



# QUILLEN COLLEGE of MEDICINE

EAST TENNESSEE STATE UNIVERSITY

## Policy Name/Number: M3 Attendance Policy / MSEC-0316-13

<b>Policy Owner:</b> Ivy Click, EdD / MSEC Chair	
<b>Committees, Departments, or Individuals Responsible for Implementation:</b> Vice Dean for Academic Affairs, M3 Clerkship Directors, Clerkship Coordinators, and Clinical Medical Education Director	
<b>Original Approval Date/ By:</b> 10/18/2022 / MSEC	<b>Effective Date:</b> 2023-24 AY
<b>Most Recent Revision Date:</b> 5/15/2025	<b>Policy Advisory Committee Review Date:</b> 5/15/2025
<b>Date of Next Review:</b> 5/15/2028 (All policies are reviewed by the Policy Advisory Committee every 3 years unless circumstances for an earlier review is identified.)	

### (A) Policy Statement:

Students pursuing the MD degree at Quillen College of Medicine (QCOM) are physicians in training who must meet standards of professional conduct and responsibility to develop into effective physicians (*Institutional Educational Objective 5.0: Demonstrate a commitment to carrying out professional responsibilities and an adherence to ethical principles.*). As a professional school, QCOM requires attendance and active participation in all components of the curriculum as defined by clerkship and course directors. Active participation in the school's clerkship and course activities indicates the student's understanding and mastery of professional responsibilities.

### (B) Purpose of Policy:

The granting of the MD degree attests to the fact that the student has demonstrated a commitment to their professional responsibilities through participation in all aspects of the curriculum as defined by the faculty. When it is necessary for students to be absent from a required MD program activity, students must approach such absences with the same standard of professional responsibility required of practicing physicians; professional responsibility extends to one's patients and members of one's team.

### (C) Scope of Policy (applies to):

M3 students enrolled in the Quillen College of Medicine MD Program.

### (D) Policy Activities:

Flex days, medical absences, planned absences, unanticipated absences, religious observances, and educational absences are outlined in the policy.

The online *M3 Absence Request Form* becomes part of this policy and is required for any of the above absences.

#### Flex Days

Attendance is expected at all scheduled teaching and learning activities, yet we recognize individual student needs for some flexibility in scheduling academic and personal responsibilities. All students therefore have flex days that they may request at their discretion.

Students will be permitted to use up to four (4) flex days during the M3 year. Examples of flex day absences include family obligations, weddings, child's school conference, summer job interviews, etc. Students do not need to provide a reason for requesting a flex day. Out of respect, the student should discuss their planned absence with all faculty involved once approval for a flex day or other absence is received. Students can use a maximum of two (2) flex days per clerkship.

Flex days will not be granted for the following circumstances:

1. To “bookend” any official school vacations or holidays (including 3-day weekends).
2. During major exams or assessment weeks.
3. For sessions that are not feasible to recreate / make-up such as: clinical simulation, MUTA, GTA training, ACLS, OSCEs
4. Other activities defined by the clerkship director(s).

#### Procedure for Requesting Flex Days

A student who needs to miss scheduled required activities must request approval at least four weeks in advance. The request must be made by submitting the online *M3 Absence Request Form*, available on the Forms page on the Academic Affairs website.

Absences, other than flex days, must be approved by clerkship directors. Extenuating circumstances must be communicated and approved by the Vice Dean of Academic Affairs. See details below.

#### Medical Absence:

Students are expected to seek necessary healthcare to maintain their physical and mental well-being. Examples of necessary health care include preventive health services, visits for acute illness, ongoing care for chronic illnesses, physical therapy, and counseling and psychological services. Consistent with their rights under university policies and the law, students have a right to privacy when seeking care. Documentation of medical necessity may be required.

#### Planned Absences

For planned absences related to healthcare, students must contact the clerkship director or clerkship coordinator and preceptor or patient care team leader in advance to coordinate time away from the clerkship. Students need not disclose the specific type of healthcare that is being sought. A student’s decision to seek healthcare during a clerkship should have no impact on their performance evaluation. Students are encouraged to attempt to schedule routine visits so that they do not conflict with required curricular activities. The online *M3 Absence Request Form* must be completed for all planned absences.

Other planned absences including but not limited to meetings and/or educational sessions must be approved by the course director in advance and an online M3 Request Form completed. No release from clinical duties will occur without prior approval.

#### Unanticipated Absences

Unanticipated absences for illness or emergency, including emergencies involving immediate family, must be communicated to the clerkship director, clerkship coordinator and preceptor or patient care team leader as promptly as possible. If the absence involves an examination, students must also contact the Vice Dean of Academic Affairs and Clinical Medical Education Director. The online *M3 Absence Request Form* must be completed for all unanticipated absences. Absences of greater than two (2) consecutive days require a note from the student’s personal healthcare provider. The make-up of missed activities/experiences is at the discretion of the clerkship director. Absences involving making up an exam (i.e., quiz, test, NBME Subject exam, etc.) may require a note from the student’s healthcare provider. This policy is to be considered in conjunction with the expectations set forth of the QCOM Exam Administration Policy (MSEC-0515-11) if the absence involves missing an examination.

Students who miss more than 20% of the total duration of a clerkship for an approved and/or unanticipated absence must complete clerkship director defined makeup activities before clerkship conclusion. Failure to do so will result in a grade of Incomplete. An Incomplete (I) grade indicates that a student in a course or clerkship who, because of illness or other valid reason beyond the student’s control, is not able to complete the course or clerkship requirements in the allotted time assigned. An Incomplete grade is not considered a deficient grade. The course or clerkship director will recommend a make-up plan to the Student Promotions Committee of how the student might achieve a passing grade.

The committee has the responsibility of approving or recommending changes to the make-up plan, depending on

circumstances. An Incomplete grade is temporary and must be resolved within 12 months of receipt. This 12-month period may be modified by action of the Student Promotions Committee or with approval from the Associate Dean of Student Affairs or the Vice Dean of Academic Affairs for extenuating circumstances. When the student completes the required work (e.g., completes assignments or missed exam), the course or clerkship director will submit an appropriate grade. If the student has not been approved for an extension of the 12-month timeframe requirement or fails to resolve the Incomplete grade within that timeframe, it becomes a final grade of Fail (F). Should a student withdraw or be dismissed from medical school with an unresolved Incomplete grade, the transcript will show a WP (Withdraw Pass) or WF (Withdraw Fail) as appropriate to the student's status in the course when last enrolled.

### Religious Observance

Clerkship directors must accept a student's assertion of the need to be absent from rotations for religious observance. A completed *M3 Absence Request Form* must be submitted and approved at least four (4) weeks prior to the absence.

### Educational Absence/Quillen Activity (Official QCOM committee or Integrated Grand Rounds/Other Teaching Activity):

- Leave on the first day of the rotation (clerkship orientation) and the last day of the rotation will NOT be approved.
- Clerkship directors may also identify clerkship-specific mandatory attendance days when leave will not be granted (i.e., didactic days, simulation, OSCEs, quiz dates, etc.). Students are responsible for reviewing those dates in advance of submitting a request.
- Time off from a required clerkship of up to three (3) days (inclusive of travel time) MAY be granted by the clerkship director for a student to:
  - Attend a conference if the student is presenting research as the first author or primary presenter and a completed request form is submitted and approved at least four (4) weeks prior to the conference. The conference agenda, the conference flyer, or letter of invitation documenting presentation must be submitted with the written request.
    - Students may attend only one conference during the M3 year as an educational absence with approval. Attendance at additional conferences will require the use of flex days.
    - Students should not make plans, purchase tickets, etc., until the absence has been approved.
  - Attend a conference representing QCOM in a leadership capacity or as an elected institutional representative for a regional or national organization. A completed request form must be submitted and approved at least four (4) weeks prior to the conference.
  - Take USMLE Step exams if a completed request form is submitted and approved at least four (4) weeks prior to the exam date.
- Students may request time off to participate in an official QCOM committee meeting, Integrated Grand Rounds, or other teaching activity. A completed *M3 Absence Request Form* must be submitted and approved at least one (1) week in advance.

### Makeup of Missed Activities/Experiences

The makeup of missed activities/experiences is at the discretion of the clerkship/course director. Absences that entail making up a required skill/proficiency may necessitate a note from the student's health care provider.

### Rotation Expectations

All rotations begin on Monday morning (occasionally Tuesday morning if Monday is a recognized East Tennessee State University's Board of Trustees holiday) and continues until 4:30 PM the last Friday of the rotation, including weekends. An online *M3 Absence Request Form* must also be submitted for weekend days, unless the clerkship specifies there are no expectations of student participation in required educational activities, such as, but not limited to call or hospital rounds on weekends.

Students are expected to follow the work schedule of the ambulatory or inpatient site they are assigned. East Tennessee State University's Board of Trustees recognized holidays do not apply to these sites.

### Unexcused Absences and Consequences of Unexcused Absences

Any non-emergency absence that is taken without prior notification or permission of the course director is considered an unexcused absence and will be treated as an act of unprofessional behavior. A professionalism form will be submitted and it could impact the grade for the clerkship.