



UT Health Science Center:	
COM130 Excused Absence Policy for Preclinical Curriculum - COM Medical Education	
Version 2	Publication Date: 07/16/2024

No./Title: COM130/Excused Absence 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 training environment in which students' educational and work requirements can be balanced 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 two types of excused absences that may be granted (anticipated excused absences and unanticipated excused absences) and the circumstances for which excused absences from required preclinical learning events may be granted.
2. Excused absences from required preclinical learning events will have no negative impact on a student's course grade (both numerator and denominator are subtracted when calculating final grade). However, students must recognize that, in most cases, it will not be possible to recreate the learning event for the student; the student will miss out on the learning opportunities provided by the event.
3. An unexcused absence for a required event will result in the student receiving a score of "0" (zero) if the event has points attached.
4. Excused Absences:
 - a. **Anticipated excused absences:** a maximum of 2 days of anticipated excused absences per semester may be granted to allow for the following activities:
 - i. Major life events (e.g., weddings, family reunions)
 - ii. Preventive or routine healthcare (e.g., anticipated medical appointments that cannot be scheduled during non-mandatory events)
 - iii. Religious observances/Holy Days

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- iv. Legal obligations (e.g. jury duty, court proceedings, etc)
- v. Attendance at professional meetings if presenting or representing the COM

Important notes: anticipated excused absences require that a Limited Leave Request must be submitted by the student at least 30-days prior to the required event. Excused absences to attend professional meetings must be approved by the Sr. Assistant Dean of Basic Sciences. Exceptions to the minimum 30-day notice for excused absence request may only be granted by the Associate Dean of Medical Education and will only be granted in exceptional circumstances.

- b. **Unanticipated excused absences** due to acute circumstances: there are no formal limits on the total numbers or duration of excused absences for the following types of circumstances because the circumstances are beyond personal control:
 - i. Funerals (Death of a close family member)
 - ii. Acute Illness/Urgent Healthcare issues (including those of dependents)
 - iii. Emotional/Mental Health crisis (no specific details required for approval)
 - iv. Other unanticipated events (must meet with Sr. Asst. Dean of Basic Science Curriculum for approval)

Important notes: excused absence for either Acute Illness/Urgent Healthcare Issues or Emotional/Mental Health Crisis will only be granted if the student informs the Sr. Assistant Dean for Preclinical Curriculum and/or the course/module director in a timely fashion (prior to the start of the event if possible). For any physical illness that extends beyond 2 days involving mandatory attendance events, documentation (e.g. doctor's note) must be provided. All excused absences due to Emotional/Mental Health Crisis will trigger submission of a Care Team form, and the student will be required to meet with a Care Team Navigator. Excused absences resulting from unanticipated "acute" situations will be tracked by COM leadership, and Student Affairs Deans will be notified if a student amasses an abnormally high number of excused absences due to acute circumstances so that Student Affairs Deans can determine whether there is a professionalism issue.

Because attendance for required events is a professional expectation, absences (excused and unexcused) from required events will be tracked and shared with the Student Affairs Deans. If the Student Affairs Deans determine that a student has missed an excessive number of required events, a professionalism comment will be included in that student's MSPE letter.

- 5. To request an anticipated or unanticipated excused absence, complete and submit an "Excused Absence and Wellness Day Leave Request to the Sr. Assistant Dean for the Basic Science Curriculum (currently Dr. Kaushik Parthasarathi). This form can be found on OLSEN ([Leave Request Form](#))

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