

# Student Leadership Absence Policy

Category: Academic  
Number: TBA  
Responsibility: Associate Dean, Undergraduate Medical Education  
Approval: Student Academic Management Committee  
Date: April 1, 2021  
Reviewed: January 2021

URL/SharePoint: UGME policy website

## **Purpose:**

The purpose of the *Student Leadership Absence Policy* is to prescribe college-level standards for approval of absences for students in leadership positions in the College of Medicine and in national and international organizations.

## **Principles:**

The College of Medicine supports student leaders and acknowledges the additional commitment that student leaders make to the College in their roles and recognizes that students in these roles should not be required to utilize the absence days entitled by the *Attendance and Absence Policy – Pre-clerkship and Attendance and Absence Policy – Clerkship* in order to fulfill their leadership roles.

The College of Medicine is also governed by the principles of:

**Fairness:** The College of Medicine is committed to applying a fair and equitable process in determining approval of medical student absences.

**Transparency:** The College of Medicine is committed to ensuring a transparent approach to the approval of medical student absences.

## **Definitions:**

**Student Leader:** A College of Medicine student in good academic standing who executes significant leadership responsibilities as part of their Student Medical Society of Saskatchewan (SMSS) leadership role, Canadian Federation of Medical Students (CFMS) leadership role, or other medical student leadership role within a College of Medicine approved organization (in consultation with and approved by the Academic Director or Associate Dean, UGME). This includes, but would not be limited to, SMSS Executive Council, CFMS Representative (such as Western Representative, SMSS VP External, SMSS Positions required at the CFMS National

Meetings), Saskatchewan Medical Association (SMA) Committees, Saskatchewan Health Authority (SHA) Committees and College of Physicians and Surgeons of Saskatchewan (CPSS) Committee. Please see Appendix 1 for a description of these student leadership commitments.

## ***Scope of this Policy:***

This policy applies to all undergraduate students registered in the Doctor of Medicine (MD) program at the University of Saskatchewan irrespective of the geographically distributed site/campus to which they are currently assigned.

This policy aligns with the *Attendance and Absence Policy – Pre-clerkship* and *Attendance and Absence Policy – Clerkship and Deferred Exam Policy*.

## ***Policy:***

### **1.0 Background**

Student Leadership absences are intended to guarantee that student leaders who undertake leadership responsibilities beyond their scope as students, but within their scope as medical student leaders, are granted absence days in addition to the number of absence days granted to all medical students. This is to ensure that student leaders also have the benefit of taking planned absences, flex day absences, and unplanned absences, in the same number as all other students. This is to recognize that students in leadership roles may require more absences than students who are not in significant student leadership roles. Student leaders requesting an absence from a non-mandatory or mandatory session will generally be approved to a maximum of **6 days per academic year**.

### **2.0 Non-Mandatory Sessions**

Non-mandatory sessions are valuable important components within the curriculum, but are such that absences from them can be relatively easily made up with extra effort on the student's part (e.g.. self-directed learning through a lecture or obtaining lecture notes from a colleague).

Absences from Non-Mandatory sessions are in addition to the maximum of combined Planned and Flex Day absences.

Leadership absence requests from non-mandatory sessions in excess of six leadership absence days in a single academic year will be granted on a case-by-case basis by the Year Chair.

Types of non-mandatory activities considered under this part of the policy will include: large group sessions, non-mandatory lectures/seminars, and non-mandatory small group sessions.

### **3.0 Mandatory Sessions**

Educational sessions that are critical to the MD program and the student's progress are deemed to be mandatory. If missed, mandatory sessions can put the student at a disadvantage within the program and may affect program and national exam performance. Many educational sessions have an assessment component within them. Assessment may range from an in-session assignment to written or oral exam/quiz to OSCEs to assessment of clinical skills.

Absences from mandatory sessions will be dealt with on a case-by-case basis but will generally be approved.

Specific considerations include the relative weight of the assessment to be missed, logistics of rescheduling the assessment, impact of foregoing the assessment (i.e., lost opportunity for feedback, a grade of zero, etc.) and past student academic performance.

The types of mandatory activities considered under this part of the policy will include: mandatory large and small group sessions, mandatory small group cases, mandatory clinical skills sessions, mandatory seminar sessions, and written examinations (quizzes, midterms, end of module exams).

The types of mandatory activities **not** considered under this part of the policy will include: practical examinations, OSCE examinations, end of term final examinations and any remediated assessment sessions or examinations

### **4.0 Application for a Student Leadership Absence**

A student leader who is requesting a Student Leadership Absence must be in good academic standing and will complete the online Absence Application using the drop down for "Student Leadership Absence"

Absences will be requested no later than 4 weeks before the planned leadership absence or as soon as possible if student is provided notice less than 4 weeks in advance. Included in the request will be:

- Details regarding the sessions that will be missed.
- Outline of the role the student will be engaging in during their absence.
- Documentation supporting the student's engagement in the leadership activity. This can include a letter from a supervisor, the SMSS, the CFMS, etc.

The form will be handled by the Pre-clerkship or Clerkship Administrative Coordinator or Administrative Clerical Support who will contact the student, within two weeks, with one of the following results:

- The Student Leadership Absence is approved
- The Student Leadership Absence is not approved

If the absence is approved the College of Medicine and student may pursue alternative arrangements to enable the student to make up any missed assessments and/or other critically mandatory sessions due to the leadership commitment. These shall be determined in cooperation with the course/module director. Should the absence involve missing an exam, the student should apply for a deferral as per the *Deferred Exam Policy*.

Should the student be scheduled for a mandatory session after their absence has been approved, the student will not be professionally or academically penalized for missing it.

Students should wait to make travel plans until the absence is approved and are strongly encouraged to make flexible travel plans.

### **5.0 Process when a Student Leadership Absence is not Approved**

Absence requests may be declined when a student is not in good academic standing. When the Student Leadership Absence is not approved, the College of Medicine will provide a rationale explaining why the absence request was not approved.

A Student Leadership Absence may not be approved during Clerkship if a student has not completed sufficient clinical experiences to allow for a valid assessment, as determined in consultation with the Rotation Director/Coordinator.

A student may appeal this decision. Appeals will be submitted by the student to their Year Chair who will review the request on a case-by-case basis. The decision of the Year Chair is considered final.

## ***Responsibilities***

The Associate Dean, Undergraduate Medical Education, is responsible for providing oversight to the overall administration of the *Student Leadership Absence Policy*.

The Manager, Undergraduate Medical Education, with the assistance of the Undergraduate Medical Education Office, is responsible for the implementation, monitoring, maintenance, and evaluation of the *Student Leadership Absence Policy*.

## **Non-compliance:**

Instances or concerns of non-compliance with the *Student Leadership Absence Policy* should be brought to the attention of the Vice-Dean, Education or the Associate Dean, Undergraduate Medical Education, within the College of Medicine.

## **Procedures:**

The Manager, Undergraduate Medical Education, provides overall stewardship to the standard operating procedures associated with the *Student Leadership Absence Policy*.

## **Contact:**

Manager, Undergraduate Medical Education

Phone: 306-966-6135

Email: [ugme.medicine@usask.ca](mailto:ugme.medicine@usask.ca)

## **Appendix 1 - Description of Student Leadership Commitments**

This list is provided for context and examples of current leaderships roles but is not inclusive of all potential roles or responsibilities per role.

### **SMSS President**

- Western Medical Schools Meeting
- Canadian Federation of Medical Students (CFMS) Annual General Meeting (AGM) (3 days) and Spring General Meeting (SGM) (2 days)
- White Coat Ceremony (Speaker)

### **VP Academic**

- Western Medical Schools Meeting
- CFMS SGM
- Student Academic Management Committee Meetings
  - Potentially also Curriculum Committee Meetings
- Research Symposium (if VPA in Regina, will need to travel to Saskatoon)

### **VP External**

- CFMS AGM (3 days) and SGM (2 days)
- Canadian Medical Association General Council and Health Summit (3 days)

### **VP Internal**

- CFMS AGM (3 days)
- CPSS Meetings (2 days/month [sometimes less often])

### **Wellness Representative**

- Western Medical Schools Meeting

### **Global Health Liaison (GHL)**

- CFMS AGM (3 days) and SGM (2 days)

**Government Affairs and Advocacy Committee (GAAC) Rep**

- CFMS National Day of Action

**Saskatchewan Medical Association (SMA) Student Rep**

- Fall and Spring SMA Representative Assembly (1 day/term)