

Policy Name:	Attendance/Absence Policy
Original Approval Date:	09-18-2020
Approving Officer/Committee:	Medical Curriculum Committee
Revision Dates and Notes:	
Related LCME Element(s) (if any):	

A. Policy - Developing competency to practice medicine within four years requires reliable attendance. This policy formalizes the process for requesting time off for either planned or unexpected absences during the four years of medical school. The clear communication of expectations between students and course and clerkship directors will permit flexibility within reasonable limits in a way that does not impact either education or reflect on a student’s professionalism.

B. Purpose - This policy addresses the expectations for student attendance and the procedures for requesting time off.

C. Scope – This policy applies to all School of Medicine students.

D. Procedure/Process –

1. Pre-Clinical Curriculum (Years 1 & 2)

An essential element of a medical student's professional development is the consistent demonstration of a mature sense of dependability and accountability. While the preclinical curriculum offers a great deal of flexibility, as learners have the option to participate in many classes in person or remotely through lecture capture. However, some sessions do have required attendance, including scheduled examinations, clinical assignments, small groups, Standardized Patient interactions, and patient presentations, etc. All mandatory sessions and activities will be identified by the Course and/or Module Directors and listed in the course syllabus or course schedule.

Requesting an Excused Absence from Mandatory Activities:

- To request an excused absence, a student must complete the online [Medical Student Absence Request](#) form at least 14 days in advance. Requests must fulfill one of the following criteria:
 - Needed medical diagnostic, preventive and therapeutic health services
 - An anticipated significant family event that requires the student’s attendance. (NOTE: Weddings are NOT an excused absence)
 - Presentation of scholarly work at an academic conference
 - Serving as an official representative of the university
 - Attendance or participation related to a University sanctioned event
 - An anticipated religious ceremony or observation
 - Absence for military service obligations

- A student is allowed no more than four (4) excused absences per academic year.
- Completion of *Medical Student Absence Request* will generate an email to the Office of Student Affairs and to the appropriate course director, who will in-turn verify student eligibility based upon academic standing and prior number of excused absences.
- Each request is considered individually. Requests will be reviewed by the Office of Student Affairs and approved by the course director(s).
- The course director(s) will notify the student if the request is approved.
- Approval for planned absences may not be granted if they impact key, required course components or if they create undue hardship for the course, at the discretion of the course director. Examples: teaching sessions with patients, laboratory teaching sessions, cadaver dissection or other structured teaching experiences.
- Some sessions cannot be rescheduled and an equivalent makeup assignment may not be feasible due to the nature of the educational experience. Accordingly, in some cases, absence may be granted with loss of points for the session, at the discretion of the course director.
- Students with an Approved Absence from a required teaching session may be required to submit makeup assignments for the session and should discuss this with the course /clerkship director.

Needed Medical Diagnostic, Preventive and Therapeutic Health Services

Students who request and receive an excused absences related to needed routine medical diagnostic, preventive and therapeutic health services should obtain a medical excuse after the visit(s) and submit it to Office of Student Affairs. The respective course and clerkship directors are notified by the Office of Student Affairs. Students should attempt to schedule routine care outside of required clinical activities if possible.

Chronic Illnesses/Ongoing Need for Medical or Mental Health Care

Students who are scheduled for ongoing, recurring appointments, or who have other ongoing medical or mental health appointments during a clerkship must follow the process for requesting accommodation as outlined in the catalog. Students should contact the Office of Student Affairs at least 4 weeks prior to the start of the course/clerkship, if accommodation is needed. If the request for accommodation is approved, the Director of Student Affairs will subsequently inform the student, the course/clerkship directors, and help accommodate the student's needs while maintaining the student's privacy.

Presentation of research or scholarly work at a national or regional conference

Students will be allowed to use up to 2 excused absence days per year to attend a national or regional conference at which they are presenting. The day(s) should be used only for the day of the conference they are presenting (not the entire conference) and travel time. Students must submit documentation that they are presenting at the conference in order to qualify for the non-personal day(s).

Unanticipated Absences

Absences for a required educational activity due to a personal illness or an unanticipated crisis are to be reported as soon as possible to the course director(s), and the Office for Student Affairs. In case of emergency with limited time for notification, the Office of Student Affairs can be notified at (318) 675-6570 and/or by sending a detailed email to shvstudentaffairs@lsuhsc.edu. Any verbal communication must be followed up with written communication from the student to the course director(s) and the Office of Student Affairs.

Acute Illnesses

Students who become acutely ill during a course/clerkship should notify the course/clerkship director, and complete the excused absence request form. Students missing more than 48 hours of school must provide documentation from a licensed health care provider in support of student having an excused absence due to illness/health condition.

Family Illness/Emergency/Death

Students will routinely be granted an excused absence for family illness, emergency or death. Students should inform the course/clerkship director and the Director for Student Affairs. The Office for Student Affairs will be available to provide support as needed. Both the school and individual course/clerkship director will work with the student upon their return to assess any possible need for make-up time, if appropriate.

Unexcused Absences

Any student who is absent from a required educational activity and has not been granted an excused absence by responsible faculty/staff will receive an unexcused absence and the student will receive a ZERO for any scheduled academic activity that is missed. The student may still be required to complete the scheduled learning activity or an alternate learning activity without receiving a grade, if deemed necessary by the course director in order to proceed through the remainder of the course. An example might include an important SP clinic interaction that is required to ensure competent future practice or completion of a presentation required to achieve the learning objectives for the course.

Clinical Curriculum

2. MSIII

Students are expected to attend all aspects of every clerkship. Make-up requirements for all absences are at the discretion of the clerkship director. Students may take up to 8 personal days per 12 month clerkship block to be limited to no more than 4 days in the fall semester and 4 days in the spring semester during the course of the third year. Students may also use their personal days for planned wellness days. To request an excused absence, a student must complete the online [Medical Student Absence Request](#).

Background

Clinical teams expect students to make every effort to attend clinical activities, even when there are competing interests or pressures such as exam preparation. This is consistent with the expectations by patients of physicians. On the other hand, the school acknowledges the

legitimate need for student access to important family or personal events, along with any required medical care; the latter must be available in a private and confidential manner. The following rules seek to balance these requirements.

General Principles

- Attendance during clinical rotations is mandatory, except in extenuating circumstances.
- Attendance will be tracked by the medical school administration, clerkship directors, and clerkship coordinators.
- Students will be granted time off for certain federal and state holidays.

Personal Day Excused Absences

- Students are encouraged to take up to 8 personal days per 12-month clerkship block to be limited to no more than 4 days in the fall semester and 4 days in the spring semester during the course of the third year as previously stated for wellness.
- Students can use their personal days for events such as weddings, graduations, religious holidays, tournaments, and conferences (where you are not presenting).
- Students may also use their personal days for planned wellness days.
- Students can request personal days by submitting the Clerkship Absence Request Form. The form is automatically sent to the Office of Student Affairs for review.
- The request will be approved if it meets all of the qualifications listed below.
- Students must submit the request at least 4 weeks in advance of the scheduled absence and must meet all personal day qualifications listed below in order to receive the personal day.
- If the student has exceeded 8 personal days for the clerkship year, the request will be flagged by the student affairs office, and will need to be evaluated by the student affairs and Dean of Student Affairs before being processed by the clerkship coordinator.

Personal day qualifications

- Students cannot use a personal day on the first day (orientation) of a clerkship.
- Students cannot use a personal day to extend a school holiday.
- Students cannot use a personal day on the day of a quiz, test, or other graded assignment where attendance on that day is necessary to receive a grade for that assignment.
- Students cannot use a personal day during the week of a final clerkship exam.
- Students cannot use more than 1 personal day during a 4- or 6-week clerkship.
- Students cannot use more than 2 personal days during a 12-week clerkship.
- Students cannot use 2 or more personal days in a row.
- Students will be allowed to use 1 of their 4 personal days for a clerkship didactic day, if necessary. However, students must notify their clerkship director in writing, and the student will be responsible for any missed work during the clerkship didactic day.
- Students will be granted the personal days as long as they meet the above criteria.

Non-Personal Day Excused Absences

- Students may also be granted non-personal day excused absences for the following situations: 1) chronic illnesses/ongoing need for medical or mental health care, 2) presentation of research or other scholarly work at a regional or national meeting, 3) acute illnesses, and 4) family illness/emergency/death.
- Chronic illnesses/Ongoing need for medical or mental health care
 - Students who are scheduled for ongoing, recurring appointments, or who have other ongoing medical or mental health appointments during a clerkship must follow the Documentation/Accommodation Process steps outlined for student disabilities.
 - If the request has been approved, the Director of Student Affairs will subsequently inform the student, the student's clerkship coordinators and directors, and help accommodate the student's needs while maintaining the student's privacy.
 - Students should contact the Office of Student Affairs at least 4 weeks prior to the start of the clerkship.
- Presentation of research or scholarly work at a national or regional conference
 - Students will be allowed to use up to 2 non-personal days per year to attend a national or regional conference at which they are presenting. The day(s) should be used only for the day of the conference they are presenting (not the entire conference) and travel time.
 - Students must submit documentation that they are presenting at the conference in order to qualify for the non-personal day(s).
 - Students who will be presenting at multiple conferences (requiring more than 2 days absent) can utilize their personal day absences for any additional conference time.
 - Students are discouraged from taking additional personal days during any given clerkship if they have already requested 2 non-personal days to present at a conference. If additional days are needed within any given clerkship, students will need to make up the additional days at the discretion of the clerkship director.
- Acute illness that occurs during a clerkship
 - Students may become acutely ill during the course of the clerkship year. Students should notify their team and their clerkship director, and complete the excused absence request form.
 - If the student requires more than 1 day off for an acute illness, they may need to submit a note from their primary care provider, and may need to make up additional time before the end of the clerkship, especially if the student has already taken off additional time (via personal days or excused non-personal days). This will be determined at the discretion of the clerkship director, and in accordance with the make-up days policy detailed below.
 - All acute illness absences will be tracked by the clerkship coordinators, clerkship directors, and medical school administration.
- Family illness/Emergency/Death

- Students will routinely be granted an excused absence, and the school administration will be available as needed for support. Students should inform their clerkship coordinator, clerkship director, and the Director of Student Affairs.
- Both the school and individual clerkship will work with the student upon their return to assess any possible need for clinical make-up time, if appropriate.

Requesting Excused Absences

- Students should request an excused absence at least 4 weeks in advance of any personal day, or planned, non-personal day excused absence.
- For a weekend exception, students should email clerkship coordinators 6 weeks in advance of the start of the clerkship (only necessary for clerkships that require weekend shifts) to ensure the highest likelihood of receiving the weekend off.
- Occasionally, students may need to request an unanticipated absence. These are absences that occur less than 4 weeks in advance of the requested absence. Any unanticipated absence requests will need to be evaluated by the Dean of Student Affairs on a case-by-case basis before being processed by the clerkship coordinator.
- Approval for an unanticipated absence is not guaranteed. If the request is approved, the day will count toward one of the four personal days and the student will be directed to submit the request via the absence request form.
- Students must submit an absence request form for all other absence requests they are seeking.
 - The information from the form will then be routed to the Dean/Director of Student Affairs and the clerkship coordinator. Students will subsequently be notified by the Office of Student Affairs about approval.

Requesting Weekend Absences

- Email the clerkship coordinator at least 6 weeks before the start of the clerkship.
- For clerkships in which students are expected to work Friday night, Saturday, and/or Sunday, requests for absences on a weekend (weekend exceptions) may not need to count as a personal day, if the request is made at least 6 weeks before the clerkship begins. Schedules may be able to be organized so that students do not have to take off an extra day.
- The following requirements pertain to requests for weekend exceptions:
 - A student can only request one weekend exception per clerkship. The clerkship director will make every effort to grant the request, but it is not guaranteed.
 - If a weekend exception cannot be granted, then the student will need to request a personal day in order to take a weekend day off.
 - If the relevant clerkship coordinator does not receive a request for a weekend exception at least 6 weeks before the clerkship starts, the weekend exception request will not be honored.

Unexcused Absences

- Any student who does not notify the clerkship directors and/or the Office of Student Affairs as described above, and who does not receive formal approval, may be subject to an unexcused absence.
- Any student with an unexcused absence may be subject to the following: 1) additional make-up days, 2) lowering of a clinical grade, and/or 3) referral to the Dean for Student Affairs. If there have been other professionalism concerns, one unexcused absence could initiate a referral to the student affairs and subsequent committee.
- Repeated or habitual absences will be brought to the attention of the Dean of Student Affairs. It may also result in the student's record being presented to the Committee for professionalism.
- Any questions as to whether an absence is appropriate or excusable should be sent to the Dean of Student Affairs for consideration.

Policy for Missing Partial Clinical Days

- Students are not permitted to miss rounds or mandatory didactic sessions during the clerkship without approval from their clerkship director.
- Patient care should come before classroom events or extracurricular activities (i.e., non-mandatory student meetings, student interest group meetings, etc.).
- If a student needs to excuse themselves for a non-mandatory and non-personal health activity, they must discuss the possibility with either their team or their clerkship director.
- Any non-mandatory or non-personal health activity that requires a student to miss more than one hour of a clerkship day will need to be approved by the clerkship director.
- Any personal health activity (i.e., doctor's appointment) that requires a student to miss more than one hour of a clerkship day, or that interferes with performing clinical duties, requires approval from the clerkship director (unless the student has received prior approval through the Office of Student Affairs).
- Students may need to take an excused absence personal day for any activity that requires them to leave clerkship duty for more than one hour, or that interferes with performing clinical duties in any way.

Make-up Days

- The following rules apply for make-up days that occur in excess of the allowable excused/personal day absences.
- For any 1-week or 4-week clerkship, students are required to make-up every additional day beyond 1 day of missed clerkship duty.
- For any 6-week or 12-week clerkship, students are required to make-up every additional day beyond 2 days of missed clerkship duty.
- The timing and type of make-up work is at the discretion of the course director and may be scheduled during vacation periods. Make-up days which cannot be completed before the course end date will result in a grade of "Incomplete".
- Students who are absent for a number of days deemed to be disruptive enough to prevent satisfactory completion of the clerkship through make-up days may be required

to drop and retake the entire clerkship. This decision will be made in conjunction with the clerkship director(s), the Dean of Student Affairs.

Any Additional Issues

- Please note, every attempt has been made to compile a comprehensive policy, but there may be specific absence requests that fall outside of the situations listed above.
- If students have any questions or have any absence requests that may fall outside of the aforementioned policies, email the Dean of Student Affairs.

3. MS IV

During the main interview months of October 1 through January 31, a student will be allowed one excused absence per week of instruction. This applies to two week courses and four week courses. In all other blocks and dates, a student is allowed one excused absence for every two weeks of instruction; in two week rotations, one day is allowed and in four week rotations, two days are allowed; Make-up requirements (types of assignments -clinical assignment or presentation, locations -clinics or wards, dates- weekends or evenings, etc.) are at the discretion of the course director.

Tracking of Student Absences:

Attendance data will be tracked longitudinally for all preclinical courses, and this data will be monitored by the Associate Dean for Student Affairs in collaboration with the Office of Academic Affairs. An absence will be recorded even when makeup work for a missed session is completed. Students for which a concerning pattern of absences is identified will be required to meet with the associate dean for student affairs. Students for which a professionalism concern is identified may be referred to the Student Professionalism Committee for possible disciplinary action.