

Complete Policy Title	Leave of Absence
Approved by	MD Executive Committee
Date of Original Approval	November 7, 2007
Date of Most Recent Approval	
Supersedes/Amends Policy dated	

1. Preamble:

Due to the short duration of the MD Program and the vast amount of knowledge and skill that must be attained in this short time, students are encouraged to limit leaves of absence during academic and clinical activities. At the same time, we recognize that there are occasions when students will require an absence from their academic or clinical duties. Absences should not unduly interfere with a student's ability to learn the necessary content to be successful in the MD Program. Below, we have outlined appropriate reasons for absence, the protocol for requesting a leave of absence, and the ramifications of taking time off, including how time will be "made up". Requests for maternity and paternity leave are considered separately in the document: "LEAVE OF ABSENCE - Expectant Students/ Maternity/Paternity Leave".

2. Attendance:

Attendance is considered mandatory for the following types of activities: orientations, tutorials (Medical Foundations, Professional Competencies, Clerkship and CIR); clinical skills sessions; and, assessment activities (CAE, OSCE, PPI, mid-foundation and end-foundation evaluations, tests, and examinations). During Clerkship and electives, students will be informed at the beginning of each rotation of their clinical responsibilities, including 'on call' shifts. All clinical time is mandatory. During Clerkship, students are expected to attend all academic sessions and attendance will usually be taken. Attendance is strongly encouraged at large group sessions and small group sessions during the Medical Foundations.

If a student misses more than 10% of the mandatory activities within a Medical Foundation or CIR (e.g. 3 or more tutorials in an 8 or 9 week Foundation, 2 or more clinical skills sessions in an 8 or 9 week Foundation, 4 or more tutorials in a 13 or 15 week Foundation, 2 or more sessions within CIR, etc.), the tutor must give the student an "Incomplete" on the end-unit evaluation. The Foundation Director/CIR Director and the Assistant Dean, Undergraduate Medical Education (UGME) shall together determine the appropriate action to be taken in each case.

3. Reasons for Leave:

It may be appropriate to take time off for the following reasons: (1) attendance at a conference with preference being given in the following order – the student is presenting at the conference, she/he is attending a conference that is relevant to her/his current area of study, she/he is attending a conference in an unrelated area of medicine; (2) meetings sanctioned by the MD Program (such as student council related activities, program

development retreats, etc.); (3) illness which would put the student or her/his patient(s) at an inappropriate level of risk if she/he were in attendance; (4) appointments which cannot be scheduled during off hours (i.e. physician, dentist, psychologist, etc.); (5) significant illness or death of an immediate family member; or, (6) religious holiday or event at which the student’s attendance is required based on her/his religious beliefs. Leaves of absence may be requested for other reasons and these will be considered at the time the request is made.

4. Making a Request for Leave:

4.1. *Leave of 3 Days or Less:*

- a) Complete the MD Program “Request for Leave of Absence” form.
- b) A student’s request must be authorized by three individuals who will all sign the “Leave of Absence” form. For all activities, the appropriate MD Program Administrator must authorize the request in addition to the individuals listed in the table below. Students should attempt to complete the form, including all necessary signatures at least five weeks prior to the planned requested leave and preferably at the beginning of or prior to the MF or clinical rotation for which the request is being made. When a request for leave is required in less than five weeks, students should submit their requests as soon as possible to enable complete consideration of the request.

Required Signatures on Leave of Absence Form (The regional program administrator’s signature is needed for all leaves of absence)		
Activity	Waterloo and Niagara Campuses	Hamilton Campus
Tutorial (MF and Pro Comp) Clinical Skills	Tutor <i>or</i> Longitudinal Facilitator <i>or</i> Clinical Skills Preceptor, Regional Assistant Dean	Tutor <i>or</i> Longitudinal Facilitator <i>or</i> Clinical Skills Preceptor, MF Director/Pro Comp Director
Elective	Clinical supervisor/preceptor, Regional Assistant Dean	Clinical supervisor/preceptor, Electives chair
Clerkship	Tutor, Regional Education Leader	Tutor/Supervisor, Clerkship Faculty Coordinator

- c) Students may be asked to submit more information to those authorizing the request.
- d) The appropriate MD Program Administrator (of the student’s home campus) will ensure that students are in good academic standing. Leaves of absence should not interfere with mandatory activities where it can be avoided. Supervisors are encouraged to balance and consider the needs of the request with the importance of the activities being missed and the ability to adequately make up the time missed.
- e) Students will be informed verbally, in writing, and/or by email of either approval or denial of the request. Students should be aware that a request for leave is not approved until they receive such notification from the MD Program. Every effort

should be made to inform students of the decision within a timely manner to enable students to make plans for the requested leave.

LEAVE OF ABSENCE REQUEST FORM

Leave of More Than 3 Days:

- a) Requests for leave of absence from the MD Program for more than three days should be made directly to the appropriate MD Program Administrator by completing the “Request for Leave of Absence” form. In most cases, this will require a meeting to discuss the reason for the leave and the plan for remediation or continuation with the program.
- b) All such requests will be presented to the (Regional) Assistant Dean, UGME of the student’s home campus. The (Regional) Assistant Dean, UGME will make the decision with input from the appropriate Program Administrator and/or the student’s advisor. Leave of more than 3 days should be reserved for compassionate reasons that one would not ordinarily expect a medical student to endure while attending medical school (i.e. significant, prolonged illness, death of close family member, etc.). The student should not be using the compassionate grounds to avoid difficult or uncomfortable academic or clinical situations.
- c) The student will be informed of either approval or denial of their request by the (Regional) Assistant Dean, UGME verbally or by email AND in writing. Every effort should be made to inform students of the decision within a timely fashion to enable students to make plans for the requested leave. In the situation where the request is approved, the plan for remediation or continuation will also be outlined where possible.

LEAVE OF ABSENCE REQUEST FORM

4.2. Leave of Absence for Medical Reasons:

- a) Pre-clerkship

If a student is ill for 3 or more days and this results in him/her missing more than 1 tutorial, professional competencies or clinical skills session, a doctor’s note must be provided to the appropriate Program Administrator. See “Making Up Missed Time” below.

- b) Clerkship

If a student misses 6 or more days throughout clerkship due to illness, a doctor’s note must be provided to the appropriate Program Administrator. See “Making Up Missed Time” below.

- c) Extended Medical Leave

The program may offer the opportunity for students to extend the program for a reasonable time beyond the three years to accommodate an extended medical leave. The (Regional) Assistant Dean of Undergraduate Medical Education and the appropriate Program Administrator together will decide if such an extension is appropriate and the terms of any such extension. A doctor’s note will be required to support the request for an extended medical leave.

4.3. Urgent or Emergent Leave of Absence:

When leave is required urgently or emergently (i.e. significant illness), students should inform their tutor or clinical supervisor of their required time off as soon as possible, preferably prior to the scheduled academic or clinical activity. Students should inform their tutor or clinical supervisor and the MD Program if they require ongoing absence of more than 3 days. See “Leave of More Than 3 Days” above and “Making Up Missed Time” below.

4.4. Maternity or Paternity Leave:

Please refer to the policy titled, “Leave of Absence – Expectant Students/Maternity/Paternity Leave” for appropriate details.

5. Making Up Missed Time:

5.1. Preclerkship

Students should discuss with their tutor or preceptor if/how missed time is to be made up. Tutors and preceptors may consult the Foundation Director, Professional Competencies Director, and/or the appropriate MD Program Administrator for direction where they are uncertain as to an appropriate course of action. Options include: no remediation necessary or remediation appropriate to the content missed (i.e. submit a flow chart of an approach to a patient with shortness of breath if this was the topic during a missed tutorial; spend 15 minutes prior to tutorial reviewing with the tutor the objectives of the missed tutorial; etc.).

5.2. Clerkship

Students are expected to make up any missed time. As part of the request for leave, students should contact the Clerkship Faculty Coordinator (Hamilton Campus) or Regional Education Leader (Waterloo and Niagara Campuses) to determine the manner in which they will make up missed time, if necessary. Faculty are encouraged to have students make up academic time with academic activities (i.e. complete an independent study for missing a tutorial) and clinical time with clinical activities (i.e. additional on call shift(s), additional clinical days, etc.). When making up clinical time with additional clinical shifts, faculty and students should be aware that students cannot miss mandatory activities in their current rotation to make up missed time in a prior rotation. When approving a request for leave, faculty should consider whether there is sufficient time to adequately assess the student. Students should consider their academic and clinical needs when requesting a leave of absence to ensure that they will have adequate time to meet the objectives of the rotation.

6. Appeals:

Students may appeal decisions to the appropriate individual: Medical Foundation Director for tutorials and clinical skills, Professional Competencies Director for Professional Competencies, or Clerkship Director for Clerkship. Consultation will be made with the MD Program Administrator. These individuals will review the request for leave and may consult others when coming to a decision. The result of the appeal will be given to the student in writing within a timely manner to enable students to make plans for the requested leave.