

POLICY: Excused Absence (Clinical Years)

INITIAL EFFECTIVE DATE:	LAST REVISION DATE:	RESPONSIBLE DIVISION/ DEPARTMENT/COMMITTEE
August 1, 2022	April 25, 2025	Curriculum Committee Office of Student Affairs

POLICY STATEMENT

Medical school is a full-time endeavor. Consistent on-time attendance and participation are expected of all students. Excused absence requests are required for any absences during mandatory classes, clerkships, or other mandatory defined activities. Students must follow Procedure, Excused Absence to request all excused absences.

During Academic Year 3, students may be approved up to **two (2)** planned personal days in an **eight-week clerkship** and **one (1)** personal planned day in a **six-week clerkship** (for the purpose of absences, Radiology and Neurology/ elective are considered one six-week clerkship). No more than **three personal** planned absences in each of the 6-month A and B blocks will be approved.

Distinct from Planned Personal Days, during Academic Year 3, students may be approved for up to **two (2)** scholarly activity absences, one in each of the A and B blocks. Up to **two (2)** consecutive days, including necessary travel, may be excused for a single scholarly activity absence. During a **6-week clerkship**, students are allowed a maximum of **two (2)** total planned absences days, including personal and scholarly days. For example, this may include **one (1)** scholarly activity absence and **one (1)** planned personal absence. In this example, the scholarly activity absence can only be one day. Alternatively, if no other planned personal absence is taken during the **6-week clerkship**, then **two (2)** consecutive days may be used for scholarly activity absence.

During Academic Year 4, students may be approved for up to **one (1)** planned absence per **two- or four-week** rotation. No more than **six (6)** planned absences (excluding residency interviews) will be approved.

Health care appointments or illness, whether planned or unplanned/emergent, do not count towards the permitted number of planned excused absences. Students should schedule non-emergent healthcare appointments during times that do not conflict with classroom and clinical activities. If an appointment must be scheduled during a mandatory educational activity, students must request permission to be excused for the duration of the appointment, including appropriate driving time, using the Excused Absence system as outlined in Procedure, Excused Absence.

All absences must be made up in a manner determined by the Course/Clerkship Director.

If a student's request for an excused absence is denied, the student is expected to report to all required activities.

SCOPE

This policy applies to all medical students and addresses both planned and unplanned absences across the clinical years (Academic Years 3 and 4).

REASON FOR POLICY

Students are accountable for managing their schedules. HWCOM recognizes that medical students need to attend to health and personal matters throughout their medical education. The absence policy defines how medical students can request time away in a compliant manner.

This policy also addresses LCME Element 12.4, which states that "A medical school...has policies and procedures in place that permit students to be excused from these experiences to seek needed care."

DEFINITIONS (in alphabetical order)	
TERM	DEFINITIONS
Blackout dates	Specific dates when planned absences will not be approved due to academic or clinical requirements. Blackout dates include day before exams, exam days, OSCEs, and simulation activities, orientations and the first day of clerkships or rotations. In the case of health care related needs or illness, a doctor's note is required as documentation with the excused absence request for blackout dates.
Block	Used to describe time in AY 3 clerkships. The increment of time is 6 months. There are two blocks, Block A and Block B.
Excused Absence Request System	The online system to request all absences. The Office of Student Affairs processes requests and sends notices to students and applicable faculty/staff through this system.
Extended Excused Absence (EEA)	An extended period of absence, due to health or personal reasons that does not impact a student's ability to graduate on time. EEAs generally last between three days and six weeks.
Mandatory activities	Any class/activity that is mandatory as defined by course syllabi or schedule. Any mandatory class or activity will require an

	excused absence request if missed. All clinical activities are mandatory. All mandatory activities/classes, regardless of approved absence, require make-up, as determined by the course/clerkship director.
NeighborhoodHELP visits	As they constitute a curricular requirement, NeighborhoodHELP household visits do not require a formal excused absence request. However, a student's clerkship director or coordinator must provide approval for a visit to occur during clinical responsibilities, and the student is responsible for notifying his/her preceptor of the visit at least 48 hours in advance of its scheduled time. Students should work with their clerkship, household, and NeighborhoodHELP team to minimize the number of missed clinical hours. Clerkship syllabi should be reviewed for any policies or guidance specific to clerkship.
Personal planned absence	An absence that is scheduled in advance and requires prior approval per Procedure: Excused Absence. Planned absences may include healthcare appointments, personal commitments, family events, religious observances, professional obligations and attendance at a conference (not presenting).
Religious observances	HWCOM recognizes the importance of religious observance and will provide excused absences for recognized religious holidays, prayer times, or observances. These absences need to be requested through the Excused Absence System and do not count toward a student's allotment of planned absences.
Residency interviews	All requests for absences for residency interviews will be approved with documentation (i.e., calendar invite or email request). However, if a student requires more than 4 absences in a 4-week rotation or 2 absences in a 2-week rotation, the student may be asked to reschedule the rotation to a different block of time.
Scholarly activity absence	Scholarly activity absences are limited to presenting at approved conferences or when a student has received a scholarship to attend a conference during AY 3. Only one (1) HWCOM student will be approved for a scholarly activity absence for a given presentation.
Unexcused absence	An absence that is not reported within the required timeframe or does not meet the criteria for an excused absence. Unexcused absences are considered a professionalism concern. Unexcused absences may result in academic penalties or professional incident reports as outlined in clerkship syllabi.
Unplanned absence	An absence that occurs due to unforeseen circumstances, such as illness, family emergencies, bereavement, or other urgent situations. These absences must be in accordance with Procedure:

Excused Absence. Documentation may be required for extended absences or absences on blackout dates.

RESPONSIBLE PARTIES

Associate Dean of Student Affairs
Director of Compliance

RELATED RESOURCES

Excused Absence Request Form: [Excused Absence System](#)
Travel Form: <https://app.smartsheet.com/b/form/ecc684d7c59c4296a82de21f2072befb>
Policy and Procedure, Medical Student Travel
Procedure, Excused Absence

CONTACTS

Questions about this policy should be directed towards the Director of Compliance, Office of Student Affairs.

HISTORY

List initial effective date, revision dates, and/or review date.

Initial Effective Date: August 1, 2022

Review Dates (*review performed, no updates*): N/A

Revision Dates (*updates made to document*) November 22, 2024, February 28, 2025, April 25, 2025

PROCEDURE: Excused Absence (Clinical Years)

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PROCEDURE STATEMENT

To request an excused absence, students must:

1. Submit excused absence requests using the **excused absence request form** in a timely manner as outlined below. Students must choose the applicable reason for absence and attach required notification and/or documentation (see #2 and #3 below), as applicable.

Planned Absences: Personal planned absences (excluding healthcare appointments) and scholarly activity absences must be submitted using the Excused Absence (EA) form at least 30 days prior to the impacted clerkship/rotation.

Unplanned Absences: Students must submit the Excused Absences (EA) form through the Excused Absence Request System as soon as possible, but no later than 24 hours following the unplanned absence. Failure to communicate the absence to OSA within 24 hours will result in an unexcused absence. If unable to submit the form for any reason, students must notify OSA by emailing MD Compliance at MDcompliance@fiu.edu.

2. Submit appropriate documentation

Documentation is required for unplanned absences of two or more days or unplanned absences on blackout dates. Forms of documentation could include a note from your healthcare provider (PCP, urgent care, telehealth visit etc.). Documentation needs to be submitted within 7 days of absence for approval.

Scholarly Activity Documentation: Students must provide appropriate documentation, such as an invitation to present or an abstract acceptance letter. Documentation should be attached to the OSA Student Travel Request Form, see Policy and Procedure, Medical Student Travel. Scholarly activity absence requests will not be processed without a student travel request form.

3. Submit appropriate notification

Notification for planned absence: Once approved it is the student's responsibility to notify the clerkship director to coordinate make up of missed clerkship/rotation, or other defined activities.

Notifications for unplanned absence: Students must notify the clerkship director, preceptor and clerkship/rotation coordinator via email or text **by noon** of the day of the absence. The student must include (attach) the email or text notification that was sent to the clerkship director, preceptor and clerkship/rotation coordinator.

Approval. Under the supervision of the Director of Compliance, the Office of Student Affairs reviews all Excused Absence requests within three (3) business days in accordance with Policy and Procedure, Excused Absence. Documentation and/or additional information may be requested from the student.

Monitoring and Reporting. All absences (excused and unexcused) are recorded in an electronic database to screen for repetitive and/or unprofessional behavioral patterns. Repetitive, unprofessional, or suspicious behavior will be reported to the Associate Dean of Student Affairs. Students with such patterns of absence may be required to meet with an Office of Student Affairs dean and may be considered in violation of FIU HWCOC's professionalism standards.

Notification and Follow Up. The Office of Student Affairs notifies students via the Excused Absence Request System whether excused absence requests are granted or denied. Once an excused absence request is processed, the student will receive an email notification with the determination of approval or denial.