Name of Policy: Excused absences from required academic activities in the Foundational Sciences (MD Program)

Policy Number: 3364-81-17

Approving Officer: Dean, College of Medicine and Life Sciences

Responsible Agent: Associate Dean for Student Affairs and Admissions

Scope: Medical students in the preclinical years, University of Toledo College of Medicine and Life Sciences

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(A) Policy statement

As part of the professionalism component of the UTCOM Educational 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.

(B) Purpose of policy

Attendance is mandatory for all examinations and summative and formative assessments, as well as for specified classes and academic activities in the foundational science 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 in the foundational sciences curriculum at the UT College of Medicine and Life Sciences.

(D) Procedure

(1) In the event that illness or other significant extenuating circumstances preclude attending an examination/assessment, or classes/sessions with required attendance, all students must request, in writing that the absence be excused within three (3) business days. Excused Absence Request Forms are available at the following address: http://enrollmentservices.utoledo.edu/events/register.asp?event_id=33611. The completed forms should be submitted to the appropriate thread coordinator for review and consideration of approval by the thread director or co-director.

(2) Activities/circumstances for which an excused absence can be requested from the Office of Student Affairs are listed below. Please Note: Documentation may be required.

(a) Illness or hospitalization.
(b) Authorized presentation at an academic conference or other professional meeting.
(c) Service in an official, approved capacity as a representative of UTCOM at an academic conference or other professional meeting.
(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) Unforeseen, major extenuating circumstances beyond the control of the student.
(i) Professional development activities at the discretion of the Office of Student Affairs and Medical Education.

(3) Students are required to notify the Clinical Skills Center if they are going to miss a scheduled activity at the Center.

(4) 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 director/co-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 requirement and copy the Office of Student Affairs for documentation and tracking. Initial response to a request will be made within five (5) business days from submission.

(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, however, 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. One example may be to write a paper in lieu of missed attendance at a required class or exercise. In all cases, it is the student's responsibility to verify the status of their excused absence request, and to contact the thread/course director about their make-up policies for excused absences. Any student requesting five (5) excused absences in one academic year may be required to attend a mandatory academic advising session, and may be subject to a professionalism behavior report. Any student missing more than five (5) mandatory activities may be ineligible to be excused for travel purposes.

(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/course. At the discretion of the system and thread 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, and may be subject to a professionalism behavior report. Any student with an unexcused absence for the academic year may be ineligible to be excused for travel.

(8) Serious breaches of this policy, as well as patterns of unexcused absences may result in a negative professionalism report. Knowingly submitting false information on an excused absence request, as well as submitting fraudulent documentation may also result in a professionalism report or more serious consequences.

(9) Any student who reschedules examinations in three examination periods during one academic year will be required to have a mandatory advising session with the Office
Excused absences from required academic activities in the Foundational Sciences (MD Program) of Student Affairs that may be followed by a referral to the Medical Student Promotions Committee for a review of progress.

(10) 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/course syllabi.

(11) The Department of Medical Education will periodically review total number of excused absences for students. If number of absences exceeds a reasonable number, the student may need to provide explanation.

Approved by:

[Signature]
Christopher Cooper, M.D.
Executive Vice President for Clinical Affairs and Dean, College of Medicine

[Date]
11.30.17

Policies Superseded by This Policy: None

Initial effective date: 8/21/17
Review/Revision Date: N/A
Next review date: 8/21/20

Review/Revision Completed by:

Assistant/Associate Deans for Medical Education
SLT