheduled or another form of assessment will take place in discussion with the Course Chair and learner.

Persistent non-approved leaves or absences will prompt a review by the Course Chair and Program Competence Committee. Such review may result in a recommendation of non-progression for Professionalism.

Persistent leaves or absences from clinical learning (even if approved by LEW or UME) in *Clerkship* or *Clinical Sciences Electives* learning may require additional clinical time to complete clerkship or elective rotations.

If a student absence, leave or deferral request is denied, the student is expected to be present at the Program scheduled learning or assessment. Failure to do so will result in a review under the Program Professionalism Policy and may impact progression in the curriculum.

b. Mandatory Learning Sessions

Mandatory learning sessions are created to support advancement of student competence and deliver content or skills supported by the Program Curriculum Committee. Group learning is a powerful modality that supports small ratio coaching and formative peer feedback. Failure by students to attend mandatory sessions (without approval) may result in remediation of and/or a grade of "Fail" in a course for Professionalism.

As per Program requirements, attendance in group learning sessions (as listed below) is mandatory:

Courses (Years 1, 2):

All small group learning in Years 1 and 2 regardless of course is mandatory for attendance. In addition, for some courses, there will be active large group learning sessions (i.e. Team-Based Learning) that are mandatory and identified in the Course Syllabus.

Students assigned to groups must attend the group sessions assigned. Joining an alternate group is not permitted unless granted by the Course chair, UME or LEW Offices for compassionate or accommodation reasons.

Assessments (Year 1, 2):

All assessments are mandatory and must be completed as scheduled in the Program syllabus.

NOTE: *There will be no deferral of assessments during scheduled Course summative assessments. Requests for Academic Leave during these time periods will not be approved unless by the authorization of the Assistant Dean (Undergraduate) LEW or the Associate Dean UME after discussion with the student.*

Years 3, 4 Clinical Learning: Clerkship and Clinical Sciences Electives:

Clerkship is a single Year 3 course and Clinical Sciences Electives is a single semester course in Year 4 of mandatory experiential clinical learning. For both, the learning context demands attendance as per the text below:

The following is mandatory.

Year 3 Clerkship:

- Students must attend all Academic Sessions: Introduction to Clerkship; All Academic Half-Days; all written or oral assessments, all Rotations including: exit interviews, scheduled shifts, On Call and seminars.
- Students are expected to attend all sessions in the schedule set by the Rotation supervisor, including call duty, rounds, etc. for the full period of the rotation and to inform supervisors of any approved absences.
- Provision must be made for their clinical responsibilities.
- For a requested absence to be approved, the time absent must be limited and not interfere with clinical learning. Failure to attend scheduled clinical obligations may result in remediation of and/or a grade of "Fail" on a rotation of Clerkship.
- Requests for Academic or Non-Academic Leave which conflict with orientation sessions or high-stakes assessment such as end-of-rotation exams and exit interviews will be reviewed on a case-by-case basis but will usually **not** be approved.

Limits by Rotation Length

- Time away must be limited to a maximum of 10% of the rotation 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).
 - The rotation length refers to the specific placement being completed at that time, not the core block length (e.g. refers to two-week placement in Surgery subspecialty selective, not 12-week Surgery block. A two-week subspecialty placement would only allow for an absence of one day).

- Requests for time away which exceed 10% of the rotation length will be reviewed by the Course Chair on a case-by-case basis in conjunction with the Rotation Director.
 - Additional clinical time may or may not be offered or required, by discussion between the Rotation Director and Chair of CEC.
- Students who miss 25% of a rotation, for any reason, will be given an Incomplete for that rotation.
 - The Course Chair, in conjunction with the Rotation Director, will determine if the student must complete additional clinical time or repeat the full placement in order to complete the rotation.

Limits for Academic Leave

- Students are eligible to take up to five (5) days of Academic Leave during their Clerkship year, provided they comply with 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.
 - Students must not request permission for Academic Leaves from Rotation Directors, preceptors, or administrative staff. Requests must be submitted in Single SignOn.
 - Requests must be submitted a minimum of six (6) weeks before the start of the relevant core block. Earlier submission is ideal for longer requests.
 - Students are encouraged to request an absence as soon as they have submitted their abstract for consideration at a scientific meeting and not wait for acceptance from the meeting.
- Students may request half-days of Academic Leave. These will be counted as half-days towards their total time off.

Limits for Non-Academic Leave

- Students are eligible to take up to three (3) days of Non-Academic Leave during their Clerkship year.
 - There are no Personal Days in Clerkship.
 - Non-Academic Leave includes both significant personal events as well as absences due to illness or compassionate reasons (see pg.2).
 - Students may not use Non-Academic Leave days in order to accommodate additional Academic Leave, with the following exceptions:
 - Students may use Non-Academic Leave to attend or present at local scientific meetings or educational events provided that the release time to attend the event is one day or less.
 - Students may use Non-Academic Leave to attend meetings related to student leadership roles in provincial, national, or international organizations.
- Students must not request permission for Non-Academic Leaves from Rotation Directors, preceptors, or administrative staff. Requests must be submitted in Single SignOn.
- Requests must be submitted a minimum of six (6) weeks before the start of the relevant core block whenever possible. Earlier submission is ideal for longer requests.
- 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 Clerkship 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 LEW, no further absences for other Non-Academic personal events will be approved by UME. Approval by LEW also does not indicate that the student may not be asked to make up missed time.

- If a student's total Non-Academic Leave reaches five (5) days, the student's leave history will be reviewed by CEC, and additional clinical time may be required during the student's Year 4 Elective period or in the weeks of August after Clerkship is completed in order to successfully complete the Clerkship course.
 - **Any** additional absences in excess of five (5) days, even if approved by LEW, will trigger further review by CEC and may result in a rotation and/or the Clerkship course being deemed Incomplete and/or a student being required to make up time.
- Students may request half-days of Non-Academic Leave. These will be counted as half-days towards their total time off.

Absences Not Counted Towards Totals

- Time off for health appointments will not count towards a student's total Non-Academic Leave during Clerkship, 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 SSO request in order for the appointment not to count towards their total time off.
 - Students who will need longer release time or frequent/recurrent appointments should be making arrangements for accommodation directly through the LEW Office.
- Time off to participate in Schulich governance committee meetings will not count towards a student's Academic Leave or Non-Academic Leave totals.
 - However, students are encouraged to participate via teleconference or videoconference in order to minimize time required away from service.

Off-Call or Scheduling Requests

- Requests to not have a shift outside of normal working hours on a particular date are generally considered "off-call" requests, or, for rotations with shift work, "scheduling" requests.
- Off-call/scheduling requests must be submitted via the same process as absence requests.
 - All requests must be submitted via SSO rather than directly arranged with rotations, preceptors, residents, or staff.
 - The same deadline (6 weeks before the start of the block) applies. Students are encouraged to submit as early as possible.
 - Off-call or scheduling requests submitted past deadline will not be granted; once the deadline has passed, students are responsible for arranging their own shift trades (always subject to the approval of the rotation).
- Off-call/scheduling requests will usually not count towards a student's total time off from Clerkship, unless the student misses a previously-scheduled call shift on short notice due to illness or emergency. Missing a scheduled shift is considered an absence and would count towards the Non-Academic Leave total.
- Students may only submit **one** weekend off-call request in a six-week period.
 - For the purposes of this policy, requesting any part of the weekend (i.e. Friday night, Saturday, Sunday, or a weekend-attached holiday) is considered a weekend off-call request.
- Students may only submit **one** summer holiday weekend off-call request (i.e. one of Victoria Day, Canada Day, or Civic Holiday long weekends).

General Limits

- Not all absence or off-call requests will be granted, particularly on dates which attract a high volume of requests (e.g. Tachycardia, long weekends, and holidays).
 - Provision must be made for on-call coverage.
 - If necessary, a limit of only one student being granted the absence per core rotation may be adopted in order to limit the number of clerks away from the same service on the same date.
- Absence or off-call requests for the Christmas and New Year's period will not be granted by the UME Office. All students will receive one of these two weeks off; students with important events they wish to attend during this period should share their preferred week off with the Rotation Director and/or Rotation Coordinator. No additional time off will be granted outside a student's designated week off.
 - If a student has the Christmas week off, they cannot submit absence requests for the New Year's week. If a student has the New Year's week off, they cannot submit absence requests for the Christmas week.
 - There is no guarantee that a rotation will be able to accommodate a student's requested week off.

Notification Requirements for Short-Notice Absences in Clerkship

- Students are required to notify via three separate 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 coordinator.
 - Log the absence in SSO.
- Failing to notify all three groups will put the student at risk of a professionalism citation.

Year 4 Clinical Sciences Electives

- All Clinical Sciences Electives are mandatory sessions and attendance will be used as an issue of Professionalism as per Program policy. Regulations are identical to Clerkship for this course. Non-compliance with attendance in this course will be addressed as a term of progression by the Course and Program Competence Committee
- All students must attend the scheduled Year 4 OSCE Assessment session.
- The course *Integration & Transitions (I&T)*: 100% attendance is expected for:
 - I&T small group learning,
 - Weekly wrap-up of case-based modules
 - I&T Clinical Elective
 - Communications & Physicianship module
- Requests for leave in Year 4 will not be approved, except in the case of Compassionate, Health, or Religious grounds.

Limits for Academic Leave

- Students are eligible to take up to three (3) days of Academic Leave during their *Clinical Science Elective* course provided they comply with other clauses in this policy, including but not limited to:
 - Requests must be submitted a minimum of six (6) weeks before the start of the relevant elective block.
 - Students are encouraged to request an absence as soon as they have submitted their abstract for consideration at a scientific meeting and not wait for acceptance from the meeting.

Limits for Non-Academic Leave

- Students are eligible to take up to three (3) days of Non-Academic Leave during their *Clinical Science Elective* course:
 - There are no Personal Days in *Clinical Sciences Electives*.
 - Non-Academic Leave includes both significant personal events as well as absences due to illness or compassionate reasons
 - Students may not use Non-Academic Leave days in order to accommodate additional Academic Leave, with the following exceptions:
 - Students may use Non-Academic Leave to attend or present at local scientific meetings or educational events provided that the release time to attend the event is one day or less.
 - Students may use Non-Academic Leave to attend meetings related to student leadership roles in provincial, national, or international organizations.
- Requests must be submitted in Single SignOn.
- Requests must be submitted a minimum of six (6) weeks before the start of the relevant elective block. Earlier submission is ideal for longer requests.
- 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 4th year elective period 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 the LEW Office no further absences for other Non-Academic personal events will be approved by UME. Approval by LEW does absolve the student being asked to make up missed time.
 - If a student's total Non-Academic Leave reaches five (5) days, the student's leave history will be reviewed by the Program committees (Clerkship and Electives Committee and Competence Committee). Following such review, additional clinical time may be required.

c. Sanctioned Absenteeism or Deferral

Students may be granted absence from Mandatory Learning Sessions by the Program or LEW Offices under the following categories:

Academic Leave

Academic Leaves will be reviewed on a case-by-case basis by the UME Office, the Course Chair and/or AD 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 sessions or assessments in Years 1, 2, and 4.
- Received for *Clerkship* at least six (6) weeks before the start date of the relevant core rotation.
- 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 Sciences Electives* and I&T clinical electives must be approved in advance by the elective supervisor with whom the student elective takes place. Such leave must be documented to the course and Program electronically.

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

- Overlap a significant course summative assessment
- In the opinion of the Program governance structure, occur within a pattern of documented significant or unexplained missed time in other years of the Program.
- violate the rules for requested timelines above
- Occur with issues of Professionalism documented 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 will be permitted in granted academic leaves.

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

Non-Academic Leave

Requests for Non-Academic Leave that are grounded in personal health, family or personal stress or wellness must be requested via SSO to the LEW Office and are adjudicated by the Assistant Dean (Undergraduate) LEW. All other outlined reasons will be requested via SSO to the UME Office and decided by the Manager UME in discussion with Program staff and the AD UME (or designate). Emergency requests for Non-Academic leave may be (under exceptional circumstances) granted by the AD UME (or delegate).

Where possible, notification must be given to the LEW Office 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 Program Professionalism policy and Western University regulations of academic misconduct.

When required, one day of travel before and after the event will be permitted, but travel days **do** count towards absence totals. Documentation must be provided upon request e.g. note from physician, invitation to perform, faculty/department letter of support.

All requests must be made **prior** to a leave via Single Sign On. Any request received after the start of a mandatory session or scheduled assessment/assignment deadline/presentation will be recorded as unapproved. All Program assessments missed on the leave will be required to be completed at a future date.

Year 3:

For requested Non-Academic leaves during Year 3 In *Clerkship*:

- The Rotation Director or preceptor must be contacted as soon as possible by the student for a leave.
- Daily updates are required for absences due to illness.
- Two or more consecutive days of absence because of illness, or three or more random days of absence because of illness within one rotation requires written documentation from the treating physician submitted to the LEW Office.
- Religious holidays will be granted with proper electronic requests.

Year 4:

For requested Non-Academic leaves during Year 4 *Clinical Science Electives (CSE)*:

- Students must review leave with the supervisor and program elective administrator as well as report to the CSE course chair or coordinator for tracking via SSO.
- All non-approved and non-reported absences will be subject to the Program process on Professionalism.

Approval for Non-Academic leaves may be impacted by:

- Coinciding significant course summative assessment
- The opinion of the Associate Dean, UME or Associate/ Assistant Dean LEW, there is concern regarding the student's total missed time in the Program.
- The requested timelines are not met
- Issues of Professionalism documented previously in the Program

Repeated requests for compassionate, health or religious absences may be subject to a request for supporting documentation and a meeting with the LEW Office so that the student's situation may be assessed both from a personal and/or educational standpoint.

A student who is returning to Program learning from a prolonged medical or other leave, must satisfy the requirements for return to studies as found on the Program guidelines:

https://www.schulich.uwo.ca/medicine/undergraduate/docs/policies_statements/statements/1-3-12-Student-Return-UME-Curriculum.pdf

Match Day: The afternoon of Residency Match Day will be a sanctioned half day off in the I&T course. Be aware that the day following Match Day is a regular class day. Everyone is expected to attend all sessions scheduled on that day.

Residency Interviews: A three-week break has been provided to students in Year 4 during the I&T course during which they are expected to attend all Residency Interviews.

d. Cross-Campus Attendance

Students are assigned by the Program by Campus purposely to ensure that there are adequate resources and learning opportunities for all students. To ensure there is appropriate resource usage, cross-campus attendance is prohibited without prior approval by the UME or LEW Office or the AD UME (or delegate) on a limited basis due to capacity. Such requests are only granted under compassionate or academic reasons on an individual basis.

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

Students found attending the opposite campus for a second or more time without appropriate permission will be cited for Professionalism under the MD Program process.

e. **Unapproved Absences**

Years 1, 2, & 4 (I&T)

Students will receive a mark of 0% on any assessment given during an unapproved absence.

The Program will monitor attendance:

- Professionalism is a term of progression for all Program courses
- Students recorded as absent from a mandatory session without approval from either LEW or UME Office(s) 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 Associate Dean, UME/Windsor Campus and addressed under Program processes
- Ongoing egregious attendance issues will be considered to be in violation of Western's Student Code of Conduct and will be recorded in the student's MSPR.
- "Failure to sign-in" will not be considered a legitimate excuse for non-attendance of a small group session.
- Students may not sign attendance documents on behalf of their peers. Students forging attendance documents for peers will be referred to the Associate Dean and dealt with under the Program and Western University relevant policies and processes
- Students must attend the small group session to which they are assigned. Attending an unassigned group will be considered an absence.

Years 3 & 4 (Clerkship and Clinical Science Electives)

- Professionalism is a graded component of *Clerkship* and *Clinical Science Electives*.
- As would be expected in any workplace, immediate notification of absence due to illness or emergency is required in order for absences to be deemed approved.
- Unapproved absences will be considered a breach of professionalism.
- Unapproved absences must be noted on the assessment form and may result in a grade of Fail on a Rotation, the Course "Clinical Clerkship" or a Clinical Science Elective at the discretion of the Course Chair and relevant course leaders.

f. **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 will need to be formally requested in writing and approved by the Associate Dean, Undergraduate Medical Education. Documentation from the planned learning program leadership will be required to accompany this request.

Monitoring of the conditions of such a 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 Associate Dean, UME. Most students will return at the start of a new academic year.

g. Leave for Personal and/or Health Reasons

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

Such leaves will need to be formally requested and approved by the Associate Dean, Undergraduate Medical Education (or delegate) upon recommendation by Assistant Dean, (Undergraduate) Learner Equity & Wellness.

Monitoring of the conditions of such a leave will be completed by the LEW Office according to the Statement on Student Return to UME Curriculum after Granted Leave for Personal and/or Health Reasons and communicated to the UME Office.

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