



VCU

Student Attendance Policy

Policy Statement and Purpose

In order to support the physical, mental, and emotional wellbeing of students, and in support of the creation of a positive learning environment, the Virginia Commonwealth University School of Medicine has established procedures regarding student attendance. This policy is designed to outline attendance requirements for critical educational activities and define the procedures followed by students when attendance at compulsory activities becomes impossible due to excusable circumstances.

Stakeholders

The faculty, staff, and students of the VCU School of Medicine are responsible for knowing this standard operating procedure, its contents, and provisions.

Definitions

AI: Acting Internship.

ARF: Absence Request Form. Formerly known as Exception Request Form (ERF).

CD: Course/Clerkship Director.

Clinical Curriculum: Refers to the M3 and M4 years of the undergraduate medical education (MD) program.

IRAT: Individual Readiness Assurance Test.

LMS: Learning Management System

Mandatory Simulation Session: Sessions that use high-fidelity, lifelike patient simulators to reinforce clinical application of skills. These sessions do not include standardized patient workshops or sessions in the PCM and Ultrasound courses.

OME: The Office of Medical Education.

OSCE: Objective Structured Clinical Exam.

PCM: Practice of Clinical Medicine.

Pre-Clinical Curriculum: Refers to the M1 and M2 years of the undergraduate medical education (MD) program.



VCU School of Medicine

TBL: Team Based Learning.

VCU SOM: Virginia Commonwealth University School of Medicine.

Responsibilities

Students: Students are responsible for submitting all absence request forms through the LMS as outlined in the following procedures.

OME: The OME will centrally monitor all absence request forms to ensure they are compliant with established procedures.

Procedures

Pre-Clinical Curriculum

Attendance Expectations

- While attendance is not required at non-mandatory sessions, students are strongly encouraged to attend
- Students must be available between eight (8) am and five (5) pm on examination days, regardless of the scheduled exam time
- In order to receive credit for attendance at mandatory sessions, students must be present for the entire session
- Students are limited to four (4) days of excused absences maximum in any given academic year (M1 or M2) in the pre-clinical curriculum for professional travel and/or personal days
- Students submitting ARFs for three (3) or more days within a semester will be discussed at the next scheduled monthly student progress meeting, and may be required to meet with leadership in the Office of Medical Education, to determine if any additional support services are needed

Attendance at Mandatory Sessions

- Excused absences from mandatory, graded TBL sessions will result in a grade assignment of 70% on the assignment, or the grade earned by the student upon taking the IRAT
 - For pre-planned absences, the student must complete IRAT prior to the absence occurring
 - For unplanned absences, the student must complete the IRAT no later than 1:00 pm the first business day of the students return from absence
 - Students who opt to take the IRAT must indicate this in their absence request
 - Students who indicate their intent to take the IRAT but fail to complete the test by the required deadline will receive a 0% on the graded assignment
- Excused absences from other mandatory, graded sessions will result in a grade assignment of 70% on the assignment, or the grade earned by the student upon completion of the assignment as outlined below:
 - For pre-planned absences, the student must complete the assignment prior to the absence occurring

- For unplanned absences, the student must complete the assignment no later than 1:00 pm the first business day of the student's return from absence
- Students who opt to complete the assignment must indicate this in their absence request
 - Students who indicate their intent to complete the assignment but fail to do so by the required deadline will receive a 0% on the graded assignment
- Excused absences from mandatory, graded simulation sessions cannot be made up and will result in a grade assignment of 70% on the simulation
- Excused absences from mandatory, non-graded sessions (e.g. PCM and ultrasound workshops) may result in the student being required to make-up the session
 - Refer to the individual course syllabus for specific information regarding make-up sessions for mandatory, non-graded sessions

Absence Requests

- Personal Illness, Mental Health Concern, or Any Other Health Concern
 - Absences due to personal illness or other health concern must have an ARF submitted as soon as possible, but no later than the start of the required or graded session or exam
 - A note from the student's treating healthcare provider or other documentation of the illness/health concern must be submitted within twenty-four (24) hours of the student's return from the absence
 - Provider notes issued by a student's family member will not be accepted
 - ARFs submitted for this reason that are otherwise covered by an approved accommodation from the Division of Academic Success should be noted as such by the student on the ARF
 - In instances where absences due to personal illness, mental health concern, or any other health concern causes a student to miss an examination, the student must make up the examination at the earliest possible time upon their return as determined by the OME
 - Once an assessment is started, the examination will be scored
- Illness or Death of Immediate Family Member
 - Absences due to illness or death of an immediate family member must have an ARF submitted as soon as possible, but no later than the start of the required or graded session or exam
 - In instances where absences due to illness or death of an immediate family member causes a student to miss an examination, the student must make up the examination at the earliest possible time upon their return as determined by the OME
- Professional Travel
 - Professional travel includes absences due to:
 - Presenting at a conference
 - Holding leadership positions in a local, state or national level committee or organization related to healthcare.
 - Requests for absences due to professional travel must be submitted thirty (30) days in advance of the requested absence.
 - Evidence of participation or presentation at the specific conference will be required by the OME in review of the ARF.
 - ARFs submitted for this reason are limited to four (4) total days maximum in the pre-clinical curriculum



- Absences for professional travel will not be excused during the following times:
 - Transition Courses
 - Orientation Sessions
 - In instances where absences due to professional travel overlap with an examination, the student is expected to take the examination in advance of their travel
 - In instances where the exam is not available prior to travel, the student must make up the examination at the earliest possible time upon their return as determined by the OME
 - Students who fail to take the exam as scheduled by the OME will receive a grade of 0 on the exam unless they receive an additional excused absence for the rescheduled exam
 - Students with absences due to professional travel adjacent to a scheduled exam will not be allowed to delay an exam to have additional study days
 - Religious Observances
 - ARFs for the observation of religious holidays must be submitted no later than two (2) weeks after the start of the semester in which the absence will occur, even if the exact date of the observance is unable to be determined until a later date.
 - Requests should be submitted with an approximate date of the occurrence and the anticipated time the exact date will be known.
 - Military Obligations
 - Students who receive orders for training or active duty should submit an ARF as soon possible upon notification
 - ARFs for military obligations must be accompanied by a copy of the orders indicating the date(s) the student will be absent
 - Students who submit ARFs for military obligations must meet with an Associate Dean for Student Affairs prior to the absence to discuss the optimal timing of training requirements
 - Civil or Legal Obligations
 - Requests for absences due to civil or legal obligations may include, but are not limited to:
 - Jury Duty
 - Students who receive a summons for jury duty during a component of the curriculum that would potentially delay a student's progression and/or graduation from the program may request a letter of support as soon as possible from the SOM registrar for deferral of jury duty obligations
 - A letter of support does not guarantee the student will be excused from jury duty
 - Students are encouraged to meet with an Associate Dean for Student Affairs to discuss potential implications to their curricular progression
 - Citizenship or Immigration Obligations
 - Court Appearances
 - ARFs for civil or legal obligations must be accompanied by a copy of the specific document requiring the absence (e.g. jury duty summons letter, official document indicating the date and time of the court date, etc.)
 - Parental Leave or Planned Medical Procedures
 - Students who anticipate a need for parental leave or planned medical procedures must meet with an Associate Dean of Student Affairs as soon as possible upon determination that an absence may be required to plan for the potential implications to their curricular progression



- Personal Leave Days
 - Students are allotted two (2) personal leave days in each year of the pre-clinical curriculum
 - Two (2) personal leave days are allotted for the M1 year, and two (2) personal leave days are allotted for the M2 year
 - Personal leave days may be used for any reason, but will not be approved if they cause the student to be absent for:
 - Transition Courses
 - Orientation Sessions
 - OSCEs
 - Mandatory simulation sessions
 - Unused personal leave days may not be carried over into the subsequent academic year
 - Students are responsible for acquiring any content missed due to the use of personal days
 - Students should discuss the suggested resources available with the Course Director to assist the learner in acquiring any missed content
 - Requests for absences for personal leave days must be submitted thirty (30) days in advance of the requested absence
 - No documentation is required when submitting the ARF
 - In instances where absences due to personal leave days overlap with an examination, the student is expected to take the examination in advance of their absence
 - In instances where the exam is not available prior to the scheduled absence, the student must make up the examination at the earliest possible time upon their return as determined by the OME
 - Students who fail to take the exam as scheduled by the OME will receive a grade of 0 on the exam unless they receive an additional excused absence for the rescheduled exam
 - Students with absences due to personal leave days adjacent to a scheduled exam will not be allowed to delay an exam to have additional study days
 - In instances where absences due to personal leave days overlap with a mandatory group presentation, the student must complete their portion of the presentation
 - Depending upon the specific group project, the student may be required to record and submit their portion of the group presentation to their group members and the CD, or schedule a time to present their portion of the group project to an audience determined by the CD in collaboration with the OME

Professionalism Expectations for Absence Requests

- In order to promote a positive learning environment that promotes collaboration and respect for all students, faculty, and staff involved in different educational sessions, students are expected to demonstrate professionalism when requesting planned absences
 - In instances where a student submits an ARF for a personal day that overlaps with a mandatory group session, the student is responsible for notifying the other members of their group, as well as the faculty and/or course director, of their planned absence
 - Students are responsible for collaborating with group members and/or the faculty/course director to identify ways in which the student may still meaningfully



contribute to the work of the group and support the overall learning outcomes of the group session

- Students are active partners in their educational experience and are encouraged to consider the potential impact(s) of missing educational sessions
 - Students are ultimately responsible for the acquisition of any knowledge, skills, and/or content missed as a result of absences

Clinical Curriculum

Attendance Expectations

- Daily attendance is **required** throughout the M3 and M4 years.
- Students are not permitted more than four (4) total days for professional travel or significant personal events that are submitted as planned absences throughout all M3 clerkships and M4 AIs
 - Students will be required to make up time when their absences, for any reason, exceed:
 - 4 Week Clerkship/AI—2 or more days
 - 6 Week Clerkship—2 or more days
 - 8 Week Clerkship—3 or more days
 - Students who miss more than 50% of the scheduled time within a clerkship/AI will be required to repeat the entire clerkship/AI
 - CDs/AI Directors in consultation with the OME will determine when missed time will be made up by the student
- Students must be available between eight (8) am and five (5) pm on examination days, regardless of the scheduled exam time.
- Students submitting three (3) or more ARFs within an academic year will be discussed at the next scheduled monthly student progress meeting to determine if any additional support services are needed.

Absence Requests

- All absences longer than a half-day must be documented with an ARF.
 - Students will submit the ARF through the LMS and notify the CD/AI Director of their absence via email
 - Requests for absences must be approved by the OME
 - All submitted ARFs are recorded in the student's record within the LMS.
- Personal Illness, Mental Health Concern, or Any Other Health Concern
 - Absences due to personal illness or other health concern must have an ARF submitted as soon as possible, but no later than the start of the required or graded session or exam
 - A note from the student's treating healthcare provider or other documentation of the illness/health concern must be submitted within twenty-four (24) hours of the student's return from the absence.
 - Provider notes issued by a student's family member will not be accepted.
 - Failure to provide the required documentation will result in an unexcused absence.



- ARFs submitted for this reason that are otherwise covered by an approved accommodation from the Division of Academic Success should be noted as such by the student on the ARF.
 - In instances where absences due to personal illness, mental health concern, or any other health concern causes a student to miss an examination, the student must make up the examination at a date determined by the CD in consultation with the OME
 - Once an assessment is started, the examination will be scored
- Illness or Death of Immediate Family Member
 - Absences due to illness or death of an immediate family member must have an ARF submitted as soon as possible, but no later than the start of the required or graded session, exam or clinical learning experience
 - In instances where absences due to illness or death of an immediate family member causes a student to miss an examination, the student must make up the examination at a date determined by the Clerkship Director in consultation with the OME
- Interviews
 - Requests for absences due to interviews that occur outside of the four (4) week block for interviews must be submitted to the Coordinator/Preceptor for the rotation during which the absence will occur.
 - The Coordinator/Preceptor for the rotation is responsible for reviewing and approving these requests.
 - Students are not allowed to request absences for interviews during:
 - Make up experiences for M3 clerkships
 - AIs
- Professional Travel
 - Professional travel includes absences due to:
 - Presenting at a conference
 - Holding leadership positions in a local, state or national level committee or organization related to healthcare
 - Requests for absences due to professional travel must be submitted thirty (30) days in advance of the requested absence
 - Evidence of participation or presentation at the specific conference will be required by the OME in review of the ARF
 - ARFs for professional travel will not be approved if they cause the student to be absent for:
 - Transition Courses
 - Orientation Sessions
 - OSCEs
 - Mandatory teaching sessions
 - In instances where absences due to professional travel overlap with an examination, the student is expected to take the examination in advance of their travel if possible
 - In instances where the exam cannot be taken prior to travel, the student must make up the examination at a date determined by the Clerkship Director in consultation with the OME
 - Students who fail to take the exam as scheduled by the OME will receive a grade of 0 on the exam unless they receive an additional excused absence for the rescheduled exam
 - Students with absences due to professional travel adjacent to a scheduled exam will not be allowed to delay an exam to have additional study days

- Religious Observance
 - Requests for absences for the observation of religious holidays must be submitted in advance of when the absence will occur, even if the exact date of the observance is unable to be determined until a later date.
 - Requests should be submitted with an approximate date of the occurrence and the anticipated time the exact date will be known.
 - For rising M3 students:
 - ARFs must be submitted by March 15th for absences scheduled to occur between April and July
 - ARFs must be submitted by June 15th for absences scheduled to occur between July and December
 - ARFs must be submitted by December 15th for absences scheduled to occur between January and July
 - For M4 students:
 - ARFs must be submitted by June 15th for absences scheduled to occur between July and December
 - ARFs must be submitted by December 15th for absences scheduled to occur between January and July
- Military Obligations
 - Students who receive orders for training or active duty should submit an ARF as soon possible upon notification
 - ARFs for military obligations must be accompanied by a copy of the orders indicating the date(s) the student will be absent
 - Students who submit ARFs for military obligations must meet with an Associate Dean for Student Affairs prior to the absence to discuss the optimal timing of training requirements
- Civil or Legal Obligations
 - Requests for absences due to civil or legal obligations may include, but are not limited to:
 - Jury Duty
 - Students who receive a summons for jury duty during a component of the curriculum that would potentially delay a student's progression and/or graduation from the program may request a letter of support as soon as possible from the SOM registrar for deferral of jury duty obligations
 - A letter of support does not guarantee the student will be excused from jury duty
 - Students are encouraged to meet with an Associate Dean for Student Affairs to discuss potential implications to their curricular progression
 - Citizenship or Immigration Obligations
 - Court Appearances
 - ARFs for civil or legal obligations must be accompanied by a copy of the specific document requiring the absence (e.g. jury duty summons letter, official document indicating the date and time of the court date, etc.)
- Parental Leave or Planned Medical Procedures
 - Students who anticipate a need for parental leave or planned medical procedures must meet with an Associate Dean of Student Affairs as soon as possible upon determination that an absence may be required to plan for the potential implications to their curricular progression
- Significant Personal Events



- Requests for absences due to significant personal events must submit an ARF at least thirty (30) days prior to the start of the clinical experience during which the absence will occur
- Longitudinal Session Night Float and Being Assigned Away Clerkship Sites
 - Students who are assigned to overnight shifts the night before or after a longitudinal session or are assigned a clerkship site greater than 60 miles away must submit an ARF by noon on the day of the longitudinal session

Multiple or Extended Absences

- Students who encounter circumstances that require multiple or extended absences at any point in the curriculum may consider a leave of absence
 - Information regarding leaves of absence, including the process for requesting a leave, can be found in the Leave of Absence Policy
 - Students are encouraged to meet with an Assistant/Associate Dean in the Office of Medical Education regarding their available options to ensure their academic and personal success

Review and Approval of Absence Requests

Pre-Planned Absence Requests

ARFs in the Pre-Clinical Curriculum

- ARFs will be reviewed by the OME within two (2) weeks of receiving all required documentation for the ARF
 - Students will be notified via email by the OME regarding the outcome of the submitted request

ARFs in the Practice of Clinical Medicine Course

- ARFs will be reviewed by the PCM team no later than two (2) weeks prior to the date of the planned absence
 - The PCM team will advance the request, along with their recommendation for approval or denial, to the OME
 - Students will be notified via email by the OME regarding the outcome of the submitted request

ARFs in the Clinical Curriculum

- ARFs and all required, supporting documentation must be submitted no less than thirty (30) days prior to the start of the clerkship during which the absence will occur
- ARFs will be reviewed by the clerkship leadership no later than two (2) weeks prior to the date of the clerkship during which the absence will occur
 - The clerkship leadership team will advance the request, along with their recommendation for approval or denial, to the OME



- Students will be notified regarding the outcome of the submitted request via email by the clerkship leadership no later than two (2) weeks in advance of the start of the clerkship during which the absence will occur

Unplanned Absence Requests

ARFs in the Pre-Clinical Curriculum

- ARFs will be reviewed by the OME no later than two (2) business days after the receipt of the ARF
 - Students will be notified via email by the OME regarding the outcome of the submitted request

ARFs in the Practice of Clinical Medicine Course

- ARFs will be reviewed by the PCM team no later than two (2) business days after the receipt of the ARF
 - The PCM team will advance the request, along with their recommendation for approval or denial, to the OME
 - Students will be notified via email by the OME regarding the outcome of the submitted request

ARFs in the Clinical Curriculum

- ARFs in the M3 year will be reviewed by the clerkship leadership team no later than two (2) business days after the receipt of the ARF
 - The clerkship leadership team will advance the request, along with their recommendation for approval or denial, and associated makeup plan, to the OME
 - Students will be notified via email by the OME regarding the outcome of the submitted request
- ARFs in the M4 year will be reviewed by the OME and are advanced to the course/AI/elective leadership no later than two (2) business days after the receipt of the ARF
 - The course/AI/elective leadership will advance the request, along with their recommendation for approval or denial, and associated makeup plan, to the OME
 - Students will be notified via email by the OME regarding the outcome of the submitted request
 - In the event of a schedule change through the drop/add system, the ARF will need to be resubmitted by the student for review by the new course/AI/elective leadership

Related Policies _____

Professionalism Policy

Review Cycle and Revision History _____



VCU School of Medicine

The policy is reviewed and may be revised by the Curriculum Council as necessary, but at least every three years.

Current Approved Version: 12.12.2024

Previously Approved Versions: 07.27.2023

Applicable Laws, Regulations & Standards

LCME Standards for Accreditation of Medical Education Programs Leading to the MD Degree:

- LCME Standard 3, Element 5



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