RELEVANT LCME STANDARDS:
12.4 Student Access to Health Care Services

PURPOSE AND SCOPE:
To provide rationale of attendance requirements and absence request procedures.

YEARS 1 AND 2 POLICY:
Attendance is mandatory at all small group sessions, laboratories, ASM sessions, Frontiers in Science lectures, COMPASS I, and any sessions or classes designated as "patient encounters" where patients or families are present. Attendance for mandatory sessions is tracked in two ways: by a students’ security ID for all large group sessions in the lecture halls, and by signing into the provided attendance sheets for sessions in small group and lab rooms.

Students should refer to the Academic Calendar on the Registrar’s website when planning any travel. The course calendars may be changed without advance notice. If plans are made for time away based on a day having only lectures scheduled, the student could be in jeopardy of missing a required activity if the schedule is changed. If the course schedule changes within two (2) weeks of the planned absence, the student will be excused from the required activity. Unexcused absences are considered unprofessional behavior, will be recorded, and may have an adverse effect on a grade including failure of a component of a course or an entire course. The following will be considered excused absences:

- Illness that physically prevents a student from participating in a session
- Urgent medical evaluation or healthcare management appointments
- Religious holiday observance
- Jury duty
- Significant family event (e.g., wedding or religious ceremony)
- Personal emergency (e.g., unanticipated caregiver obligation; death of a loved one)
- Presenting work at a regional, national or international conference
• Attending a meeting of a national committee (e.g., AMSA, AMA, AAMC) of which student is a member with a leadership role.
• One conference (medical or scientific) per academic year as an attendee, if student receives funding from a department, a scholarship, or grant
• Attending an Executive Oversight Committee (EOC), Promotions Committee, or Mistreatment Committee meeting as a student member
• or Longitudinal Clinical Experience (LCE) patient appointment

YEARS 3 AND 4 POLICY:
The clinical phase of the curriculum requires a full-time commitment by the student in patient care and didactic activities. Students serve as members of the health care team and assume an active role in the care of patients. Student presence, participation and engagement at the bedside form the cornerstone of learning in the clinical environment. In these clinical years, students are required to attend all clerkship functions including night, holiday, and weekend duty, as well as participate in all educational exercises (e.g., InFocus Weeks, and any required remediation). Unexcused absences from any of the above may result in an Incident Report or failing grade, and students may be required to make up days missed or the entire clerkship depending on the length of time involved.

The following will be considered excused absences:

• Sitting for a USMLE Step exam
• Illness that physically prevents a student from participating in patient care or an educational session
• Urgent medical evaluation or healthcare management appointments
• Religious holiday observance
• Personal emergency (e.g., unanticipated caregiver obligation; death of a loved one)
• Significant family event (e.g. wedding or religious ceremony)
• Interview for residency/job or scholarly year experience
• Presenting work at a regional, national or international conference
• Attending a meeting of a national committee (e.g., AMSA, AMA, AAMC) of which student is a member with a leadership role
• One conference (medical or scientific) per academic year as an attendee
• Attending an Executive Oversight Committee (EOC), Promotions Committee, or Mistreatment Committee meeting as a student member
• Jury Duty

PROCEDURES, YEARS 1 AND 2:

I. Reporting Your Absence for Years 1 and 2

To request an excused absence, students must fill out the Year 1 and Year 2 Absence Request Form and attest that they are abiding by the Absence Policy and the Student Code of Conduct. This form will notify Student Affairs and the students’ Course Director(s). In the event of an
urgent situation, a student may email medstudentabsence@mssm.edu AND their Course Director for an immediate response.

Requests for excused absences are reviewed by Student Affairs and students will be notified of approval or non-approval within three (3) business days of sending a request.

- Students must fill out the Year 1 and Year 2 Absence Request Form to request an excused absence.
- Excused absences need to be requested two (2) weeks in advance (this does not pertain to illness that physically prevents a student from participating in the session, unexpected caregiver obligation, urgent medical appointment, or death in the family).
- Requests made after a class session begins will not be considered except in extenuating circumstances.
- Absences longer than two (2) days for illness require that a doctor’s note be submitted to medstudentabsence@mssm.edu.
- Students attending a conference will have to submit an acceptance letter, or proof of funding from a department, scholarship or grant.
- Student Affairs reserves the right to request a doctor’s note or other documentation in the event of a pattern of absences or any absences immediately preceding or following a holiday.
- Although an absence may be excused, students are responsible for any missed work. The Course Director will inform the student of appropriate make-up work and timeline.
- It is the student’s responsibility to make sure that the make-up is completed in a timely manner.
- Students should refer to the Policy for Scheduling an Alternate Test Window for details on how to request an excused absence.

II. Consequences of Unexcused Absences for Years 1 and 2
Students must attend all mandatory sessions (as listed above) or submit an absence request prior to the session. Unexcused absences will be tracked with a Flag in My Access and Resource Center (MARC) and will have the following consequences:

1st unexcused absence: Report to student affairs;
2nd unexcused absence: Placed on monitored academic status;
3rd unexcused absence: course failure.

III. Punctuality
Timely attendance is an expectation of professional performance for all School of Medicine students. This shows respect for peers, patients, faculty and staff. Students will be held accountable for adhering to their course schedule, including timely arrival for all learning activities and examinations. A pattern of lateness during an academic year will be escalated to the Senior Associate Dean for Student Affairs and the Senior Associate Dean for Curricular Affairs, and may result in an Incident Report.
IV. Test Policy

In Years 1 and 2, the ability to take an online assessment (examination or quiz) during a prescribed assessment window provides students with flexibility when and where they take the assessment. Given this flexibility, there are only a few instances when permission to take an assessment outside the window may be granted by the Office for Student Affairs. Students must request permission to take an online assessment outside of the assessment window. Please see the Policy for Scheduling an Alternate Test Window in the Assessment and Grading section of the handbook for full details.

V. Longitudinal Clinical Experience (LCE) Absences

A student who wishes to be excused from a mandatory course session in order to meet with their LCE patient must fill out the Year 1 and Year 2 Absence Request Form. The ASM course directors, the relevant course director and Student Affairs will jointly decide whether the event is of significant magnitude to justify the Year 1-2 session absence.

PROCEDURES, YEARS 3 AND 4:

I. Reporting your absence for Years 3 and 4

To secure an excused absence, students must fill out the Year 3 & 4 Absence Request Process. In addition to filling out this form, students should also notify any additional team members (attending, resident, etc.) by phone, text or email. This form only notifies the clerkship directors and student affairs. It is the student’s responsibility to let those they are working about their whereabouts. Approval of absences is the responsibility of the clerkship director.

It is the expectation that students are present on exam days (NBME shelf exam and direct observation) and students should review the Policy for Scheduling an Alternate Test Window for Years 3 and 4 for details for requesting an absence.

Note:

- Excused absences need to be requested a minimum of one (1) month in advance of the clerkship (this does not pertain to illness or death in the family).
- Absences longer than two (2) days for illness or disability related accommodations require a written doctor’s note be submitted to Student Affairs (medstudentabsence@mssm.edu) and the Clerkship Director.
- Student Affairs reserves the right to request a doctor’s note or other documentation in the event of a pattern of absences or any absences immediately preceding or following a holiday.
- Requesting absence from a scheduled shelf exam or direct observation follows the Policy for Scheduling an Alternate Test Window for Years 3 and 4, as mentioned above.
- For any absences that occur in the clerkship:
  - The clerkship director may offer make-up experiences, if available or possible.
  - If make-up experiences are not possible, then at the discretion of the clerkship director, the student will need to reschedule the clerkship.
If the student knows that they will need more than three days of excused absences during a rotation, they will need to request elective time for that period when completing the lottery. Requests for excused absences are approved by the Clerkship Director and are reviewed by Student Affairs. Students will be notified of approval or non-approval within three (3) days of sending a request.

II. Policy for Residency Interviews and Second Looks

Advance notification of at least one (1) month to the clerkship director(s) and clerkship coordinator is critical to ensure that clinical obligations are met. It is understood that on occasion this is not possible, but students are expected to advise the Directors and Coordinators immediately or with one month’s notice.

If a student needs to miss for residency interviews and/or second looks, they will be expected to make up any missed activities. The clerkship director(s) will determine when and how this happens.

If a student needs to miss three (3) or more days during a clerkship, they will need to do one extra week of the clerkship. The timing of this will be determined in conjunction with the clerkship director(s).

As with all absences, the student should follow the Year 3 & 4 Absence Request Process.