

# Whiddon College of Medicine Medical Student Attendance Policy

## 1. Purpose

Students in the USA Whiddon College of Medicine (Whiddon COM) are encouraged to realize that, as future young professionals, they have an obligation to their fellow members of their cohort class, their instructors, their clinical teams, and patients to be in attendance for all activities that the Whiddon COM outlines as necessary to meet curricular and clinical objectives for learning. In some cases, the student is expected to assume some aspects of the role of a physician, and in so doing to recognize the needs of patients and the need of the service for coverage, regardless of weekends and holidays.

## 2. Applicability

This policy applies to Whiddon COM M.D. degree-seeking students.

## 3. Definitions

**Absence:** Any time taken away from the academic or clinical environment.

**Life event day:** Time taken away from the academic or clinical environment due to typical life occurrences that may be planned or unplanned.

**M4 course:** A course reserved only for senior-level students.

**Second look:** An invitation from a residency program after program interviews have concluded to return to the program for touring and familiarization purposes

## 4. Policy Guidelines

### 4.1 Preclerkship Phase (M1 and M2 Years)

Although lecture attendance is not required unless otherwise specified by the module/course director, regular attendance at lectures is strongly encouraged and expected.

Attendance is required for all of the following: in-class sessions which are team-based which include team-based learning (TBL) sessions, Flip Class sessions, instructional sessions or assessments conducted in the gross anatomy laboratory, which includes ultrasound sessions, team-based laboratory instructional sessions, other team-based type instructional sessions, Clinical skills sessions, and assigned CLINIC days.

### 4.2 Clerkship Phase (M3 and M4 Years)

Attendance is required for all clinical experiences (inpatient and outpatient) during the Phase III clinical rotations.

#### **4.3 Clerkship Phase—M4 Year**

##### **4.3.1 Holidays and Continuous Professional Development**

All blocks in the M4 year begin on a Monday and end on a Friday. Time off for M4s during holidays is at the discretion of the supervisor/course director or may be delegated to the responsible resident on the service. For M4 students, excused time to observe official university holidays is at the discretion of each course director. The student must communicate with the director before the holiday and adhere to his/her decision. M4 students are expected to assume, in many respects, the role of a physician and, in so doing, to recognize the needs of patients and the need for the service for coverage, regardless of weekends and holidays. M4 students can assign their blocks of CPD-400 Continuous Professional Development to any block dates of their choice, keeping in mind these blocks are frequently scheduled during the residency interview season.

##### **4.3.2 Residency Interviews, Second Look Invitations, and USMLE Step 2**

M4 medical students are allowed to miss a total of five (5) days during a four (4) week M4 course in order to interview for residency, attend a “second look” initiated by the designated program or institution, or to take USMLE Step 2. Exceptions to this guidance include the following:

- When an M4 student is enrolled in a required M3 clerkship occurring in the M4 calendar year, that student is subject to the attendance requirements established for the M3 clerkships regarding mandatory clinical and curricular time, excused time, and make-up of clinical and curricular time. Although this clerkship is taken during the student’s M4 academic year, this clerkship is not considered an M4 course.
- The five (5) days off during an M4 course cannot be taken during an Acting Internship rotation.
- The five (5) days off during an M4 course cannot be taken in succession causing the student to miss an entire week unless this request has previously been approved by the course director.

In the event of a “second look” at a residency program or institution, the student must be able to provide the course director with documentation demonstrating that the institution or residency program initiated the official “second look”. If the “second look” is initiated by the student, life event days must be utilized in order to be excused from coursework.

All M4 students, regardless of course enrollment, must request their time off by contacting the Course or Clerkship Director with as much advance notice as possible. These requests are not facilitated through the Office of Student Affairs. The director may require make-up work for the time missed or suggest, in consultation with the Associate Deans for Medical Education and Student Affairs, that the student drop the rotation and place Continuous Professional Development in the block instead.

##### **4.3.3 M4 Course Credit and Attendance**

Credit cannot be awarded to an M4 student who exceeds five (5) days missed in any given M4 course. In order for a student to receive credit for the M4 course, at least 75% of the clinical or curricular activities must be satisfactorily performed with the course director's approval. Make-up assignments, if necessary, are at the discretion of the course director. Including the acting internship rotations, each M4 student in an M4 course should have at least an average of one day in seven free from all required clinical duties over the four (4) week rotation. In the event of urgency, if the M4 student needs to exceed the time off for any given M4 rotation, the student must contact the Associate Dean of Student Affairs prior to the beginning of that rotation with sufficient time for a plan to be implemented with the Course Director. If a plan cannot be implemented with the Course Director to ensure that the curricular objectives of the course will be satisfactorily met, a Continuous Professional Development block may need to be placed in the schedule as an alternative.

#### **4.4 Appointments for Maintaining Student Health and Well-Being**

The USA Whiddon College of Medicine recognizes and supports the critical need for students to maintain their individual health and well-being. To that end, during the M1 – M4 years, students will be granted excused absences to attend necessary physical and mental health appointments. Such appointments include those to address preventive healthcare, acute illnesses, chronic illnesses, physical therapy, and counseling/psychological services. Students who are parents are excused to attend their children's appointments that fall under these categories as well. With the approval of the module, clerkship or course director, and the Associate Dean of Student Affairs, a student may attend the appointment of a family member for which they are considered the caregiver. The following guidelines apply in these circumstances:

- Every effort should be made to schedule appointments during less active days and time periods for the module or clerkship.
- As much advance notice as possible should be provided by the student to the appropriate supervisory individuals (module, course, or clerkship/site director) regarding the date/time of the appointment and when the student anticipates leaving and returning.
- Documentation of the appointment by the provider should be able to be provided if necessary to the module, course, or clerkship/site director. (NOTE: Personal information regarding the nature of the appointment is not necessary. The only documentation required is the date/time of the appointment and that the student was in attendance)
- Make-up activities will be assigned at the discretion of the module, clerkship, or course director.

#### **4.5 Travel**

Pending the availability of funds and advance approval of the Associate Dean for Student Affairs or designee, the Whiddon COM or other organizations can support travel for students in good standing as follows in the guidelines below.

##### **4.5.1 AAMC Organization of Student Representatives (OSR)**

1. M2 representative: The M2 representative may attend the regional spring meeting after finishing his/her M2 year. The previous fall meeting may be attended when financially feasible and approved by the Associate Dean for Student Affairs or designee.
2. M3 representative: The M3 representative may attend both the fall national and spring regional meetings.
3. M4 representative: The M4 representative may attend the fall national meeting, which is the last time to serve as a voting member. If he/she holds a national or regional elected office, the M4 student should plan to attend both the fall and spring meetings. The spring regional meeting may be attended when financially feasible and approved by the Associate Dean for Student Affairs or designee.

#### **4.5.2 Students with Presentations at Professional Meetings within the Continental United States and Canada**

1. If a student has submitted academic work to a Professional Society that has been accepted for presentation and the student is a named presenter, the student may request time off and assistance with funding from the Office of Student Affairs. Note: The submitted work must have been initiated after the Student's date of matriculation at the USA Whiddon COM or the Summer Research program and be performed in conjunction with a USA Whiddon COM or USA Health investigator in order to request funding. Requests for funding for work performed at another institution or to be presented at meetings or published after graduation will not be considered. Requests for time off to attend professional meetings where academic work which was performed at another institution will be presented will be considered for excused time. If more than one student is listed as an author on the work accepted, each student must be able to delineate his/her role in the preparation or delivery of the presentation in order to attend the meeting.
2. The student will be excused for one day of travel to the meeting, attendance at the meeting on the day of presentation or scheduled participation, and one day for return travel. If the location of the meeting necessitates more than the three allotted days, the student may need to use a life event day(s).
3. The student must follow the guidelines as listed in [the Travel Funding Request Standard Operating Procedures](#) as well as approach the Office of Student Affairs, module director, clerkship director, and/or course director for approval and provide as much advance notice as possible about the dates the student anticipates being absent.
4. Make-up work may be required and is at the discretion of said curricular director.

#### **4.5.4 Students Participating in Professional Meetings for Other Reasons**

1. The student is responsible for seeking approval from the Office of Student Affairs to attend the meeting if excused absences are needed.
2. The student must approach the Office of Student Affairs, module director, clerkship director, and/or course director for approval and provide as much advance notice as possible about the dates the student anticipates being absent.
3. Make-up work may be required and is at the discretion of said director.

#### **4.6 Life Event Days**

In order to allow for other important planned events in a student's life (i.e., family events such as weddings, graduations, funerals of friends or non-first-degree relatives, major religious holidays, participation in professional meetings, student initiated "second looks" at residency programs, etc.) students may be granted up to 3 full days per each academic year. If possible, these days are not to be taken in succession so as to be absent a week from the learning environment. Additionally, these days are not considered personal days or time off to use otherwise.

Students are responsible for notifying the Office of Student Affairs, the module director, clerkship director, and/or course director for approval. Since this is time away from either curricular or clinical duties for a planned event for which schedules may be impacted, students are strongly encouraged to request this time off at least two (2) weeks prior to the event. Students are encouraged to plan these days outside of major exam and quiz dates if at all possible. Every effort will be made to reschedule an exam, if the ability of the student to plan an absence around an exam proves impossible. However, since this is not guaranteed, students are strongly encouraged to consult with the directors of the module, clerkship, or course prior to finalizing travel plans, such as purchasing plane tickets, etc.

### **5. Procedures**

The following procedures are set forth as the official process for requesting excused absences in the core curricular courses/clerkships through the Whiddon COM's Office of Student Affairs. Students within the Primary Care Pathway are referred to those policies distributed by the Pathway.

#### **5.1 Process for Requesting an Excused Absence**

1. Prior to absence, or within 24 hours of absence, complete the Request for an Excused Absence Form.
2. Submit the required documentation, if appropriate.
3. Once excused, contact the course, module, or clerkship director to inform them of the absence and discuss the possibility of make-up work.
4. Once the Whiddon COM's Office of Student Affairs has processed the student's absence request, the student will receive an official excused absence memo via email to their Jag Mail address with the appropriate parties carbon copied.

### **6. Enforcement**

Students with actions found to be in misuse of the absence policy may receive a Physicianship Early Concern note as related to professionalism.

### **7. Related Documents**

The policies and operating procedures, as listed below, may be related to the attendance guidelines.

- 7.1 Student Affairs Travel Funding Request Standard Operating Procedures
- 7.2 Physicianship Early Concern Policy
- 7.3 Student Travel Funding Standard Operating Procedures
- 7.4 Professionalism Policy