



Attendance-Medical Students

Departmental Policy

Authorizing Unit Undergraduate Medical Education Committee (UMEC)	Table of Contents: Purpose 1 Scope 2 Responsibilities 3 Appendices 4 Process 5 Instructions/Forms 6 Standards 7 Consequences 8 Approval 9
Classification Operations	
Approval Authority Associate Dean, Undergraduate Medical Education (UME)	
Implementation Authority Manager, UME	
Effective Date June 6, 2014	
Last Revision September 15, 2023	

Purpose

- 1 Create a policy regarding the student attendance. The purpose of the attendance policy is to strike a balance between the importance of attendance and student agency.

There are multiple considerations that support the importance of attendance, including but not limited to:

- Supporting academic performance: Link between attendance and academic performance has been demonstrated in multiple educational domains.
- Professional responsibility: during interactive educational sessions the students are not only learners but also an integral part of the social learning environment. Thus, absence has potential impact on other learners in the group.
- Respect & engagement: The willingness of patients and guest speakers to participate in our students' learning is crucial to the success of medical education. It is important to respect this contribution. Similarly, faculty members that take time away from other clinical and academic duties to teach will likely be more engaged when attendance is appropriate.
- Resources: Some sessions require significant resources (lab simulation, simulated patients, OSCE exams). Excessive need for make-up experiences due to student absences may strain the resources of the medical school.

In addition, Student agency is important given the reality that our students:

- Have diverse lives and experiences outside of medical school that may place unavoidable demands on their time (e.g. childcare, family commitments)

- May experience challenges to their own health and wellbeing during medical education.
 - May need freedom & flexibility to engage in related activities in the realms of leadership, scholarship, and other pursuits)
- Scope** **2** This policy applies to all students attending MD Program.
- Responsibilities** **3** While not all educational sessions in the MD program are considered mandatory, attendance at all sessions is highly recommended.
- Attendance is mandatory at the following:**
- a. Evaluations – (Note: absences from summative evaluations must be addressed via the exam deferrals policy)
 - Formative
 - Summative
 - b. Clinical learning experiences
 - Clerkship (all)
 - All experiences in clinical settings and/or in which patients will be present
 - c. Interactive learning experiences
 - Small group learning
 - Medical skills sessions
 - Simulations/labs
 - Other interactive sessions as defined by course leads
- 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 Handbook.
- Process** **5** Attendance will be recorded at mandatory sessions via the use of sign-in sheets or attendance recorded by preceptors (for online sessions attendance will be recorded for those present virtually). Students are expected to show up on time for all sessions. Attendance will be recorded for no more than 10 minutes after the start of the sessions. Students arriving after sign-in sheet has been collected or the attendance taking period is past may remain at the session but will be considered absent from the session. These students should submit an absence request in OSLER. When sign-up sheets are used it is inappropriate for students to have classmates sign in on their behalf. If students must leave a session early due to unforeseen circumstances the preceptor should be notified (when possible) and an absence request must be completed in a timely manner (within 24-48 hours).
- Instructions/Form** **6** Students should endeavour to attend all mandatory sessions. When absences from mandatory educational activities are required, students must follow the process for requesting absences. Such absences may fall within one of two categories:

- i. **Planned absences:** These are absences for events in which advanced notice is possible. Students should request absences from mandatory sessions for planned events with sufficient notice for these to be assessed by the UME office (at least 7 full calendar days in advance). Students should not make any plans (such as booking flights and accommodation) until the approval has been granted by UME. Problems related to plans made prior to approval (flights, accommodations etc.) are the responsibility of the student.
- ii. **Unplanned absences:** It is recognized that unplanned absences may occur. Students may have situations arise that legitimately prevent them from attending a scheduled learning session. If possible, students should let their preceptors know about this absence directly or via a student colleague. A formal absence request should be completed as soon as it is possible to do so (within 24-48 hours). Unplanned absences that result in the student being away for more than 1-2 sessions should be addressed under the short-term leave of absence policy.

There is a diversity of reasons that may justify a student absence at a mandatory educational event. In considering absence requests each circumstance will be judged on its individual merits. In general, considerations include consistency, equitable treatment of students, recognition of professional and academic responsibility, student well-being, respect for the UME program, teachers, students and volunteers (including real and simulated patients).

Examples of appropriate reasons for planned absences may include (but are not necessarily limited to):

1. Research – Conference attendance for the purpose of research presentation
2. Committee work – Attendance at committees, conferences or retreats in which the student is representing the Cumming School of Medicine in a position/capacity recognized by the UME office.
3. Professional development – Major opportunities for networking or professional development (Examples might include – invitation to participate in panel discussion or participate in a work shop at a national / international conference, note: this does not include shadowing)
4. Health – Medical appointments/treatments that cannot be scheduled outside of educational activities
5. Major life events – Includes weddings, funerals, as well as major holidays and/or observances within a student’s culture/faith.

Examples of appropriate reasons for unplanned absences may include (but are not necessarily limited to):

1. Illness – personal or family related
2. Issues related to mental health and wellbeing
3. Extreme weather
4. Unavoidable travel delays (example: flight delays or cancellations, loss of travel documents)
5. Child care issues

Information considered in the decision to grant/approve an absence may include but not necessarily be limited to:

- Amount of time requested – Absence requests should endeavour to minimize time away taking into consideration the length of the event and need for travel.
- Specifics of the missed educational event(s):
 - content
 - opportunities for remediation / parallel learning
 - Course or block related policies on attendance thresholds to: 1) proceed to the summative exam; or 2) complete the course.
- Student absence request history: length of absence, number of previous absences including LOAs
- Academic standing of the student including professional performance, potential impact of absence on academic advancement/success
- Reason for the requested absence
- Impact of the absence reason on the academic, professional and/or personal development/wellbeing.
- Lead time given for planned absences

Standards

- 7** All absence requests (planned or unplanned) must be completed using the approved online form in (OSLER-New Name to be substituted). Requests will be discussed for approval with the appropriate assistant dean, or the associate dean by the program supervisor. If additional information or documentation is required, the program supervisor will reach out to the student for clarification.

Supporting documentation may be required for approval of absence requests. The UME office will endeavor to strike an appropriate balance between the need for documentation and the burden on students, administrators, and the health system in obtaining documentation. For example, isolated instances of short-term acute illness will not require a doctor's note. However, conference attendance for research presentation may require the student to attach the acceptance email or a copy of the conference agenda attesting to their participation.

The UME leadership will consider the context of these absences in making decisions. For example, unplanned absences related to significant acute illness or personal tragedy in which case, documentation may necessarily be of lower priority than student wellness.

Professionalism & Student Misconduct:

Misrepresentation of the reason or other details of an absence request will be considered a serious breach of the professional responsibility of the student (knowingly providing false information is a breach of the University of Calgary Student Non-Academic Misconduct Policy).

Absences from mandatory sessions that are not appropriately documented may be considered a breach of appropriate student conduct.

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.

Concern for non-academic misconduct with result in a meeting with the Associate Dean for discussion of the specific instance(s) of concern and potential contributing factors. Further steps and/or consequences will be determined by the associate dean following this discussion.

Consequences **8** 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 replacement/make-up learning experiences may be determined by course/block policy, or determined by the appropriate course leader, Assistant or Associate Dean taking into considerations all appropriate factors relevant to the absence and the academic progress of the student.

Overall, attendance at mandatory events will be tracked by UME. Patterns of attendance that might indicate academic or non-academic struggles on behalf of the student will be explored via communication from the Associate Dean or appropriate Assistant Dean.

Unplanned absences that are determined, after review by the Assistant Dean and/or Associate Dean not to meet a reasonable standard for approval will be followed up as follows:

- A first instance in this category will be follow-up via electronic communication to the student referencing the attendance policy and explaining why the requested absence was felt to not meet the standard for approval. A copy of this email will be retained in the student file, however there will be no adverse consequence of this in terms of records transferred or mentions on the Medical Student Performance Record (MSPR). Students receiving this communication may request a meeting with the Associate Dean if they wish further clarification or would like to bring forward extenuating circumstances that they wish the UME office to be aware of.
- Following a second instance in this category the student will be asked to meet with the appropriate assistant dean or the Associate Dean in order to discuss the issue further an explore potential personal / health issues that might be impacting the student's ability to attend and to discuss potential resources and options available to the student to address these issues. Documentation of these meeting will be retained in the student file but will not appear on any transferred records or on the MSPR.

