



Area: University of Oklahoma School of Community Medicine PA Program, Tulsa
Title: Absence Policy

Overview and Philosophy

OU Physician Assistant students are aspiring to a profession in which full participation in the learning environment is an essential component of lifelong learning and aligns with accreditation and licensing standards. Professional development dictates that, as physician assistants in training, students are expected to make PA school their highest priority. Attendance and participation are expected in all educational activities and are required for all sessions specified by the PA Program.

*The PA Program policy is that students are **required** to punctually attend and participate fully in all program-sponsored courses and events.* PA Course Directors will intermittently monitor and assess attendance. Attendance is a demonstration of professionalism and is a criterion used for recommendation for promotion to the clinical year and graduation. It is required that students observe the following policy:

An absence is any instance when a student is not present at an activity. Students should not assume they are allowed any absences at their discretion or for their personal convenience. All requests for excused absences must be made in writing to the appropriate individuals as specified below. All anticipated absences must be requested in advance. A limited number of reasons will justify excused absences. These include, but are not limited to:

1. An illness, personal emergency or family tragedy
2. Presentation or representation in a leadership capacity at regional or national professional meetings

3. Employment interviews. Students are strongly encouraged to schedule interviews during vacation periods to avoid conflict with scheduled activities
4. Access to health services and counseling. Students may be excused to attend necessary health care and counseling appointments. Students are strongly encouraged to make all such appointments during non-required activities if possible

Other reasons for an excused absence will be considered on a case-by-case basis.

Absences in the Preclinical Portion of the PA Program

During the preclinical phase, any request by a student for an anticipated absence from a required session must be addressed directly to the PA Program Director and the applicable Course Directors.

All unanticipated absences due to illness, accident, or other unexpected events **must** be reported to the program as soon as possible. Please report via email to the appropriate course/module director **and** the administrative assistant (Crystal-Peterson@ouhsc.edu).

Absences in the Clinical Phase of the PA Program

Any request by a student for either an anticipated or unanticipated absence during the clinical phase must (in advance when anticipated and as soon as possible when unanticipated) be submitted through Hippocrates. Documentation of the communication with the Clerkship Director/Preceptor must be uploaded as part of the submission in Hippocrates. For an unexpected absence, the student should notify the Clerkship Director/Preceptor as soon as possible to allow for timely adjustments to the clinical schedule.

Anticipated absence requests:

Clerkships: Email the Clerkship Director first, copying (cc) the Director of Clinical Education and Program Director. Upload the approval as part of the Hippocrates submission.

Community Rotations: Email the Director of Clinical Education and Program Director initially for approval. Upload the approval as part of the Hippocrates submission. Notify the preceptor of the approved absence.

Consequences of Absences

Preclinical: In all cases, the student is responsible for the material missed while absent. At the discretion of the Course/Module Director, the student may be required to provide documentation of the reason for the absence and may be required to complete supplementary assignments to make up for missed activities, but the Course/Module

Director is not required to provide repeat or make-up opportunities for missed assignments. All absences are recorded in the program and reviewed as part of the Student Progress Committee.

Clinical (Clerkships): Excused absences of three days or less in a clerkship are a matter between the student and the Clerkship Director. In all cases, the student is responsible for the material missed while absent. At the discretion of the Clerkship Director, the student may be required to provide documentation of the reason for the absence and may be required to complete supplementary assignments to make up for missed activities, but the Clerkship Director is not required to provide repeat or make-up opportunities for missed assignments. All absences are reviewed as part of the Student Progress Committee.

Absences in any clerkship that exceed three days (in total throughout the LIC year) requires consultation with the PA Program Director. Further consultation may include the Associate Dean of Student Affairs. The Program Director will determine the course of action, which may include withdrawal from the course, remediation of the course, or deferral to the Clerkship Director who will then follow procedures developed by that particular clerkship. At the discretion of the Clerkship Director, flex time may be used to compensate for an excused absence. For extended absences, see “Extended Absences in the Longitudinal Integrated Clerkship” below.

Clinical (Community Rotation): All absences will be reviewed by the Student Progress Committee to determine the appropriate remediation or action.

Student absences that are considered potentially excessive will result in an automatic review by the Tulsa Physician Assistant Student Progress Committee.

An unexcused absence or failure to report an absence as described above is considered unprofessional behavior and may be dealt with under the appropriate OUHSC policy regarding student professional behavior. A review of professionalism for each student, including absences and tardies, will be completed by the Student Progress Committee following each semester in the program.

Extended Absences in the Longitudinal Integrated Clerkship (LIC)

- A student must complete the Clinical Transitions course at the beginning of the clinical curriculum. Any student who does not complete the course will delay until the next entry point of the LIC, subject to the discretion of the Student Progress Committee.
- Extended absences should be limited to extraordinary personal/family problems or illness. Students who require extended absences for reasons that may require accommodation should reach out to the OU-Tulsa Student Accommodations Services. Academic difficulty in itself is not a sufficient reason for an extended absence. Absent an approved accommodation or extraordinary circumstance,

lengthy absences usually are not approved because of the adverse effects on a student's educational development and potential failure to meet the technical standards of the LIC.

- Any absence beyond 6 weeks may require the student to withdraw from current courses and restart the LIC at the next entry point.
- All extended absences require review and approval by the PA Program Director. All requests must be submitted in writing to the Program Director.

Special Circumstances: Examinations and Clinical Skills Performance

Due to the difficulty of rescheduling examinations and clinical skills evaluations, including OSCEs, permission to be excused must be obtained in writing in advance from the Program Director and is limited to reasons of health, personal emergency or presentations at national professional meeting. Although requests will be considered on an individual basis, employment interviews, family events, or personal travel are not considered reasons for missing an examination.

Faculty may not impose a point limitation or grade penalty on examinations for which a student has obtained an excused absence. However, faculty may administer an alternative examination. Any rescheduled examination will be given on a date and time determined by the Course Director.

A student with an unapproved absence from any examination will not receive credit for the examination.