

Common Questions and Answers

Pre- Clerkship Absences

NOTE: These common questions and answers are meant to help you navigate the sometimes complicated policies, but they may not apply to every situation. They are NOT a substitute for the official policy and procedures, which hold precedence and can be found here: <https://umanitoba.ca/health-sciences/rady-faculty-health-sciences-policies>. If you have any questions about details in the policy, please contact Student Affairs and/or the Policy Contact (listed at the bottom of each policy)

1. I have a really important social event coming up (e.g. a close friend's wedding) How can I make sure I get my absence approved?

The best way of getting the flex days you need for a very important event is to ask well in advance. Many days, especially near exams, fill up quickly to the 10% class cap. After that, only unexpected absences (illness, bereavement etc.) will be approved. So, if the date is very important to you, request it early. If you don't it is very possible that the absence will not be approved.

2. I have a religious observance coming up that conflicts with a mandatory session. Is this a valid reason for school absence?

Yes, religious observance is covered as a valid reason for absence from mandatory sessions and do not count towards flex days.

As with other absences it is the student's responsibility to inform UGME of the planned absence and we appreciate you doing so as far in advance as is possible. We are aware that some holidays follow a non-Gregorian calendar or that the exact date of observance may vary by a few days from the expected date (e.g. Eid-al-Fitr) For those holidays, please inform UGME as soon as possible that you will be observing the holiday, the expected date of observance, and the possibility that the date may change.

3. I'm involved in student government or student athletics and need time away to participate in an event. Those kinds of absences always get approved so there is no reason to request them in advance, right?

No. Involvement in some high level athletics and some student government events are valid reasons for absence and do not count

towards flex days. However, as with other absences, they are subject to the 10% class cap and may therefore be denied if requested after the class cap is reached. Therefore, anticipated absences should be requested as soon as far in advance as is possible.

It our expectation that academic responsibilities take precedence over extracurricular activities. Therefore, absence requests for athletics or student government may be denied if a student is having significant academic difficulties.

Note: Student government related absences are usually restricted to large meetings, like Western Dean's or the CFMS Annual Meeting. Other student government absences, like advocacy events, count towards your flex day limit. When in doubt as to whether an event counts as student government or not, ask well in advance for clarification.

4. I have a chronic medical condition, childcare issues or other special circumstances and I think I will need more flex days than the ones allowed. What do I do?

The absence policy is designed to allow a reasonable number of absences for the average student, but we know that individual situations can vary. If you feel that the 10 allocated flex half days will not work for your particular situation, you should speak with Student Affairs so that appropriate accommodations can be offered.

For medical conditions, you may be asked to provide medical documentation from your treating physician with recommendations for extra absences. You can also discuss your health situation with Student Accessibility Services who can review what other accommodations may be appropriate for your situation.

5. I maxed out my flex days and then something unexpected happened (acute illness, death in the family etc.) Do I need to come to school in any case?

No, we understand that unexpected issues may require extra absences above the flex day limit. If you have an unexpected issue after you have reached the flex day limit, register the absence as usual. You may be asked to explain the situation further to Student Affairs, who can then approve the absence for you. You may be asked to provide documentation to support such absence requests.

6. I had a good reason to be away. Why am I still responsible for the material covered while I was gone?

Now that you are in medical school, you are accruing knowledge and skills that will help you to be a safe and effective physician. No part of the curriculum is optional or extraneous. Therefore, you will be responsible for all the material covered, even if you need to be away. You may want to connect to other students or course leaders to review the material you will be missing and reference course material and other resources as appropriate.

CONTACT US

We welcome feedback. Please let us know if you find this document helpful and if you have tips you would like us to add! Contact us at StudentAffairsmed@umanitoba.ca.