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| Name of Policy: <u>College of Medicine and Life Sciences: Excused Absences from Required Academic Activities in the MD Program</u> | |  Revision date: February 24, 2020 Original effective date: 8/21/17 | |
| Policy Number: 3364-81-17 | | | |
| Approving Officer: Dean, College of Medicine and Life Sciences | | | |
| Responsible Agent: Associate Dean for Student Affairs | | | |
| Scope: Medical students in the preclinical and clinical years, University of Toledo College of Medicine and Life Sciences | | | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | New policy proposal | <input type="checkbox"/> | Minor/technical revision of existing policy |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | Major revision of existing policy | <input type="checkbox"/> | Reaffirmation of existing policy |

(A) Policy statement

As part of the professionalism component of the UTCOMLS Educational Program Objectives students are expected to conduct themselves responsibly, reliably and dependably in all aspects of their professional lives. Attendance at all scheduled instructional periods, as well as timely and appropriate requests for excused absence when attendance is not possible, is considered to be a key aspect of this objective. Attendance is mandatory for all examinations and summative and formative assessments. Attendance is also mandatory for specified classes and academic activities in the foundational science curriculum of the MD program at the discretion of the thread/course directors, when participation by students is deemed essential to the proper acquisition of knowledge, skills, and behaviors. Failure to attend for any reason, whether excused or unexcused, does not relieve a student from responsibility for curriculum content during an absence. Excused absences do not include designated University holidays, winter break, spring break.

In recognition that the religious diversity of our students may result in time conflicts between students' religious beliefs/practices and certain educational activities, UTCOMLS will attempt to make accommodations that do not unduly burden faculty and staff, disproportionately affect the general student population involved in the affected educational activity, and honor the primacy of our commitment to patient care, while ensuring that the requirements of the prescribed curriculum are upheld. Students who believe they have a need for religious accommodation during any thread, clerkship or other required educational activity must notify the relevant authority as soon as possible after an impending conflict becomes apparent —prior to the beginning of the course, clerkship or other activity. If it is established that there is a legitimate basis for excusing or accommodating a student, reasonable accommodations will be provided where possible, including the opportunity to make up the activity in conflict if this is indicated and consistent with curricular policies. Absences excused for religious holidays or observances do not relieve a student from responsibility for curriculum content during an absence. This policy is intended to allow students under limited circumstances to exercise their religious beliefs while still continuing to meet their academic requirements. This policy is not intended to allow students to be granted excessive

absences from the curriculum or to be granted significant alterations of the prescribed curriculum, regardless of one's religious beliefs.

Attendance is mandatory for all required sessions in foundational science and clinical clerkships; however, the faculty and administration realize that illnesses and significant extenuating circumstances may render a student incapable of attending required sessions. Excused absences will be granted for documented medical and mental health appointments. Students must request to be excused for time away, in writing, from the clerkship/thread director, as soon in advance as possible. Requests for excused absences must be approved by the clerkship/thread director or his/her designee, with input from an Associate Dean when necessary. For unanticipated absences that preclude seeking permission in advance, the student is responsible for notifying the appropriate parties prior to the time that they are required to be present for their educational responsibilities.

(B) Purpose of policy

Since attendance is expected and part of professional growth of students, this policy outlines the rationale, procedure and implication of excused and unexcused absences.

Attendance is mandatory for all examinations and summative and formative assessments, as well as for specified classes and academic activities in all of the curricular years. Thus, policies and procedures for the timely notification of all appropriate parties in the event of an absence, as well as for requesting a formal excuse for the absence, have been developed, implemented, and enforced.

(C) Scope

This policy applies to Medical students at the UT College of Medicine and Life Sciences.

(D) Procedure

- (1) In the event that illness, appointment, or other significant extenuating circumstances preclude attending an examination/assessment, clinical assignment, or class/session with required attendance, all students must request, in writing that the absence be excused. Excused Absence Request Forms are available at on the UTCOM website.
- (2) Coordinators will review and forward to thread or clerkship director to be considered for approval. The final determination will be made by the thread or clerkship director with the option for consultation and input from the appropriate Associate Dean. Serious breaches of this policy, as well as patterns of unexcused absences may result in review by the Academic Progress Committee and a Professionalism Behavior Report. Knowingly submitting false information on an excused absence request or submitting fraudulent documentation may also result in a Professionalism Behavior Report or more serious consequences. Any student who reschedules examinations in three examination periods during one academic year will be required to have a mandatory advising session with the Associate Dean of Student Affairs that may be followed by a referral to the Medical Student Promotions Committee for a review of progress.

- (3) Activities/circumstances for which an excused absence can be requested but may not automatically be granted are listed below. Please Note: Documentation will be required. **All requests for an excused absence in all 4 years must be made 60 days prior to the scheduled event ***.
- (a) *Illness or hospitalization.
 - (b) *Medical or mental health appointment
 - (c) *Authorized presentation or service at an academic conference or other professional meeting. (Refer to the travel policy 3364-81-04-015)
 - (d) Significant family ceremony or family event that requires student participation.
 - (e) *Family emergency or crisis (including funeral) that requires student attendance.
 - (f) Religious holiday or observance.
 - (g) Military service obligations.
 - (h) Taking USMLE step 2 CK and step 2CS.
 - (i) *Interviewing for residency positions.
 - (j) *Other extenuating circumstances as approved by the thread or clerkship director, with input from the associate or assistant deans for medical education, as necessary.

***The 60 day window may be waived.**

- (4) Students needing time off for routine or urgent health care will be provided reasonable accommodations by all threads and clerkships. Students requiring regular or multiple scheduled visits during a thread or clerkship should seek assistance from disability/accommodation office and/or Office of Student Affairs. In some cases, requests for an excused absence may need to include written documentation of said illness or extenuating circumstance. Documentation of illness must be provided by Student Health Services or the student's personal health care provider. An excused absence for significant extenuating circumstances may also require written documentation if requested. Submission of documentation does not guarantee that a requested absence will be excused.
- (5) Decisions about whether an absence will be excused cannot be made until written documentation is provided and validated, and thus notifications of excused absences will often follow the date/time of the absence. The thread or clerkship director, through the coordinator, will notify a student as to whether a student has been granted an excused absence from the required examination or instructional activity.
- (6) The faculty and administration realize that illnesses and significant extenuating circumstances may render a student incapable of sitting for an examination or attending required sessions. If the prescribed procedures for requesting an excused absence are followed, every effort will be made to offer the student an opportunity to make-up the examination or required activity. Even if an absence is excused, a thread/course may not offer the student a make-up opportunity; laboratory sessions and quizzes are two examples. In other situations, an alternative make-up activity may be required to receive credit for the required activity or examination. In all

cases, it is the student's responsibility to verify the status of their excused absence request, and to contact the thread/course/clerkship director about their make-up policies for excused absences.

- (7) Failure to follow these procedures will result in an unexcused absence. In the event of an unexcused absence, students will be given a grade of zero on any missed examinations or quizzes, and may be given a grade of zero on any assignments, or in-class learning experiences, which may result in failure of the thread/clerkship. At the discretion of the appropriate director, students may still be required to complete the scheduled learning activity or alternate activity without receiving a grade if deemed necessary in order to proceed through the remainder of the course. Any student with an unexcused absence for the academic year may be ineligible to be excused for travel. In addition, unexcused absences may result in the filing of a Professional Behavior Report, which could lead to disciplinary action, up to and including suspension or dismissal (see policy 3364-81-04-017-02).
- (8) In addition to attendance, students are expected to be on time at all examinations, summative and formative assessments, as well as for specified classes and academic activities in the foundational science years. Excused absence requests should not, however, be used for situations when students are tardy. Instead, advance requests for late attendance or notification of unexpected late attendance should be handled in accordance with thread/clerkship syllabi.
- (9) If the number of absences exceeds the number allotted for each medical school year, this behavior will result in a Professionalism Behavior Report. The student will have a mandatory meeting with the Associate Dean for Student Affairs.
- (10) Specific attendance policies for the Clinical curriculum
 - (a) Religious accommodations: an excused absence must be made in writing to the Clerkship Director and Coordinator prior to the beginning of the clerkship or activity.
 - (b) Requests for excused absences or accommodations must be approved by the Clerkship Director or his/her designee, with input from the Associate Deans for Clinical Undergraduate Medical Education or Student Affairs when necessary. The Clerkship Director may request additional information or documentation prior to rendering a final decision.
 - (c) Once an absence or accommodation has been approved, the Clerkship Director or Coordinator will notify the involved parties, including the faculty and/or residents with whom the student is rotating, and the clerkship/educational coordinator at the assigned clinical site. Students must also notify the relevant parties of their scheduled absence from any clinical responsibilities.
 - (d) Time away: students may take up to 2 days for a 2 week clinical rotation and up to 3 days for all other rotations. The clerkship director will decide if

a make-up experience or assignment is required, even when an absence is excused. If the clerkship director decides that a make-up experience is required, the make-up may involve additional clinical hours or an alternative assignment.

- (11) Foundational sciences: When an excused absence has been granted from a written or practical examination, it is the responsibility of the Course Director, in conjunction with the system faculty, the Academic Test Center or the Clinical Skills Center, where indicated, to decide when the make-up examination will be administered. Such accommodations must not unduly burden faculty and staff or disproportionately affect the general student population involved in the affected educational activity.
- (12) When an excused absence has been granted from other required educational activities, an opportunity to make up the activity in conflict will be provided when possible if this is indicated and consistent with block/clerkship policy. It is the responsibility of the Thread or Clerkship Director to decide if an opportunity for a make-up experience or assignment will be provided and whether or not a make-up experience or assignment is required (see 7 above).
- (13) In case of student presentation at a national or regional meeting and/or conference related to academic or scholarly activity, permission may be granted after prior approval by the appropriate Associate Dean and the clerkship/thread director.
- (14) The Academic Progress Committee will periodically review total number of excused absences for students. If the total number of absences exceeds five (5) in any academic year, an automatic review will be undertaken.
- (15) If the number of days of absence is deemed excessive, the following actions may be undertaken: a.) Student may be required to drop the any given course for which allowed absence was exceeded, and/ or given no credit for the course; 2) Student may be required to undertake academic counselling, or 3) other steps deemed appropriate.
- (16) All clerkship and thread coordinators will submit a log of absences (excused and unexcused) at the end of each course.

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| <p>Approved by:</p> <p><u>/s/</u> Christopher Cooper, M.D., Executive Vice President for Clinical Affairs and Dean, College of Medicine and Life Sciences</p> <p><u>February 24, 2020</u> Date</p> <p><i>Review/Revision Completed by:</i></p> <p><i>Assistant/Associate Deans for Medical Education, Office of Student Affairs SLT</i></p> | <p>Policies Superseded by This Policy: 3364-81-04-032-00 3364-81-04-014-03 3364-81-04-014-04 3364-81-04-014-05</p> <p>Initial effective date: 8/21/17</p> <p>Review/Revision Date:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• 01/03/2020 review• 02/24/2020 revision <p>Next review date: 02/24/2023</p> |
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