

Clerkship Absentee Policy

The Required Clerkship Curriculum Committee, which is composed of clerkship directors, students, and members of the Dean's Office, developed the following policy related to absences from clinical coursework. These guidelines are also on the Web, will be provided to you as part of the Clerkship Track Scheduling material in the fall of the second year, and are included as part of each clerkship's syllabus.

Students should not expect to take time off during a clerkship. Students should anticipate personal events (such as weddings and reunions) and academic events (such as presenting papers at meetings) before scheduling clerkships whenever possible, i.e. do not schedule a required clerkship during this time. With permission from the Clerkship Director, students may be excused for 2 days (including travel time) from a required clerkship for such events. Students needing time off should consult with the appropriate clerkship director 4 – 6 weeks prior to the beginning of the clerkship. Such absences should not be planned during orientations or final examinations. In two-week clerkships, no time off will be approved. Students should not regard this policy as a guarantee of time off. If more than 2 days off are needed during a clerkship, the clerkship should be rescheduled.

During a clerkship, if a student must miss time due to illness or personal emergency, this protocol must be followed. Students missing ANY number of days must speak with the site director as well as the attending or resident in charge prior to the start of the shift. It is not acceptable to leave only a phone or email message or to contact only administrative staff. Students should receive confirmation (direct conversation, return email or phone call) from the site director and/or the attending/resident in charge indicating that the team is aware of the student's absence. The specific person and his/her contact information are available on the individual clerkship websites. Students missing THREE OR MORE days must also contact the Clerkship Director who will determine if make-up time is needed for unintended absences or if the entire clerkship needs to be rescheduled.

If a clerkship exam must be postponed, the student must contact the Clerkship Director to determine if the exam should be rescheduled as soon as possible or delayed until the next time the exam is given. Progress in other clerkships may be interrupted until the examination is taken depending on the situation surrounding the delay.

Students absent without permission may receive a Fail grade and may be required to repeat the clerkship. In addition, students may also receive an Unacceptable professionalism grade.

Students should plan time in their schedule for residency interviewing and not have clinical courses schedule(d) during that time. If interviews are offered during times when students are already scheduled for required or elective clerkships in the fourth year, students should work directly with the Clerkship Director in advance of the clerkship regarding absences for residency interviews.

Revised and Approved by Required Clerkship Committee: October 19, 2009

Important Addendum to Clerkship Absentee Policy
Related to Fall 2009/Winter 2010 Influenza Season

Dear Clerkship Faculty and Students:

As we anticipate the arrival of novel H1N1 influenza virus in our communities, we are concerned about the potential spread of illness through our student population. Generally, our medical students are extremely reluctant to miss time on clinical rotations. However, to protect peers, colleagues, staff, and particularly vulnerable patients, we are asking students with symptoms of influenza to NOT enter the patient care environment while ill. Influenza Like Illness (ILI) symptoms include fever over 100°F and one or more of the following: cough; nasal congestion; sore throat. We are asking clerkship faculty to be flexible and accommodating with students who miss clerkship time due to illness.

Because of the increased risk to our students who are pregnant, we recommend that they not see patients with influenza-like illness or known influenza. Pregnant women who may have been exposed or develop ILI symptoms should call their obstetrical provider. Others identified to be at increased risk include those with chronic pulmonary, cardiovascular, hepatic, hematological, neurologic, neuromuscular or metabolic disorders, and those who are immunosuppressed.

Recommendations for returning to the patient care environment will vary depending upon the student's clinical site of practice. We ask that first and foremost, students follow the "return" policy of their clinical site. This will vary from returning 24-48 hours after fever resolves to returning seven days from the start of illness. If there is no formal policy in place, we recommend checking and following the most up to date CDC guidelines. Please go to: www.cdc.gov/H1N1FLU/

Most students will not need to visit a health care facility for influenza, and we are not encouraging students to do so. Therefore, we should not expect students to have a note from their health care provider or confirmation of influenza "status" unless this is a requirement of their clinical clerkship site.

It remains the responsibility of the student to communicate directly with the clerkship director if more than two days of clerkship time are missed due to illness (or more than four days of Internal Medicine). Students will be permitted to miss up to seven days due to influenza and still receive full credit. It will be determined by the clerkship director if any time missed needs to be made up. If more than seven days are missed due to illness, discussion will occur between the clerkship director and the Associate Dean for Curriculum.

We ask all faculty and students to forward questions to their Seattle-based clerkship director or to the Associate Dean for Curriculum.

Sincerely,

Susan G. Marshall, MD
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University of Washington
School of Medicine