SOM OP: 40.02, **Student Attendance**

**PURPOSE:** The purpose of this School of Medicine (SOM) Policy and Procedure is to explain attendance expectations for students in the School of Medicine.

**COMMITTEE:** This policy covers activities managed by the Student Affairs Committee.

**REVIEW:** This SOM Policy and Procedure will be reviewed on or before November 1 of each odd-numbered year by the Student Affairs Committee. The result of this review will be communicated to the Dean by November 30.

**POLICY/PROCEDURE:**

1. **General.** This policy is intended to address questions about student attendance in courses throughout the medical school curriculum.

2. **Attendance in Years 1 and 2.** Attendance is not mandatory except as specified for certain components of individual blocks. Attendance is strongly encouraged, however. In addition to scheduled examinations, unannounced quizzes or other graded exercises may occur during the course of formal educational activities.

3. **Attendance in Year 3.**
   a. Students are required to be present each day and for all exams and to be present to carry out all clerkship duties and responsibilities as scheduled except as allowed under the excused absence policy.
   b. **Excused absences:**
      1) Students may be granted up to 12 excused absences within the third year.
      2) Any absence for any reason must be reported to the Clerkship Director. If an absence for illness is for more than one day, documentation of the illness and/or a diagnosis from the student’s physician must be given to the Clerkship Director/Preceptor and forwarded to the student’s campus Student Affairs Office for inclusion in the student’s file.
   c. **Personal days:**
      1) Up to four of the 12 excused absence days may be taken as “personal days”. The Clerkship Director must approve personal day absences at least 30 days in advance.
      2) “Personal days” would include any absence not otherwise defined as a sick day, observance of a religious holiday, or attendance at a professional meeting. Examples of personal day absences include, but are not limited to, attending
family events (e.g., weddings, graduations, birthdays) and addressing personal business needs.

3) “Personal day” absences will not be granted during mandatory attendance activities. Mandatory attendance activities in Year 3 are MSIII Orientation, all graded activities (e.g., NBME exams), Integration Seminar, class meetings, and the all-campus OSCE. Additional “mandatory attendance” activities may be designated at the start of each clerkship.

4) “Personal day” absences, once approved by the Clerkship Director, must be reported by the student directly to their home campus Student Affairs Office.

5) Students may appeal to their home campus Student Affairs office for approval of up to two additional (beyond the allowable four) personal days during the Spring semester of the academic year.

   a) One additional “personal day” may be requested during January – March and a one additional “personal day” may be requested during April – June.

   b) Approval of either of these additional personal days must be agreed upon by both the student’s home Student Affairs Office and supervising Clerkship Director.

   c) If allowed, these two additional personal days would equal up to a maximum of six of the twelve excused absence days during Year 3.

d. Sick days/leave:

   1) Sick leave is intended for use only in the event of personal illness or to assist a member of the immediate family who is actually ill. For purposes related to sick leave “immediate family” is defined as:

      a) Individuals who reside in the student’s household and are related by kinship, adoption, or marriage;

      b) Foster children certified by the Texas Department of Protective and Regulatory Services who reside in the student’s household; or

      c) Minor children, whether or not living in the student’s household.

   2) Use of sick leave for family members not residing in the student’s household is strictly limited to the time necessary to provide care and assistance to a spouse, child (minor or adult), or parent of the student who needs such care and assistance as a direct result of a documented medical condition.

   3) The use of sick leave for any reason other than due to personal illness or family health needs as detailed above will be considered misconduct and subject to referral to the Student Conduct Administrator on the student’s home campus and/or disciplinary action through the Student Promotions and Professional Conduct Committee Year 3/Year 4 Subcommittee.
e. **Absence to attend professional meetings during Year 3:**

1) Approved absences to attend professional meetings will not be classified as "personal days". Designated action for missed workdays will depend on the student’s level of participation in the professional meeting.

2) Excused with no expectation to make up missed workdays;
   a) This option can be used only once per academic year for up to maximum of three work days.
   b) Excused absences must be approved by both the student’s home Student Affairs office and Clerkship Director.

3) Subtracted from the total of 12 allowable excused absences per academic year; or

4) Made up by the student through arrangement with the Clerkship Director.

f. **Absence to observe a religious holiday:**

1) Requests for an excused absence in observance of recognized holy days and/or religious observances must be submitted to a student’s home campus Student Affairs office no later than 30 days in advance of the request for the excused absence.

2) Absences for observance of religious holidays will be reviewed/approved on an individual basis by the Academic Dean responsible for Student Affairs on a student’s home campus.

3) If approved, any missed workdays in observance of a religious holiday will be subtracted from the total of 12 allowable excused absences per academic year.

g. **Tracking of student absences in Year 3:**

1) Absences will be reported on the clerkship grading form and documented in the student’s home campus Student Affairs Office for inclusion in the student's file.

2) All student absences will be centrally tracked through each regional Student Affairs Office. Once a student reaches a total of 8 absences during the third year (for whatever reasons) notices will be sent to all remaining clerkship coordinators noting the exact number of absences the student has already accrued.

3) Any student who misses more than 4 working days in an eight-week clerkship will be referred to the Student Conduct Administrator and may be referred to the Student Promotions and Professional Conduct Committee (SPPCC) Year 3-4. Additionally, any student who is absent for more than 12 working days during the six clerkship periods that constitute the MSIII curriculum will be referred to the Student Conduct Administrator and may be referred to the SPPCC Year 3-4. The student will be given the opportunity to explain the circumstances resulting in the missed days. As a result of this discussion, it is possible that a student could be:
   a) Required to repeat a clerkship or elective; OR
b) Required to repeat the year; OR

c) Dismissed.

h. Appealing an absence in Year 3: If a student disagrees with a decision regarding absences or missed days, he/she may appeal in writing to the Academic Dean responsible for Student Affairs on their home campus who will convene the Student Affairs Committee to hear the grievance and to make a determination. If the student disagrees with the Student Affairs Committee’s decision, the student may appeal in writing to the Dean who will make a final.

i. Excused absence for Integration Seminar: All students in Year 3 will be excused from regular clerkship duties for the presentation of Integration Seminar (Student Grand Rounds). Students will also be excused for 1-2 planning sessions for the Integration Seminar as described in the syllabus for this course. Students on night float will be excused at midnight prior to the seminar presentation.

j. Unexcused absences in Year 3: Unexcused absences are not permitted in clerkships and may result in disciplinary action.

4. Attendance in Year 4. Students must be present for at least 90% of all required rotations, selective rotations and elective rotations. Thus, students may be excused for one (1) day in a two-week rotation and two (2) days in a four-week rotation. The Year 4 Director or rotation director will determine whether a student should make up absences and the format and timing of the make-up.

5. Absence Due to Personal Emergency on Exam Days or During Clinical Duties.

a. In the event of an emergency that will result in an absence, the student must contact the campus Student Affairs Office as soon as possible.

b. Inability to take an exam/perform clinical duties. If a student is unable to perform his/her clinical duties, take an exam, or other graded activity at the scheduled time due to illness or a personal emergency, the student must contact the Office of Student Affairs prior to the exam so that appropriate notice can be given to the Course/Clerkship Director. Email is acceptable. If extreme circumstances such as severe illness or the need to leave town immediately prevent the student from contacting the Student Affairs Office personally, a classmate or immediate family member may contact Student Affairs on the student’s behalf as soon as is realistically possible. In either case, it is necessary to leave a telephone number where the student can be contacted.

1) If an absence from a scheduled exam is due to illness and the student has not yet seen a physician, the student will be directed to proceed to the Department of Family Medicine or the Emergency Center to ensure that appropriate health care is delivered and to provide documentation regarding illness as the basis for the missed exam.

2) If a student reports for clinical duties but is sent home by a supervising physician due to illness, this will be considered an acceptable alternative to acquiring a physician's note verifying illness in order to have an excused absence.
6. **Absence for Residency Interviews.** Occasionally seniors on electives will need a day for an interview that cannot be scheduled at another time. In that case, the student should make the request directly to the rotation/Year 4 Director responsible for the rotation. It remains the prerogative of the rotation/Year 4 Director to grant or to deny the request for absence and to set the conditions for making up work that is missed.

7. **Attendance at Graded Activities.** No credit will be given for any graded activity missed without a valid excuse.

8. **Appealing an Absence.** If a student wants to appeal the classification of an absence, they may do so in writing to the Academic Dean responsible for Student Affairs on their home campus who will consult with the Assistant Dean for Student Affairs, the involved Course or Clerkship Director, one other Course or Clerkship Director from that year (and the Student Affairs Committee if needed) to determine if the prescribed course of action is appropriate. If the student disagrees with this decision, he/she may appeal in writing to the Dean who will make a final determination.

9. **Attendance at Professional Meetings.** If a student wishes to be excused from class or clerkship responsibility to attend a professional meeting he/she must first obtain permission from their Student Affairs Office as far in advance of that anticipated absence as possible. The Academic Dean responsible for Student Affairs on the student’s home campus will determine whether the meeting/function merits an excused absence and may consult with the Associate Dean for Academic Affairs when necessary. If permission for an absence is granted, one of the following options is then available to the student regarding the missed days:

   a. **Presenting original scholarly work/Representing TTUHSC SOM:**
      1) Student is presenting original scholarly work, invited to speak based on “expertise” in a specific area, and/or is representing the School of Medicine in an official capacity at a recognized professional meeting:
      2) Absence(s) may be excused with no expectation to make up missed class work/clinical duties
         a) Option should be used only once per academic year for up to maximum of three work days.
         b) Appeals can be made to the Academic Dean responsible for Student Affairs on the student’s home campus for additional absences in this category.

   b. **Attending professional meeting as a participant:** Missed work days will be subtracted from the total of 12 allowable excused absences per academic year (specific to Year 3); or made up by the student through arrangement with the Course/Clerkship Director (if possible).

   c. **Communication regarding absences to attend professional meetings:** The Student Affairs Office will inform the Course/Clerkship Director of the decision regarding a student’s absence to attend a professional meeting and the student will then directly contact the Course/Clerkship Director to arrange for making up missed work (if needed). A student must be in “good academic standing” in order to be granted permission to attend a professional meeting or other SOM-related activity.
d. **Appeals for absences related to attending professional meetings:** Appeals for absences related to attending professional meetings can be made directly to the Academic Dean responsible for Student Affairs on the student’s home campus.