

<b>Policy 2.1.7</b>
UAMS COM Undergraduate Medical Education
<b>Section</b>
Learning Environment
<b>Title</b>
<b>EXCUSED ABSENCE POLICY</b>
<b>LCME Element(s)</b>
12.4 Student Access to Health Care Services
<b>Approved By</b>
UAMS COM Curriculum Committee
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We strongly recommend students to be present for ALL educational activities. The practice of medicine is collaborative and collegial. Excellent patient care requires good communication and trust among and between colleagues. Medical education requires students to work collaboratively with each other, patients, fellow students, staff, and faculty in a regular and predictable manner.

The nature of our work as caregivers requires that we notify appropriate persons when we must be absent so that patient care is not compromised, and both clinical and educational responsibilities are fairly shared. As a supportive community that values wellness and well-being, the College of Medicine faculty, staff, and administration realize that various circumstances--emergent or otherwise--will require that members of our community must occasionally be absent from required events. Furthermore, we must work together to support each other during circumstances that take us away from required events. This policy outlines a process by which students can be granted excused absences. Failure to comply with this policy will be considered unprofessional behavior.

Excused absences will be *considered* for the following reasons:

- Appointments for medical care that cannot reasonably be scheduled outside your MD program responsibilities
- Acute medical illness or family emergency, to include a child or other close family member's illness or a childcare emergency
- To give a scholarly presentation at an academically relevant national meeting
- Running for or holding national office in a relevant professional organization
- Religious observances
- Residency interviews
- Taking a USMLE exam
- Other extenuating circumstances **at the discretion of the course or clerkship director**. These absences will be tracked and granting these excused absences will be limited.

## **Absence Policy for the M1 and M2 years**

In the M1 and M2 years, many activities do not have a required attendance policy, but some events do have. Course faculty will inform students of those events which have a required attendance requirement. Students should notify the course director and coordinator to be granted an excused absence. This notification should be done in advance of the absence (except in cases of emergency/sudden illness where such notification can't be made).

If the excuse is for an illness or injury to the student, the student must provide a physician's statement providing an explanation of why the student should be excused from the quiz or exam or required activity. The physician's statement must be given to the course or clerkship director within one week after the excused quiz/examination/required activity. Any required sessions, academic assignments, etc. that are missed must be fulfilled to the satisfaction of the course director. Within reason, course directors will assist students to complete all work missed during excused absences, as deemed necessary by the director of the course.

### **PROTOCOL FOR MISSED EXAMS AND QUIZZES**

- Students may only re-take missed examinations or quizzes if they have an excused absence, as outlined by the College of Medicine Excused Absence Policy.
- Students who miss an examination or quiz must contact the course or clerkship director or designee to arrange for a make-up.
- For freshmen and sophomores, make-up examinations will occur at several scheduled times throughout each semester. At times, these make-up exams may occur on a weekend. All make-up quizzes will be administered by the respective course director in consultation with the student.
- Students who have an unexcused absence from an in-house examination or quiz or who miss a make-up examination or quiz will receive a grade of zero for that examination/quiz.
- Students who have an unexcused absence from an in-house examination (excluding quizzes) may receive a negative scholastic non-cognitive evaluation. Two such negative evaluations will require the student to come before the Student Promotions Committee to determine their continuing status with the College of Medicine.
- Questions on make-up examinations and quizzes cannot be appealed.

### **During M3/M4 Clinical Clerkships**

Clinical training is an essential part of medical education and represents a critical phase of the medical student experience. Given this, any absence from clinical duties (ACD) is considered a serious matter. Clerkship directors understand that circumstances will sometimes require a student to be absent from clinical duties. The following are responsibilities and general guidelines for a medical student considering an ACD:

#### **Absence from Clinical Duties (ACD)**

This is an absence that occurs during scheduled clinical duty hours and does not occur during

mandatory time off or on additional scheduled days off from clinical service. An ACD will decrease the total amount of time that a student is able to invest in clinical service activities. A student who has an ACD **may** be required to make up the time absent, depending on what activities were missed.

## Student Responsibilities

1. Students should attempt to schedule non-clerkship related activities outside of normal duty hours for that clerkship (e.g., late afternoons/evenings and weekends or scheduled time off).
2. Students must communicate all requests with advance notice (as soon as the need is known to the student) to the clerkship director, clerkship coordinator, and the attending/resident on the team they are assigned.
3. Students who are ACD are required to collect any didactic materials/notes from lectures that they may have missed during their time away.

## Guidelines

1. Advance communication with the clerkship director and clerkship coordinator is required for any requested activity that could result in an ACD. These types of activities include:
  1. Doctor/healthcare Appointments
  2. Meetings or conferences at which the student is presenting (poster or podium)
  3. Residency interviews
  4. Religious observances
  5. Sitting for a USMLE exam
2. Any planned absence from a mandatory activity must be approved at least ONE WEEK IN ADVANCE (before the planned absence) by the clerkship director. If the absence is required during the first week of the clerkship, the student must contact that clerkship director one week before the start of the clerkship, if not earlier. Planned absences that may qualify as excused include attending a conference, attending interviews, and taking USMLE Exams. Beyond these, it is up to the clerkship director to qualify anything other planned absence as excused.
3. With advance notice, the clerkship directors will work with the student to avoid an ACD. This may include arranging rotations or shifts to accommodate the request or helping the student select the best days/times to attend their activity and limit time away from clinical duties. If accommodations can be made to align the student's scheduled time off with their activity, the absence will *not* be considered an ACD. *However, clerkship directors may not always be able to accommodate these requests.* In this case, if the clerkship director permits the student to attend the activity, this will result in an ACD.
4. Emergency requests for ACD such as student illness, personal injury, or injury/illness/death of a family member should be communicated as soon as possible to the attending/resident on the assigned team *and* the clerkship director and clerkship coordinator.
5. In cases of ACD without prior communication with the clerkship director, a negative noncognitive evaluation may be filed by the clerkship director. This includes unauthorized extension of a previously authorized ACD.

Further information about common reasons for missing required educational events:

### **Excused Absences for Personal Medical Care**

Medical students are strongly encouraged to maintain their own physical and mental health and well-being. Whenever possible, students should schedule non-emergent healthcare appointments during times that do not conflict with classroom and clinical activities. In the event an appointment must be scheduled during a required educational activity, students must request permission to be excused from the course/clerkship director and the request will be granted.

### **Religious Observances**

The UAMS College of Medicine recognizes and respects the importance of individual religious beliefs and practices. While the College of Medicine calendar includes only religious observances recognized as Arkansas state holidays, the school seeks to accommodate student religious needs reasonably and within the requirements of the academic schedule. There shall be no adverse or prejudicial effect resulting to any student requesting excused absences for religious observances. Students assigned to patient care educational activities may request assignments that allow the student to meet their religious needs; on occasion, students may be asked to attend patient care activities that cannot be reasonably re-scheduled, such as on-call time with a care team. Required academic work missed as part of an excused absence must be made up to the satisfaction of the supervising faculty member.

### **Residency Interviews**

During clinical clerkships, students MAY be granted excused absences for residency interviews. If a student must be absent from a clerkship due to a residency interview, the student must forward electronic documentation of the interview invitation and date to the clerkship director for approval. Approval should be sought prior to making travel arrangements.



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Executive Associate Dean for Academic Affairs

July 22, 2024

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Date