



No./Title: COM130/Excused Absence and Wellness Day Policy for Preclinical Curriculum	Resp. Office: Medical Education Approval Body: CUME	Effective Date: 8/15/22
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Related Policy: AA100 – Attendance Policy SA107 – Accommodations for Religious Beliefs, Practices and Observances	Program: Medicine (M.D.)	

POLICY

It is the policy of the University of Tennessee Health Science Center (UTHSC) College of Medicine (COM) to provide a learning environment during the preclinical curriculum in which students' educational and work requirements can be integrated with family and life obligations, including maintenance of one's own health. Also, as a component of professional development it is critical for students to recognize when they are not well and learn to take appropriate steps to ensure that patient care and/or the health of fellow learners is not compromised.

RATIONALE AND PROCEDURE

1. It is recognized that professional activities can at times be impacted by other obligations and responsibilities, either anticipated or emergent. This policy delineates the mechanisms by which provisions are made for such disruptions, whether involving excused absences for specified reasons or discretionary wellness days that need not be explained.
2. However, it is also recognized that there are far fewer required events during the pre-clinical years than in the clinical phase of the curriculum, therefore excused absences and wellness days are expected to be used only when absolutely necessary during the pre-clinical years.
3. **Excused Absences:**
 - a) Excused absences may be granted to allow for the following activities:
 - i. Funerals (death of a close family member)
 - ii. Acute illness/urgent medical appointments (e.g., sick days)
 - iii. Preventive or routine healthcare (e.g., anticipated medical appointments that cannot be scheduled during non-mandatory events)
 - iv. Religious observances/Holy Days
 - v. Jury duty and other legal obligations
 - vi. Attendance at professional meetings if presenting or representing the COM
 - b) There are no formal limits on the total numbers or durations of excused absences since many of the circumstances are beyond personal control. However, the following guidelines should be considered:
 - i. For non-emergency, preventative or routine healthcare, a Limited Leave Request must be submitted 30 days before a mandatory attendance event during the pre-clinical years. Documentation of the visit should be provided to the Senior

Assistant Dean for the Basic Science Curriculum for signature and routing to the Office of Medical Education.

- ii. For acute illness or urgent healthcare issues, the Senior Assistant Dean for the Basic Science Curriculum must be immediately informed (telephone or email) if any mandatory attendance event will be affected.
- iii. If an absence due to an acute illness extends beyond 2 days involving mandatory attendance events, documentation (e.g., doctor's note) must be provided.
- iv. For absences due to religious observances, a Limited Leave Request must be submitted at least 30 days in advance of the event. If the date of the observance is not known 30 days in advance, then requests should be made as soon as the date is determined.
- v. Attendance at professional meetings must be approved by the Associate Dean of Medical Education in advance. Approval should be requested as far in advance as possible, and no less than 30 days prior to the meeting. Approval is typically based on presentation of original work or otherwise representing the COM in an official capacity at a recognized professional meeting. Every effort should be made to minimize the time away from the curriculum and to avoid scheduled examinations. Other participation or attendance may be approved at the discretion of the Associate Dean of Medical Education.
- vi. Points associated with mandatory or required events will be forfeited and will not be used to calculate the final course percentile (e.g., points will also be removed from the denominator). Opportunities to view missed materials will be at the discretion of the course director.
- vii. The reason for the excused absence should be noted on the Limited Leave Request form. Forms should be submitted to the Senior Assistant Dean for the Basic Science Curriculum for signature and routing to the Office of Medical Education.

4. **Wellness days:**

Wellness days encompass any absence not otherwise justified as an excused absence. These may be used for any important life event (weddings, reunions, etc.), or in circumstances for which a student may not wish to disclose a reason. **Indeed, students will not be required to provide a reason for requesting a wellness day.** Wellness days can be divided into two categories.

a) **Emergent Wellness Days:**

- i. Emergent Wellness Days may be used when a student feels that continuing to work or attend classes poses a risk to their own physical or mental wellbeing, or those of fellow students. Indeed, as growing professionals, it is vital to recognize signs of burnout for students to not only protect themselves but to ensure patient care is never compromised. Be aware that Emergent Wellness Day requests will trigger a Care Concern submission to SASSI to ensure the student has all available resources that may be needed in crisis.
- ii. Points associated with mandatory or required events will be forfeited and will not be used to calculate the final course percentile (e.g., points will also be removed from the denominator). Opportunities to view missed materials will be at the discretion of the course director.

- iii. Limited Leave Request forms should be submitted as soon as possible to the Senior Assistant Dean for the Basic Science Curriculum for signature and routing to the Office of Medical Education.

b) Anticipated (non-emergent) Wellness Days:

- i. Anticipated (non-emergent) Wellness Days may be used for important life events with established dates, such as weddings, reunions, etc. Anticipated or nonemergent wellness days must be requested a minimum of 30 days in advance via the Limited Leave Form.
 - ii. Anticipated (non-emergent) wellness days may not be used during the following events:
 - 1. Course/subject exams
 - 2. OSCEs/clinical skills sessions/PCM case studies
 - 3. Simulation/skill training days
 - 4. Sessions designated as Social Determinants of Health (SDofH) training sessions
 - 5. Days before or immediately after vacations/administrative closings
 - iii. Points associated with mandatory or required events will be forfeited and will not be used to calculate the final course percentile (e.g., points will also be removed from the denominator). Opportunities to view missed materials will be at the discretion of the course director.
 - iv. Limited Leave Request forms should be submitted to the Senior Assistant Dean for the Basic Science Curriculum for signature and routing to the Office of Medical Education.
5. Wellness days are limited to 4 per academic year and to no more than 2 days per semester.
6. **It may be necessary to make up, or in some cases repeat, any mandatory training elements** that may have been missed. Some missed events may not be amenable to remediation, and **alternative evaluation methods may be used.**
7. If by any combination of excused absences or wellness days more than 2 mandatory attendance events are missed in a single pre-clinical course, the student may be required, at the discretion of the Course Director, to make up the missed events.

APPROVAL HISTORY

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Revised: N/A