

Clinical and Academic Policy	
 Weill Cornell Medicine	Policy Title Attendance Standards
	Policy Number OME-900.25
	Department/Office Office of Medical Education
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	Approved By Executive Medical Education Committee
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Purpose

To set the criteria and process for handling MD student absences from academic duties.

Scope

This policy applies to all students enrolled in the MD program during their participation in all phases of the curriculum as well as students taking courses at the Medical College who are from other medical schools.

Policy

A central concept to the attendance policy is that students provide the faculty with a timely and valid request and/or notification for absences from any required curricular activities. The faculty considers a student's honesty regarding an absence to be the core principle that underlies all professional communication regarding the absence policy. Likewise, the student can expect that the faculty will apply the attendance policy in a way that is both fair and consistent, but which also considers a student's individual situation. When a student does not attend a required session and has not provided in advance an appropriate request for permission or explanation of the absence, the student is in violation of the standards of conduct required for students at the Medical College.

A. Student Handling of Absences

*Note: Please see definitions below for types of absences.

B. Excused Absences (Planned Brief)

The student should request permission from the course director at least thirty (30) days in advance of the beginning of the course, clerkship, sub-internship or Area of Concentration (AOC) as soon as the event is known. Students are also asked to request to be excused for scheduled medical appointments and to observe religious holidays.

During the AOC Scholarly Project block time, students are expected to work full-time during weekdays on their scholarly projects at the primary site. Students must notify and/or request permission of the AOC program director for all absences from work on their scholarly projects in addition to their faculty mentor; notification/request of the faculty mentor alone is NOT sufficient. In the rare case that a student needs to work on his or her project away from the primary site, he or she must obtain permission from the AOC Program Director in advance.

C. Excused Absences (Emergent Brief)

Students must notify the designated faculty or course leader or the Associate Dean of Student Affairs as soon as these events occur or are known and no later than 24 hours after the missed session. The "no later

than 24 hours” clause does not mean that a student routinely has up to 24 hours after an emergent missed activity to notify the course director; rather it allows a feasible time frame for those students who are in a serious emergency that precludes immediate notification.

Emergent (Brief) absences expected to last more than two (2) days and no more than five (5) days require that the student notify the Associate Dean of Student Affairs.

In addition, students with a recurrent pattern of excused absences, whether for illness or personal emergencies, will be referred to the Associate Dean of Student Affairs by the course or clerkship director for evaluation and/or counseling.

D. Excused Absences (Emergent Extended)

Students must be in contact with the Associate Dean of Student Affairs after two (2) days of continuous absence if additional time will be needed. An excused absence (“EAb”) may not exceed twenty (20) continuous work/class days (“4 weeks”), which includes the first five (5) days of the EAb, for courses in Phases 1, Phase 2, or scheduled periods of Phase 3. Students who need to be excused for more time should consult the Associate Dean of Student Affairs about a formal medical or personal leave of absence.

The student on EAb should consult with the Associate Dean (Student Affairs) on a regular, usually weekly, basis to review the status of the student’s situation. If the EAb was granted for a medical reason, for a student to return to the curriculum, the Associate Dean of Student Affairs must be given documentation from the student’s provider confirming that the student is able to resume the curriculum requirements. If the EAb was granted for a personal reason, the student should confer with the Associate Dean of Student Affairs before the EAb is to expire about his or her readiness to resume curricular requirements.

The student on an extended absence is not considered to be on formal leave of absence. In Phase 1, the student remains enrolled in courses in the curriculum. In many cases the nature of the EAb may permit the student to complete some required course work and should be negotiated with the Associate Dean of Student Affairs in consultation with the course director. If after the EAb ends, the student was not able to make up missed sessions/ work requirements during the time period of the remaining course, the student will receive the grade of “Incomplete” and must make up missed excused workdays within a specified time frame for the incomplete grade to convert to a passing grade (see Grading and Assessment Policy, OME-900.03). In Phases 2 or 3, the student may be withdrawn before the mid-point of the course or receive an incomplete grade if they have already completed more than half of the course time. Students who are withdrawn from a course must typically retake the entire course at a later time to be scheduled by the Registrar. Students who receive an “Incomplete,” must make up the time missed at a future time to be scheduled by the Registrar. Whenever possible, students on EAb should consult with the Offices of Financial Aid and Student Accounting to be apprised of any financial ramifications or should the EAb need to be converted to a Leave of Absence.

E. Duration

Planned absences of more than two (2) days require that the student first obtain the permission of the Associate Dean of Academic Affairs, or if unavailable, the Associate Dean of Curricular Affairs, before requesting permission of the designated faculty or course leader.

F. Request and Notification

Permission to be excused from a scheduled activity is to be sought by the student themselves in writing (e-mail is acceptable). **Emergent absences** require written notification, and **planned absences** require both permission and written notification to be considered excused. To ensure that the attendance policy is implemented fairly and consistently, students must request permission from the course director or his/her designee, the Clerkship Director, or the Sub-internship Director, as applicable. Students may not negotiate an absence with the teaching faculty (e.g., a small group facilitator, office preceptor, ward attending, etc.),

nor are the teaching faculty permitted by the policy to negotiate or arrange such absences (see “Faculty Observation and Reporting of Absences” below).

In any discussion of a requested absence, the student must include an explicit discussion of:

1. the reason for the absence;
2. the student’s plan to acquire the information missed;
3. the arrangement by the student for coverage of all clinical or course responsibilities;
4. the student’s arrangements to identify and notify all teaching and clinical faculty, house staff, and students affected by the absence (typically those involved in a team effort or presentation); and
5. the duration of the absence.

If the course director, or their designees are not available in a timely fashion, the student should notify the Office of Academic Affairs in writing (e-mail). Once a student has received an excused absence, he or she should inform all teaching and clinical faculty and other students and workforce members (such as residents) affected by the absence.

G. Categories of Absences

a. Illness/Medical issues: Emergent and Non-Emergent

Students must notify the designated faculty or course director as soon as the student feels the illness will interfere with attendance ideally before the required activity and no later than 24 hours after the missed session. Students should see Student Health for evaluation after two (2) consecutive days of illness. Making up the missed work to the satisfaction of the learning unit or course leadership is mandatory.

Students should make every effort to schedule non-emergent medical appointments for times that do not conflict with class sessions or required clinical activities. For scheduled non-emergent medical appointments, students must notify the course director or his/her designee as soon as the student is aware of the appointment date for this to qualify as an excused absence. Course directors and faculty are not permitted to penalize students who miss class or required clinical activities because of attending to medical appointments.

b. Personal/Family Emergency

Students must notify the designated faculty or course director(s) as soon as the student is aware of the emergency and no later than 24 hours after the missed session. The student must discuss the anticipated length of the absence as fully as possible with the designated faculty or course director and must arrange for a way to be in communication with the Medical College to monitor the course of events. As noted above, if the absence exceeds or is expected to exceed two (2) days the student must notify the Associate Dean (Student Affairs) and discuss a plan to provide periodic updates on the situation. Making up the missed work to the satisfaction of the designated faculty or course leadership is mandatory.

c. Major Family Events

Absences to attend major family events require permission of the designated faculty or course leader(s). In the clinical curriculum, there should be a request for permission a minimum of thirty (30) days in advance of the beginning of the clerkship or as soon as the event is known. If the activity extends for more than two (2) days, the student must consult with the Associate Dean (Student Affairs). Making up the missed work to the satisfaction of the course leadership is mandatory and the course director’s decision is final.

d. Professional Off-Campus Events

A request for permission to attend an academic activity (e.g., professional meeting, paper/research presentation) that interferes with required activities should be initiated a minimum of thirty (30) days in advance or as soon as the event is known. This request must include a statement of the student's exact role in the academic activity, the mechanism for making up missed course content, the student's plan for covering all responsibilities, and notifications as discussed above. For research conferences, a student will ordinarily be excused only if he or she is presenting a poster or oral session. For professional conferences, the student should describe how the conference would provide added value above that of the required curriculum to the student's learning and/or career plans. The student's academic standing may be included in the decision to grant permission for these types of absences. If the activity extends for more than two days, the student must consult with the Associate Dean (Academic Affairs). Making up the missed work to the satisfaction of the course leadership is mandatory and the course leadership decision is final.

e. Other Off-Campus Events

Attendance at off-campus events (e.g., charity fundraisers, political campaigns, athletic competitions) will not be considered excused absences.

f. Residency Interviews

It is not recommended that students schedule required course work during the time that they will be interviewing for residency programs. There should be a request for permission as soon as the interview event is known, and any absences attributed to interviews for residency programs must be discussed with and approved by the course/clerkship director prior to their occurrence.

g. Sub-Internships

Because of the high level of responsibility on sub-internships, sub-interns are expected to work each day for the entire rotation. They are not excused on Medical College holidays. If the student must miss clinical responsibilities for any reason, the request for permission or notification should be made as soon as the event is known, and the student must help in making coverage arrangements. The sub-internship director has full discretion to determine if the work performed by the student satisfies the course requirements.

h. Religious Holidays

The Medical College recognizes and respects the religious beliefs and practices of its students and will accommodate them reasonably within the requirements of the academic schedule. The Medical College will not penalize a student who must be absent from a class, examination, study, or work requirement for religious observance. Students who anticipate being absent because of religious observance must, as early as possible and in advance of an anticipated absence, request permission for the absence from the designated faculty or course leader(s).

Whenever feasible, faculty will attempt to avoid scheduling examinations and assignment deadlines on religious holidays. A student absent from a class because of religious observance shall not be penalized for any class, examination, or assignment deadline missed on that day or days.

In the event an examination or assignment deadline is scheduled on a day of religious observance, a student unable to attend class shall be permitted the opportunity to make up an examination or to extend any assignment deadline missed. No fees of any kind shall be charged by the Medical College for making available an opportunity to make up an examination or assignment.

No adverse or prejudicial effect shall result to any student who takes advantage of the provisions of this policy. If a student believes that he or she is not being granted the full benefits of the policy and has not been successful resolving the matter with the course director, the student may confer with the Associate Dean for Academic Affairs. In the event a student continues to believe that he or she is not receiving the

benefits of this policy, the student may file an appeal under the appeal provision of the policy on Promotion and Graduation.

i. Jury Duty

New York State has rigorous regulations regarding service on juries and does not allow students to be excused from jury duty. A student who receives a jury duty notice from New York County should contact the Associate Dean (Student Affairs) as soon as s/he receives the jury notice. There is no guarantee that students will be allowed to postpone jury service, but one's willingness to make oneself available during the next break or vacation may aid the request.

H. Time Conflicts between Classroom and Clinical Activities

In the Longitudinal Educational Experience Advancing Patient Partnerships program (LEAP), some patient activities may conflict with classroom activities, including examinations. The leadership of the LEAP program sets forth a hierarchy of specific clinical scenarios in which students may be asked to weigh these competing demands. In all cases in which attendance at a patient activity conflict with attendance at a required in-class session, students are expected to provide a timely request and notification to the designated course or clerkship leaders to obtain permission for an excused absence and create a plan for making up the required material if permission is granted.

I. Making Up Absences and Reporting

The work or activities that are missed from academic programs, *regardless of the reason for the absence*, must be made up. In the Phase 1 curriculum, the student is required to make up all course assignments and may be required to make up additional activities at the discretion of the unit and/or course director. If there is an issue with resolving an absence or with the process for making up missed course work that is not resolved with the learning unit or course leadership, the student may confer with the Associate Dean for Academic Affairs.

In the Phase 2 and 3 curriculum, all missed assignments must be made up, regardless of the reason for the absence. In addition, the clerkship/course director has the discretion to ask a student to make up any missed clinical time to ensure that learning objectives have been met. The clinical activities that constitute the make-up time are at the discretion of the clerkship/clinical course directors and should be scheduled during the timeframe of the clerkship/clinical course.

J. Consequences of Unexcused Absences

In the foundational years, students who incur their first unexcused absence will receive an email message from the course director and the absence will be noted in the student performance profile in the Office of Curriculum and Educational Development. A second unexcused absence in that course will result in a mandatory meeting between the student and the course director, the filing of a professionalism report (PR), and a notation in the student's official academic record in Academic Affairs. A third unexcused absence in the same course will result in the student receiving a grade of "Marginal" for that course which will remain in the student's official academic record, but which will not be recorded on the student's transcript. In addition, the student will receive another professionalism report and may be required to complete an appropriate remedial assignment such as a reflective essay on professionalism. The student will be required to meet with the Associate Dean for Academic Affairs or other designated education dean for further evaluation of the reasons for persistent absences. The grade of "Marginal" will be converted to a grade of "Pass" for the purposes of the transcript once remediation has been successfully completed, but a notation will remain in the student's record of the absences. Students who incur an additional unexcused absence may be required to participate in additional evaluation and investigation as deemed appropriate by the Senior Associate Dean (Education). Students who accrue three grades of "Marginal" on the official academic record may be subject to review by the Promotion and Graduation Committee. (See "Promotion and Graduation Standards and Procedures")

In the clinical years, any unexcused absence will result in immediate evaluation and investigation by the clerkship director, followed by a warning e-mail from the Assistant Dean for Clinical Curriculum. Each unexcused absence will be reported to the Assistant Dean for Clinical Curriculum and the Clinical Curriculum Manager who will track these across clerkships and sub-internships. Two (2) unexcused absences across clerkships will result in the filing of a professionalism report by the clerkship director in which the second unexcused absence was incurred, and three (3) unexcused absences across clerkships will result in a “Marginal” in the clerkship during which the third unexcused absence occurs, the filing of a professionalism report and remedial assignment such as a reflective essay or additional clinical activities as appropriate. During the sub-internships, one (1) unexcused absence will result in a “Marginal” grade, the filing of a professionalism report and remedial assignment. Depending on the scope and circumstances of unexcused absences and clinical activities missed, a student may also receive a “Marginal” or “Fail” in either a clerkship or sub-internship. This is at the discretion of the course director in consultation with the Associate Dean for Academic Affairs and other relevant education deans.

Remediation may include reflective essays and/or appropriate educational activities, meetings and/or counseling by the Senior Associate Dean (Education) or the Associate Deans of Academic or Student Affairs. All missed assignments and clinical activities must be made up and may include the possibility of repeating a clerkship or sub-internship in part or in its entirety and this plan will be at the discretion of the Associate Dean for Academic Affairs in consultation with other relevant education deans and the course director.

In the period devoted to Areas of Concentration, the student’s research mentor will notify the course leadership of the AOC program of any persistent unexcused student absences. The course leadership of the AOC will evaluate the reasons for the absences and, if warranted, record such absences in the student’s official academic record and/or require that missed sessions be made up. The consequences of unexcused absences from required AOC sessions are identical to those specified for unexcused absences incurred during the foundational years (see above). For continued persistent absences, the AOC director will consult with the Associate Dean for Academic Affairs about additional evaluations, stipulations, or sanctions.

The course directors of electives, after appropriate determination that an absence is unexcused, should report such absences to the Associate Dean for Academic Affairs for further evaluation and/or measures.

Students who take electives or pursue degree programs at institutions other than WCMC are expected to comply fully with the absence policy as set forth by that institution and to incur consequences of its violation as determined by that institution. Evaluations/grades received from the institution will become part of the student’s official academic record at WCMC.

Definitions

Excused Absences: Planned (Brief): Absences that can be anticipated and planned for in advance. These may include (but are not limited to):

1. Major family events or celebrations such as weddings involving immediate family, graduations, other family events of significance;
2. Professional events and academic activities- presenting at a professional meeting, remediation of an academic encumbrance, NBME exam, residency interviews;
3. Scheduled medical appointments; and
4. Religious holidays.

Generally, the time frame for an Emergent (Brief) excused absences is expected to be no more than five (5) work/class days (including a Friday-Monday sequence).

Excused Absences: Emergent (Brief): Absences due to illness, personal emergency, or family emergency that are not under the control of students and for which it may be impossible for students to consult with course leaders prior to being absent.

Excused Absences: Emergent (Extended): Absences granted at the discretion of the Associate Dean of Student Affairs in cases in which the student has had to be out on an Emergent (Brief) absence, and – given the circumstances – is expected to remain absent for more than five (5) consecutive work/class days. An EAb will also be designated after a student has missed six (6) or more work/class days within a 2-week period.

Procedure

Students have the right to speak with the Associate Dean for Academic Affairs at any time about the attendance policy itself or concerns about the fairness in the application of the attendance policy.

A. Responsibilities of Students Regarding the Attendance Policy

Students are expected to have read the attendance policy, to abide by it, inquire in advance of the course leaders if they are uncertain how it might apply in their situation, handle all inquiries and evaluations by the faculty in a timely and honest manner, and follow through with counseling and/or satisfactory completion of missed course work. Attendance is expected unless excused.

B. Responsibilities of the Faculty Regarding the Attendance Policy

Faculty course and clerkship leaders are expected to implement the attendance policy as described above in a way that is fair, transparent, consistent and measured in consequences for any violations. Faculty are expected, a priori, to indicate to students enrolled in their units how the policy will be implemented in their units. This should be done by a clear statement in the course, clerkship or AOC website and supplemented, if necessary, through class orientations, email clarifications, or other means.

Faculty leaders responsible for implementing the policy are expected to respond to student inquiries about the policy in a timely manner, consult with education deans as needed for advice, and evaluate student absences fairly and without preconceived assumptions or judgments.

C. Faculty Observation and Reporting of Student Absences

To ensure that the attendance policy is fairly and consistently implemented, the teaching faculty in learning units and clerkships are not allowed to excuse students from class or clinical sessions. All requests for an absence should be referred to the course, clerkship, or sub-internship directors or their designee for evaluation. Faculty members who note that a student is absent from a session in which attendance is being assessed and is not known to have the permission of the course director should notify the course, clerkship, or sub-internship director directly. These course directors, in turn, should notify the Office of Academic Affairs of any unexcused absences. In order to track absences longitudinally and for potential P&G purposes, both excused and unexcused absences should be reported by the course directors to the Basic Science Coordinator in the foundational science curriculum and to the Clinical Curriculum Manager for the clerkships and sub-internships.

Compliance with this Policy

Students who fail to comply with this policy are subject to corrective standards as outlined above. Faculty who fail to comply with their responsibilities as outlined above must meet with either the Assistant Dean of Foundational Curriculum or Assistant Dean of Clinical Curriculum (as applicable) or the Associate Dean of Curricular Affairs and may be subject to correct actions including retraining or removal from student supervisory positions.

Contact Information

Office of Curriculum: curriculum@med.cornell.edu

References

- LCME Standard 9.4
- WCM Student Disability Accommodations Guidelines:
<https://equity.weill.cornell.edu/accommodations/disability-accommodations/student-disability-accommodations>

Policy Approval

This policy was reviewed and approved by the Executive Medical Education Committee (EMEC) on September 18, 2025.

This policy was endorsed by the WCM-Executive Policy Review Group on July 22, 2025.

Version History

Date	Author	Revisions
	Office of Medical Education	Original date of issue.
5/19/2016	Office of Medical Education	Amended to include new unexcused absence reporting method in Clerkship Years
6/16/2016	Office of Medical Education	Amended to better align foundational and clerkship years, and include AOC program
8/2020	Office of Medical Education	Minor updates
2/27/2025	Office of Medical Education	Amended to include making up missed assignments in Phases 2 and 3 of the curriculum
09/18/2025	Office of Medical Education	Transfer to new policy template. Assigned policy number "OME-900.25."

Appendix

A summary of the procedures for lapses in attendance is shown in the table below:

	Phase 1 or 3 Course or Phase 2 as a Whole ^{2,3}	Sub-Internship
First Unexcused Absence ¹	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Warning e-mail from course director (Phase 1) or ADCC (Phase 2) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Professionalism report issued (signed by student and director) Meeting with course director to discuss remedial assignment and consequences for subsequent unexcused absences Marginal grade assigned (removed upon successful remediation) Associate Dean, Academic Affairs issues letter
Second Unexcused Absence	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Meeting with course director to include warning about consequences for next unexcused absence Professionalism report issued (signed by student and director) 	

Third Unexcused Absence	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Meeting with course director to discuss remedial assignment (e.g., reflective essay, etc.), and consequences for subsequent unexcused absences Professionalism report issued (signed by student and director) Marginal grade assigned (removed upon successful remediation) Associate Dean, Academic Affairs issues letter 	
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Content missed must be made up to satisfaction of course director. Assignments to remediate professionalism might include a reflective essay on responsibility to patients, professional colleagues, etc.

Footnotes

¹ Unexcused absences from multiple required activities on the same day count as one absence.

² Phase 1 courses include EPOM and HID 1 and 2

Phase 3 courses include AOC (Work in Progress groups or other required didactics), TS, ACE, HCP, TTR, electives

³ Absences accrue across Phase 2, i.e., are not "reset to zero" for each clerkship. The sanction relevant to the accrued number of absences are issued by clerkship director in which that absence occurs (e.g., a student incurs a first unexcused absence in pediatrics, a second in neurology, and a third in surgery → the "sanctions" for a third unexcused absence would be administered by the surgery director)