

Office of Student Affairs
 Division of Academic Affairs
 Brody School of Medicine
 East Carolina University

SOP #	[3.5.3]
Version #	11
Implementation Date	July 20, 2022
Last Reviewed/Update Date	July 13, 2022
Approval by ECC	July 20, 2022

Heading: Student Attendance Procedure

SOP Title: BSOM Student Attendance and Excused Absence Policy

Rationale

The Brody School of Medicine (BSOM) Office of Student Affairs has established attendance procedures that support physical and emotional wellness as well as learning and success for all medical students. These attendance procedures are designed to ensure attendance of critical education activities while providing reasonable and consistent processes when such attendance becomes impossible for reasons which are excusable.

Scope

During the M1 and M2 years, students are expected to be available for classes from 8:00 AM to 5:00 PM on class days and from 8:00 AM to 8:00 PM on assessment days and must plan accordingly for those hours – i.e., arrange travel plans and other commitments to allow availability during these hours. During the M3 and M4 years, required student availability is rotation and elective-specific.

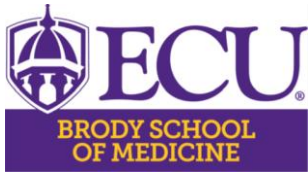
However, there are certain instances in which students will be excused from classes, clerkship responsibilities, and assessments in accordance with the terms of this policy, as stated below.

Policy

Every student is strongly encouraged to regularly and consistently attend classes. Every student must attend all mandatory learning events, clerkship requirements, and assessments. However, BSOM recognizes that there are instances in which students should be excused from attendance or should be excused from on-time arrival. The purpose of this policy is to define the terms and conditions under which students may seek an excused absence from or excused tardy for late arrival to classes and assessments.

Some class and assessment activities cannot be made up due to staffing, logistical, or other institutional reasons. Although every reasonable effort will be made to afford students the opportunity to make up activities missed due to excused absences, each course syllabus addresses how excused absences will be treated when the course’s activities or assessments cannot be made up.

Students who engage in an excessive pattern of absences from mandatory classes and assessments, whether excused or unexcused, will be required to meet with the Associate Dean



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for Student Affairs and may be referred to the Committee on Professionalism and Community Standards. Learners with three or more absences from mandatory classes or assessments during a Block, whether excused or unexcused, will be required to meet with the Associate Dean for Student Affairs and the year-appropriate Student Review and Promotion Committee. Absences will be tracked and automatically reported to the Office of Student Affairs through an online process.

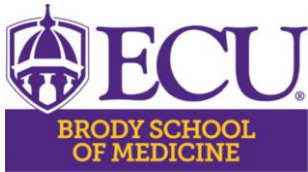
Process

Overview: This policy is interpreted and enforced by the Office of Student Affairs, which is responsible for determining whether absences are excused or unexcused, and that decision is not appealable by anyone.

Absences Excused: In order for an absence to be excused, the absence must fall into one of the following nine (9) categories: transportation, inclement weather, healthcare appointments/personal illness, serious illness/death of a loved one, religious observances, court appearances/jury duty, professional travel, BSOM mission-related travel, and natural disasters. Furthermore, those absences will be excused only if requested in the manner required by this policy. All other absences will be considered unexcused.

Process for Requesting: Requests for an excused absence should be in accordance with this process:

1. Students should communicate openly and clearly whenever an absence is required. Email is an acceptable option for notification, followed by completion of the excused absence process.
2. As soon as a student realizes that they will have either a planned or unplanned absence from a clerkship activity or mandatory learning event, they are expected to notify the appropriate parties. Any advance notice requirement for the specific type of absence must be met. Any request for an excused absence from an assessment must be requested prior to the start of the assessment, except in cases of emergency. Appropriate parties to be contacted are:
 - a. For M1 and M2 students, the student should contact the Course Director and/or Course Coordinator and the Office of Student Affairs. If there is an urgent absence involving an assessment, the Testing Coordinator and the Associate Dean for the Office of Medical Education should also be contacted.
 - b. For M3 and M4 students, the student should contact the Clerkship Director, Clerkship Coordinator, the Office of Student Affairs, and their clinical team (attending and resident). If there is an urgent absence involving an NBME Shelf exam, the Testing Coordinator and the Associate Dean for the Office of Medical Education should also be contacted.



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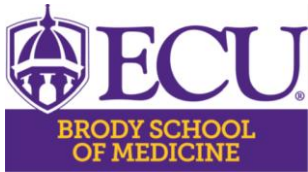
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3. All requests for excused absences must be submitted using the ‘Absence Request Form’ located on the Office of Student Affairs webpage – requests received by other means will not be considered. Any student who contacts the Office of Student Affairs concerning an excused absence will be directed to submit an Absence Request Form. Absence request forms must be received prior to the start of any assessment. Absence request forms must be submitted in accordance with any other advance notice requirements. When an absence does not involve an assessment or when the category of absence does not require advance notice, an absence request form and supporting documentation may be submitted within forty-eight (48) hours of the mandatory activity, if possible, but no later than within forty-eight (48) hours of return to classes.
4. The Office of Student Affairs staff will review all Absence Request Forms (submitted through our website) and designate them as ‘excused’ or ‘unexcused’. Whether excused or unexcused, OSA will then notify the Course/Clerkship Director and Coordinator for each affected course. The Office of Student Affairs staff will keep a log of the number of absences per student and report these to the Associate Dean for Student Affairs on a quarterly basis.
5. Course/Clerkship Directors and Coordinators should await notice from the Office of Student Affairs before confirming an absence as ‘excused’. If there is any question about the status of a student absence, the Course/Clerkship Director is encouraged to contact the Office of Student Affairs. It is recommended that Course/Clerkship Directors include guidelines in their syllabi outlining the Course/Clerkship’s approach to absences (if beyond the scope of this procedure). M-3 and M-4 Clerkships are recommended to publish their ‘black-out’ days in a timely fashion to allow students the opportunity to make informed decisions about the timing of their administrative days.

Consequences

When a student is excused from an assessment, that assessment will be made up in accordance with the Office of Medical Education’s Make-Up Examination Policy, found [here](#). Students who receive an excused absence must register for a make-up assessment by using OME’s make-up assessment link, found [here](#) (for foundational science courses and [here](#) (for clinical sciences courses) in accordance with said policy. Students whose absence from an assessment is unexcused, will be required to make up the assessment in accordance with the Assessment Policy and subject to any consequences outlined in the Assessment Policy.

The treatment of unexcused absences and tardies, other than assessments, are addressed by each course’s syllabus.



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Categories of Excused Absences

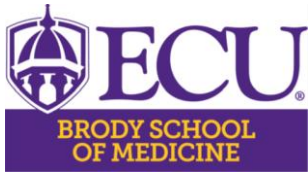
Transportation: Students experiencing unexpected delays due to transportation problems, such as automobile accidents, flat tires, dead batteries, and road closures, may qualify for an excused absence or an excused late arrival for classes and assessments. Excused absences will not be granted due to excessive traffic or other predictable travel delays. Required Documentation: Photographic or other evidence of transportation difficulty must be provided as soon as possible, but not later than within twenty-four (24) hours of the absence.

Inclement Weather: All students are excused from classes and assessments when classes are canceled by East Carolina University due to inclement weather, natural disasters such as hurricanes or tornadoes, or other disaster. In those instances, class, clerkship activities, and assessments will be rescheduled at the discretion of the Course/Clerkship Director and the Foundational or Clinical Curriculum Committee, as appropriate.

Students may receive an excused absence for other severe weather events, such as snowstorms, tornado warnings, and other severe weather which makes travel unsafe. Students should submit evidence of local weather events that make travel unsafe. Required Documentation: If not preemptively excused by East Carolina University cancellation, the student must provide evidence from the National Weather Service or other public source concerning weather conditions, if required by the Office of Student Affairs, within forty-eight hours of the absence.

Healthcare Appointments/Personal Illness: The BSOM supports student wellness and will grant excused absences for healthcare appointments and for unplanned absences due to illness. Students should make every effort to schedule healthcare appointments at times which do not conflict with required learning events, and assessments. Excused absences for assessments will not be granted for planned healthcare appointments, except in extraordinary circumstances and at the discretion of the Associate Dean for Student Affairs. Planned absences due to healthcare appointments must be requested at least two weeks prior to the planned absence.

With regard to personal illness, if a student is ill and must miss a mandatory learning event or clinical activities, that absence will be excused if the student informs the appropriate parties (as defined above) of their illness. If the student must miss an assessment due to personal illness, that absence will be excused so long as a note from the student's medical provider is provided within forty-eight hours of the absence and the excused absence is requested prior to the start of the assessment. If a student's preparation for an assessment is significantly impacted by an illness, that student may request an excused absence in advance of the affected assessment if that illness is within four (4) calendar days of an impacted quiz date (as measured by the earliest date and time the quiz opens) or within seven (7) calendar days of an impacted exam date. Required Documentation: For healthcare appointments, the student must submit a medical office note to the Office of Student Affairs as proof of the appointment within forty-eight (48)



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hours of returning to classes. For a personal illness lasting longer than 3 days (or for an absence from an assessment or mandatory activity due to illness), a doctor’s note is required within forty-eight (48) hours of the assessment or mandatory activity, if possible, but no later than within forty-eight (48) hours of return to classes.

Serious Illness/Death of a Loved One:

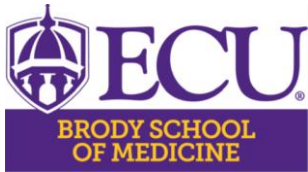
The BSOM understands that students sometimes have obligations to loved ones and may need to be absent to attend funerals or support loved ones suffering from serious illness. Required Documentation: The student should provide a copy of the memorial service program or medical proof of family illness within forty-eight (48) hours of the assessment or mandatory activity, if possible, but no later than within forty-eight (48) hours of return to classes.

Religious Observances:

Per the [ECU Policy regarding religious observances](#), students are allowed a minimum of two excused absences each academic year for religious observances required by the faith of the student. Requests for excused absences due to religious observances should be made at least 7 days in advance of the date of the absence (earlier, if possible), provided that the date of the religious observance can be determined at least 7 days prior to the absence. Required Documentation: No specific written documentation is required, though OSA may request information about the religious observance.

Court Appearances/Jury Duty: Medical students may have conflicts which arise from court appearances, such as:

- A. Jury Duty: Medical Students will, at times, be called for jury duty. Student status, along with the rigor of the curriculum, allows for a deferment of this duty (if desired by the student). Students should contact the Office of Student Affairs and provide a copy of the jury duty summons. The Office of Student Affairs will provide the documentation needed for the deferment. Jury duty is a civic responsibility. Students who do not desire deferment will be provided an excused absence.
- B. Required Appearance as a Party or Witness: Medical students may, at times, be required to attend court appearances, either as a witness or as a party. A court order to appear generally cannot be avoided. In those instances, students will be provided with an excused absence.
- C. Involvement/Support: Medical students may be intimately involved in a court case involving their immediate family, whether a divorce, criminal case, or other case. Although the student may not be legally required to attend, their attendance may be critically important for family support or litigation support. These kinds of appearances should be discussed with the appropriate Associate Dean for Student Affairs, who shall have discretion to determine whether the absence is excused.



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In every instance, (a) students must try to avoid conflicts with mandatory BSOM activities, but may be excused if conflicts cannot be avoided; and (b) excused absences must be requested in advance of the court date in question, preferably as far in advance as possible. Depending upon the length of the time away from school for these court appearances, students may be required to restart/retake affected courses or clerkships, potentially prolonging their time in school. For example, a student serving on a month-long grand jury summons would likely have to repeat the academic year. Required Documentation: Any student requesting an excused absence due to a court date must present a copy of the jury summons, court notice, or other official documentation of the court date in advance of the absence.

Professional Travel:

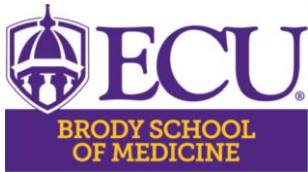
Excused absences are provided for students representing the BSOM at conferences by presenting research, holding positions on state or national committees, or presenting in relation to distinction track activities. Professional travel requests must be submitted at least 14 calendar days prior to the first day of travel for M1 and M2 students and 14 calendar days prior to the start of the affected clerkship for M3 and M4 students. Students must be in good academic standing to be approved for professional travel. Conference travel will not be approved if it conflicts with an orientation day, OSCE exam, oral exam, or any mandatory learning event. NBME Clerkship Subject Exams can be moved to accommodate professional travel, but the exam must be taken prior to the date of travel. Students needing to move an NBME Clerkship Subject Exam due to professional travel must communicate with the Testing Administrator, Clerkship Director and Clerkship Coordinator. Required Documentation: Students requesting an excused absence for professional travel must provide relevant conference information to establish compliance.

Mission-Oriented Travel: Professional travel which does not meet the requirements of the professional travel absence above may nonetheless be excused if authorized by the Executive Dean as necessary to or in service of the school’s defined mission. Students requesting an excused absence in this category should apply in advance to the Executive Dean for designation as mission-oriented travel and provide evidence of that designation to the Office of Student Affairs in advance of the proposed date of absence. This category of excused absence does not require the student to be presenting or representing the school on committees.

[Additional Excused Absence Information Specific to M3 and M4 Students](#)

M3 Students:

M3 students are an integral part of the healthcare team with professional obligations and responsibilities. It is our expectation that students will be present for their clinical rotations.



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M3 students are allowed five (5) administrative days to use at their discretion over the course of the M3 year. A student can use no more than one (1) day per 6-week clerkship or two (2) days per 8-week clerkship, and the maximum number of allowable absences in each clerkship applies to these administrative days (see below). These days can be taken in half-day increments, at the discretion of the clerkship. Requests to use these days must be submitted using an Absence Request Form fourteen (14) days prior to the start of the affected clerkship. Each individual clerkship has ‘black-out’ days when the administrative days cannot be used (due to mandatory activities). Please see each individual clerkship syllabus for a listing of these days. Additional administrative days beyond the allotted number (see above) or administrative days requested on ‘black-out’ dates set by clerkships will not be approved by the Office of Student Affairs. Learners who exceed administrative days or miss mandatory activities on a black-out date are subject to academic consequence as defined in the grading rubric for each clerkship.

Aside from the categories of excused absences above, there are no other excused absences in the M3 year. Even with an excused absence, each individual Clerkship has the authority to require that missed work or clinical time be ‘made up’. Every student is encouraged to communicate clearly and effectively with their course directors and course coordinators.

The following are the maximum amount of total absences allowed given the clerkship length. Please note that any student exceeding these limits will be required to repeat the clerkship or make up the time in some other fashion at the Clerkship Director’s discretion.

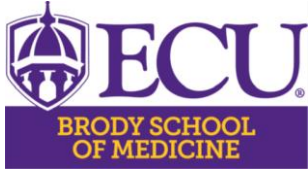
- 8 weeks: 4 days
- 6 weeks: 3 days
- 2 weeks: 1 day

Any M3 student missing more than 8 days in the M3 year will be required to meet with the Associate Dean for Student Affairs to discuss barriers to attendance. Students missing more than 12 days in the M3 year will be reviewed by the M3 Promotion and Review Committee for recommendations on repeating the M3 year.

M4 Students:

M4 students are an integral part of the healthcare team with professional obligations and responsibilities. It is our expectation that students will be present for their clinical rotations.

Students should carefully read the syllabus or course description for each M4 course to understand the absence policy for each individual clerkship. Students are expected to respond to correspondence from Clerkship Directors/Coordinators, course faculty, administrators and staff within 24 hours while enrolled in online courses.



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During the residency application process, M4 students will communicate directly with their Clerkship Directors and Clerkship Coordinators, where applicable, regarding absences for interviews – an Absence Request Form is not necessary. It is imperative that students communicate well regarding leave required for interviews. Students should make Clerkship Directors and Coordinators aware as soon as they know about a planned interview. If a student plans to be absent for the majority of a clinical rotation, the Clerkship Director may refuse to allow the student to continue in that clerkship.

M4 students are expected to complete an ‘Absence Request Form’ for the categories of excused absences described above, as well as for USMLE exam dates. Below are the maximum amount of total absences allowed given the clerkship length. Any student exceeding these limits will be required to repeat the clerkship or make up the time in some other fashion at the Clerkship Director’s discretion.

- 4 weeks: 3 days
- 2 weeks: 1 day

Even with an excused absence, each individual clerkship has the authority to require that missed work or clinical time be made up.

Procedures for Implementation and Review

This procedure will be reviewed by the Foundational and Clinical Curriculum Committees before approval by the Executive Curriculum Committee every three years.

This procedure will be disseminated by the Office of Student Affairs to students and teaching faculty/administration during orientation each year.

Related Policies

- Assessment System: Assessment Creation and Implementation SOP
- Assessment System: Make-up Examinations SOP
- Assessment System: Foundational Phase Quiz Grading SOP
- Professionalism and Community Standards SOP

Applicable Laws, Regulations & Standards

LCME Standard 3, Element 1