ATTENDANCE – MEDICAL STUDENTS
Departmental Policy

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Purpose

1 Create a policy regarding the student attendance.

Scope

2 This policy applies to all students attending MD Program.

Responsibilities

3 Many UME education sessions in the pre-clerkship are not considered mandatory for attendance. We encourage students to attend all scheduled academic sessions.

Attendance is mandatory at the following:

a. Summative and formative evaluations
b. Clerkship (Year 3)
c. Learning experiences at which patients will be present (including clinical correlations)
d. Small group learning experiences in all courses
e. All sessions within certain courses:
   - Medical Skills (Communications, Ethics, Global Health, Professionalism and Physician Health, Physical Exam, Collaborative Practice, Procedural Skills)
   - Integrative
   - Introduction to Clinical Practice
- Family Medicine Clinical Experience (Med330/430)
- Flipped classroom style sessions
- Anatomy Lab Sessions
- Career Exploration Program
- Community Engaged Learning

Other sessions that are noted as mandatory on Osler (i.e. some labs)

Appendices

4 The University of Calgary policy regarding examination deferrals can be found in the University Calendar.

Guidelines for attendance in clerkship are described in the Policies and Procedures Clinical Clerkship Document.

Process

5 Attendance will be recorded at these sessions via the use of sign-in sheets. The sheets will be collected by UME staff no later than 10 minutes after the start of the session. Students arriving after the sign-in sheet has been collected may remain at the session but may not sign in on the attendance sheet and will be considered absent from the session. These students should submit an absence request in OSLER. The sign-in sheets are the primary record of student attendance and it is incumbent upon all students to sign in individually to the mandatory session.

It is unacceptable for students to sign in for other students at mandatory sessions, equally it is unprofessional for students to ask another student to sign in for them. Any such action would be considered a breach of the Student Code of Conduct and academic misconduct.

Instructions/Forms

6 Students may request excused absences from mandatory sessions. These requests may or may not be granted and students should not make any plans requiring an approved absence until the approval has been granted by UME. UME will not take any responsibility for problems resulting from an absence that is not approved (e.g. having to change previously booked flights).

There are many reasons that may justify a student absence at a mandatory educational event. Each circumstance will be judged on its individual merits. In general, considerations include equitable treatment of students, recognition of professional and academic responsibility, student well-being and respect for the UME program, teachers and students.

Information used on whether to grant the request may include:
- the specifics of the educational event to be missed (content in the session and educational process),
- the number of sessions to be missed, the student’s previous academic and professional performance and,
- reason for the requested absence.
Examples of typically **allowed excused absences include:**

- **holidays in a student’s faith**  
  A list of recognized holidays is published in the University of Calgary Calendar
- **medical appointments**  
  Where possible, appointments should be scheduled outside of class time, but this may not be possible
- **major life events (weddings, funerals, family celebrations)**  
  Student will need to indicate the date and location of the event and their relationship to the person
- **academic conferences**  
  Student will usually be allowed to attend if he/she is presenting academic work or if the student is representing the Cumming School of Medicine in a capacity recognized by the UME office.
- **attendance at a recognized committee meeting as part of work done as a student representative for the UME program**  
  Where possible, meetings should be scheduled outside of class time; meetings of external organizations may schedule meetings that conflict with the UME schedule

Other requests for excused attendances will be considered on a case-by-case basis with the guiding principles as described above. An event included on the list above is not guaranteed to be allowed as an excused absence. The UME program is not seeking to limit student activities but recognizes that a balance between the academic program and student activities must be found.

**Standards**  

It is recognized that unplanned absences may occur. Students may have situations arise that legitimately prevent them from attending a scheduled learning session. Such situations may include but are not limited to personal health issues or family members’ health issues, travel delays, child-care problems, etc. Should a situation occur where a mandatory session is missed, a similar process should occur to that described above; the student must complete the online form in OSLER explain the absence. The Program Supervisor will discuss the situation with the Assistant or Associate Dean who will make a decision regarding the approval of the absence. Documentation to support the reason for the absence may be required.

All requests for an approved absence must be handled as above whereby the online form in OSLER must be completed with an explanation. The Program Supervisor will communicate with the appropriate Assistant Dean or the Associate Dean as required. Individual Course Chairs, Instructors or Program Coordinators should not be approached for requests for excused absences. While the Assistant or Associate Dean may discuss the feasibility of an absence request with course leaders, the final decision regarding the approval rests with the Assistant or Associate Dean. The student requesting an excused absence will provide documentation to support the reason for the request if required.
A balance will be struck between the need for documentation and awareness that accessing that documentation may create more problems than it is worth. A common situation that will arise is the student who misses a mandatory session due to acute, short-term illness. Recognizing that our students are student professionals, it is unnecessary for students to procure a physician’s note for a simple viral illness. Students will need to complete the form on OSLER to document the absence but do not need to obtain a ‘sick note’ for absences up to one day. A student that is found to have misrepresented his/her reason for missing an educational session will be considered to have committed a breach of professional responsibilities.

**Consequences**

Students are responsible for all material that is missed due to absence at a mandatory session. In some instances, there may be a requirement for a student to undertake a replacement learning process or complete an assignment to replace the missed session. The need for such a replacement and the type of make-up event or assignment will be decided by the Course or Unit Chair in conjunction with the Assistant or Associate Dean.

Students who are not in attendance at mandatory events will be tracked by UME. On occasion, students have been identified as having significant health or personal issues through attendance tracking.

**FIRST ABSENCE:** A student with an unexcused absence in one course, beyond the allowances outlined above, will be contacted by email to alert him/her to the concern. A copy of the email will be added to the student file. There are no adverse consequences to this; no record of the attendance issue will be transferred and no mention of this will be made in the students’ MSPR (Medical Student Performance Letter – Dean’s Letter) that is forwarded to CaRMS.

**SECOND ABSENCE:** A student with a second unexcused absence beyond the allowances outlined above, will be contacted by UME and asked to meet with the Assistant or Associate Dean to discuss the absences in order to ascertain whether there are ongoing personal or health issues. A letter documenting this meeting will be entered into the student file. Again, there are no immediate adverse consequences to this; no record of the attendance issue will be transferred out of the student file and no mention of this will be made in the students’ MSPR (Medical Student Performance Letter – Dean’s Letter) that is forwarded to CaRMS.

**THIRD ABSENCE OR MORE:** A pattern of repeated unexcused absences raises concerns about professionalism. A student with a third course with an unexcused absence will be required to attend at the Student Academic Review Committee (SARC). As per the SARC terms of reference: (https://cumming.ucalgary.ca/sites/default/files/teams/4/TORs/SARC/SARC%20TOR.pdf)

Students should also be aware that an appearance at SARC (if ‘justified’) will be recorded in their student file and the SARC appearance will be described in the MSPR.