Days Off/Absences Policy: Clinical

Educational Program Committee Approved: September 11, 2012
Educational Program Committee Last Revised: October 2, 2019

An essential element of a medical student’s professional development is the consistent demonstration of a mature sense of dependability and accountability. Therefore, students are expected to be present and on time for all scheduled examinations, clinical assignments, and mandatory academic activities (e.g. Didactics, Standardized Patient interactions, Grand Rounds, etc.) unless the responsible faculty/staff grants an excused absence.

Days Off

- Students will be given an average of four days off for a 4-week rotation (average of one day off per week).
- Weekends and holidays that occur during a clerkship should not be presumed as “automatic” days off.
- The schedule for days off will be prepared by the clerkship director, clerkship coordinator or another individual designated by the clerkship director.
- Total 4 days off in 4-week rotation, whether used for Step 2 CS or CK, ACLS, or residency interviews. Students are encouraged to plan their schedule for interviews, Step 2 CS and CK, and ACLS carefully, so that their attendance at fourth-year activities is spread across their fourth-year rotations and does not create situations where the number of days off needed in a single rotation exceeds the number approved in the policy. Students must request permission in advance of the time away. Students may be asked to submit documentation that verifies reason for absence.
- Clerkship director has the authority to approve additional days off on a case-by-case basis. If the clerkship director approves excused absences beyond the limits of this policy, he/she may require that the student complete an educational project or experience to compensate for the extra time missed.

Anticipated Excused Absences—Instructions for students and absence criteria:

1. Requests for an excused absence should be made in writing, via email, to the clerkship director/coordinator and copy (cc) the Medical Student Affairs email account (medstuaf@louisville.edu) at the time of the request.
2. Anticipated absence requests related to University-sanctioned events must occur in writing at a minimum of one week prior to the event or activity. The faculty member will respond in writing (email) that approval has been granted. A university sanctioned event or activity is one in which a student represents the university to external constituencies in academic or extra-curricular activities. Examples include an authorized presentation of scholarly work at an academic conference, serving as an official representative of the university, or participating in university-
sanctioned events.

3. Other anticipated absence requests, not related to University-sanctioned events, must occur in writing at least 30 days prior to the absence. A decision will occur within 7 working days of receiving the request, and the student will be notified via email.
   - Requests must fulfill one of the following criteria:
     - An anticipated significant family event that requires the student’s attendance. (NOTE: Weddings are generally NOT an excused absence).
     - An anticipated religious ceremony or observation that is not an official University holiday (see U of L website for list of work-restricted religious holidays).
     - Absence for military service obligations.

4. Students requesting an absence must explain, in writing, the reason for the request (as well as cite one of the above circumstances in the written request). All requests will be centrally tracked by the Medical Student Affairs Office via email communications between students and responsible faculty/staff. Proof of reason for absence (doctor note, meeting program, etc.) must be turned into the clerkship director/clinical coordinator.

Responsible faculty/staff will judge all incurred absences or anticipated absence requests for graded learning activities. If an excused absence is granted by the clerkship director, the student is required to work out terms with the clerkship director and/or coordinator for rescheduling, make up, or waiving the missed assignments and points. The missed days will count as days off for that clerkship/course according to the “Days Off” section above. When flexibility in scheduling within an existing block of time exists to accommodate the student’s request (e.g., call night), the decision to reschedule the student (versus consider the missed date an absence and withhold credit) is at the discretion of the affected clerkship director, staff, and/or related facilities.

Unanticipated Excused Absences

Absences or tardiness for a scheduled academic assignment (shelf exam, mandatory class/student assembly, small group session, SP exam, clinical assignment, etc.) due to an acute medical illness or an unanticipated family/personal emergency are to be reported as soon as possible to the responsible faculty or staff member—the clerkship director(s) and coordinator, the site supervisors. In case of emergency, with limited time for notification, the clinical site should be notified or the student can call the Medical Student Affairs Office at (502) 852-5192 or send a detailed e-mail to medstuaf@louisville.edu. Any verbal communication must be followed up with written communication from the student to the clerkship director, coordinator, and Office of Medical Student Affairs staff explaining the reason for absence. Students missing more than 48 hours of school due to an illness will be required to have a doctor’s statement. Students missing more than 48 hours of school must also notify the Medical Student Affairs Office so that planning for a possible leave of absence can occur. The clerkship director or their designee will decide if the missed time will be
counted as days off for that course/clerkship or will be scheduled to be made up in collaboration with the student.

Students are encouraged to seek healthcare when needed, and will be excused for all diagnostic, preventative, and therapeutic services. The student must notify the clerkship director as far in advance as possible and send an email to medstuaf@louisville.edu. Depending on number of days missed, students may be expected to make up any missed time.

**Unexcused Absences**

Any student who is absent from an academic assignment, 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 clerkship director to proceed through the remainder of the clerkship. An example might include an important requirement that is required to ensure competent future practice or required to achieve the learning objectives for the clerkship.

**Record Keeping**

Written documentation to support the inability to attend (physician note, receipt for car repair, etc.) may be required in order for graded activities to be remediated or excused.

Absences (excused and unexcused) may be recorded on the final evaluation, which is submitted to the Medical Student Affairs Office.

*Responsible faculty/staff are the leaders of the clerkship (i.e. the clerkship director, the clerkship coordinator, and site supervisors).

**Related LCME Elements**

8.8: Monitoring Student Time
12.4: Student Access to Healthcare Services

**Policy History**

Approved: September 11, 2012
Revised: May 15, 2015 (Removed Obsolete Links)
Revised: June 5, 2019
Revised: October 2, 2019 To include documentation verbiage in Record Keeping.