



Policy Title

Clerkship and Post-Clerkship Student Attendance

Identifier

USCSOMG – ACAF – 1.01

Prepared by: Office for Academic Affairs	
Reviewed by: Curriculum Committee	Review Date: 08/08/2024
Approved by: USCSOMG Policy Committee	Approval Date: 08/22/2024
	Effective Date: 09/03/2024

LCME Standards

12.4- Student Access to Health Care Services

Scope

University of South Carolina (USC) School of Medicine Greenville students on clinical rotations (including PCAT clerkships), and faculty/staff

Policy Statement

Student attendance and engagement is expected at all times as deemed appropriate by the Clerkship/Course Directors and the supervising faculty. The goal of clinical experiences is to prepare the student for advanced training and requires a commitment to professionalism and the patient that supersedes personal convenience. Educational experiences (e.g. rounds, conferences, clinics, presentations, etc.) are not considered “optional” unless clearly stated. Students should strive to minimize absences.

Integrated Practice of Medicine (IPM) III and IV have specific attendance requirements. Refer to the course syllabi for these specific requirements.

Reason for Policy

The purpose of this policy is to establish the expectations for attendance, for notification of unavoidable absences, and the reasons for which an absence may be excused.

Procedures

The following guidelines are used regarding attendance:

- Attendance during clinical rotations is mandatory.

- Attendance will be tracked by the assigned Clerkship Coordinator/Director and the Office of Medical Education. Students must include the appropriate Clerkship Coordinator in any communications to the Clerkship Director regarding absence requests. Requests for time away are not to be directed to individual faculty members or residents, but only to the Clerkship Director and Coordinator.
- All requests for absences, regardless of the reason for absences, must be made through the Smartsheet [request form](#) and must input their official school email address into the form. Please note that each absence request is tied to a particular course. If the student has an approved absence for a course, but changes their schedule, they need to submit a new absence request for the new course.
- Students in the standard curriculum will have the following number of Flex Days to be used at their discretion. Provided that the request falls within the remainder of the policy, these days will count as excused absences.
 - M3 Students: 4 days
 - M4 Students: 2 days for personal use and 5 days for residency interviews / second looks / in-person visit outside of a virtual interview day
 - Half days are allowed, but no unit smaller than a half day can be taken.
- Students in the Primary Care Accelerated Track (PCAT) curriculum will have the following number of Flex Days to be used at their discretion. Provided that the request falls within the remainder of the policy, these days will count as excused absences.
 - PCAT 1 and 2 (Family Medicine, Surgery, Pediatric Clerkships): 2 days
 - PCAT 3 (Emergency Medicine, Internal Medicine, Ob-Gyn, and Psych/Neuro Clerkships): 2 days
 - PCAT 4 (Selectives): 2 days
 - Half days are allowed, but no unit smaller than a half day can be taken.
- The following guidelines outline the maximum number of days absent from a clerkship before missed days must be made up. However, all absences may require make-up work / days at the discretion of the Clerkship or Course Director.
 - Obstetrics-Gynecology and Family Medicine (6 weeks) clerkships: 2 days
 - Pediatrics (6 weeks) clerkship: 3 days (due to frequency of illness)
 - Internal Medicine, Psychiatry/Neurology, and Surgery (8 weeks) clerkships: 3 days
 - Emergency Medicine Clerkship (2 weeks): 1 day
 - 4-week electives, selectives, or required ICU experience: 2 days
 - 2-week rotations: 1 day
- In most situations, absences will not be approved during the following times:
 - Orientation for the year or for individual clerkships
 - OSCE testing days
 - NBME Shelf exam testing days
 - Emergency Medicine Clerkship final day (due to required presentation)
 - Acting Internships
 - Integrated Practice of Medicine III or IV
- The following absences will not be counted towards the student's Flex days and can be excused by the Clerkship Director or Coordinator if they fall within the maximum number of excused absence days for the rotation:
 - Acute Illness – physical or mental (note from physician may be required for absence > 2 days)
 - Scheduled healthcare appointments, including testing and therapy appointments
 - Presentation of original work at regional or national meetings, serving as an official school representative at a regional or national meeting, attending a regional or national meeting as an officer of a national organization

- Religious holidays
 - Death in the family, immediate family serious illness
 - Make-up Exam date as scheduled through the Office of Medical Education
 - Required court appearances
 - Military service obligations
- Absences for required class-wide events or for brief one-on-one meetings with School of Medicine staff or administration, Career Counselors, Specialty Advisors, or Research Mentors should be communicated to the clinical faculty, but do not need to be reported in Smartsheet and will not count as time absent.
 - Students must seek permission for excused absences, including use of Flex days, **6 weeks in advance of the start of the rotation** in order to allow for completion of the schedule in a timely manner.
 - In the event of acute illness for the student or family member, death in the family, [inclement weather](#), or emergency situation, contact the Clerkship Coordinator and clinical supervisor for the day, and complete a Smartsheet absence form as soon as possible.
 - Scheduled healthcare appointments for non-acute illness must be cleared with the Clerkship Director and Clerkship Coordinator **at least one week in advance** and complete a Smartsheet absence form.
 - Students must obtain approval for days absent from the appropriate Clerkship Director or Coordinator **prior** to making any non-refundable travel plans. Students should minimize any absence request to as few days as possible; it is not acceptable to book travel one or two days in advance of an event (ie: presenting research at a conference), thus missing more time from clinical activities, and excessive travel time will be deducted from a student's Flex days allowance.
 - Personal time off in excess of the above guidelines will not be excused, but students may consider taking a personal leave of absence if needed or desired (see "Leave of Absence and Withdrawal Policy, USCSOMG – ACAF – 4.02)
 - All unexcused absences will be brought to the attention of the Assistant Dean of Clerkship and Post-Clerkship Education and the Associate Dean for Medical Education and will result in a referral to the Honor and Professionalism Council (HPC). This includes absences that are not documented in a Smartsheet absence request.
 - Excused absences that result in the need for making up missed time will be brought to the attention of the Assistant Dean of Clerkship and Post-Clerkship Education, and excessive or habitual absences will require a meeting to discuss absences and may result in further consequences, which could include repeating the course or requiring a leave of absence.

Any questions about making up missed time should be directed to the Assistant Dean for Clerkship and Post-Clerkship Education or the Associate Dean for Medical Education. Any additional interview dates must be approved by the Assistant Dean of Clerkship and Post-Clerkship Education or the Associate Dean for Medical Education.

Holiday Policy:

- **Inpatient Responsibilities:** In general, students assigned to inpatient responsibilities will be expected to participate in patient care activities on all holidays, unless using a Flex day.
- **Outpatient Responsibilities:** In general, students assigned to outpatient clinical, and community medical practice locations will follow the holiday schedules of those clinics and practices. Students will have holidays, when those clinics and practices are closed, on Memorial Day, Independence Day, Labor Day, Thanksgiving Day (see below), and Martin Luther King Jr. Day.

- **For the Thanksgiving holiday** (inpatient and outpatient), students will have Thanksgiving and the day after off. Students on call for clerkships the Wednesday night before Thanksgiving will have to complete their shift duties before leaving for the holiday, unless using Flex Days. This applies to all core clerkships.

Sanctions

Students that do not follow this policy may be referred to the Honor and Professionalism Council (HPC) or Student Evaluation and Promotion Committee (SEPC)

Additional Contacts

Associate Dean for Medical Education
Clerkship Director(s) and Coordinator(s)

Related Information

USC School of Medicine Greenville Student Handbook
USCSOMG – ACAF – 1.03 – Integrated Practice of Medicine Attendance
USCSOMG – HR – 2.00 – Inclement Weather
USCSOMG – STAF – 5.03 – Honor & Professionalism System
USCSOMG – STAF – 5.01 – Expectation of Personal & Professional Conduct

History

Date of Change	Change
August 2024	Updated to include expectations for PCAT clerkships and minor clarifications to procedure section.
March 2024	Minor clarifications to the procedures section, formal approval not needed
March 2023	Clarifications made to the procedures section
October 2021	Added role of Director in the approval process, added Formstack request to the procedures, and added make-up exams to the list of excused absences.
April 2019	Editorial changes made due to branding updates and titles; formal approval not required.
July 2018	Policy formalized into standardized template, LCME CQI