

**Policy Title:**  
**Leave Policy**

**Background:**

The University of New Mexico School of Medicine respects that its' students may at some point during their training require time off for personal, academic, health or financial reasons. This policy was developed to serve the best interests of the individual and the individual's colleagues, as well as the goals of the School of Medicine. It intends to ensure that patient care will not be jeopardized nor will the education of medical students be hampered by such absences.

**Policy:**

**1. Absences or Extended Leaves of Absence (LOA) From the Curriculum May Be Granted for Academic, Personal, Medical or Financial Reasons.**

- For absences of 1-3 days the student must work directly with the course or clerkship director for approval and to facilitate the possible make-up of any missed activities or assignments. Absence from scheduled assessments require additional approval from the Executive Director of Assessment and Learning.
- For extended LOAs, the student must complete the leave of absence request form and submit to the Office of Medical Student Affairs. For students in good standing, the Associate Dean of Students may approve the leave. CSPE must approve any leave for students not in good standing, any leaves lasting longer than 12 months, and/or any leaves that may result in the student not completing requirements within 6 years of matriculation. In the case of a personal or family emergency, the Associate Dean of Students may grant an emergency LOA. The maximum duration for a leave of absence is 12 consecutive months or 18 cumulative months.

**2. Emergency Leaves of Absence**

Students must contact the Block Chair or Clerkship Director and the Associate Dean of Students if a personal or family emergency arises which will require an emergency leave of absence. The Block Chair/Clerkship Director will work with the student to arrange for making up missed course work and will work with CSPE if needed once the emergency issue has resolved.

**3. Absence to Attend Conferences**

Any request for time off from a Phase I Block to attend a conference must be approved by the relevant Block Chair. A request for time off should be initiated 6 weeks prior to the start of the block when possible. Leave to attend a conference will usually be approved in the following circumstances:

- Student must be in good academic standing (have passed all prior blocks).
- Student will not miss more than one required small group session.
- Missed assessments can be easily rescheduled with approval of Assessment and Learning.
- Student is either presenting a project (research or quality improvement) or representing UNM as an officer or delegate (AMSA, AMA or AAMC).
- Student will work with the Block Chair to facilitate making up missed activities and assignments.

Students who are attending a conference without presenting research or as an officer or delegate will not be approved to miss quizzes, exams or small group sessions.

Requests for time off from a Phase II Clerkship to attend a conference must be approved by the Clerkship Director. If a student is presenting research at a conference, and prior notification is given, a student may receive up to three days leave to attend (one day to present the research and one day each for travel back and forth).

#### 4. General Time Off During Phase II Clerkships

Clerkships begin on Monday (occasionally Tuesday) and continue until 5 PM the last Friday of the rotation. Time off during the clerkship may be accommodated at the discretion of the Clerkship Director if:

- Notice is given at least six-weeks before the start of the rotation
- The reason for the leave is clear (e.g. special occasion – weddings)
- The time away does not exceed two weekend days plus perhaps the preceding Friday or following Monday.

Unless it is a family or personal emergency, leave on the first day of the rotation and the last day of the rotation will NOT be approved.

Any request for time off exceeding 3 days must be submitted to and approved by the specific Clerkship Director. If the time off is approved, the student will likely need to make-up that time off.

#### 5. Time Off During Phase III for Residency Interviews

During Phase III, students planning on matching into a residency program will need to participate in residency interviews. If a student has scheduled a course during residency interview season, time off is not guaranteed. At the discretion of the course director, students may be allowed time off for interviews, provided the missed time is made up and does not affect the learning experience of other students and/or residents. Some courses, like ICUs and Ambulatory Care, are considered "no time off" rotations and time off, even for interviews, will not be allowed. If applicable, this information is noted in the course description contained in the Phase III Clerkship Catalog.

#### 6. Time Off for Religious Observance

Acknowledging that the religious diversity of students may result in conflicts between students' religious practices and scheduled educational activities, UNMSOM will attempt to provide adjustments that honor the SOM's commitment to the integrity of its educational curriculum and patient care, and do not burden faculty or affect the general medical student population involved in that educational activity. A student who is excused from a scheduled educational activity because of religious observance will be required to make it up at another time.

School of Medicine students requesting an excused absence for religious observation during any block, clerkship, or other required educational activity shall notify the relevant block chair or clerkship director as soon as possible after an impending conflict becomes apparent, preferably before the beginning of the block/clerkship/activity. If the request requires minimal time away and causes minimal disruption of educational activities, the course/clerkship director may approve the time off. Course and clerkship directors are encouraged to seek input and approval from the Committee for Student Promotion and Evaluation (CSPE) for any requests they feel may detract from the student's educational experience or burden others. If the request for time off meets the criteria stated above, then reasonable time off may be provided in accordance with this Policy.

#### 7. Exceptions and Appeals

There are certain activities for which time off cannot be granted. During Phase I those activities include block examinations and simulated patient (summative) exams. For Phase II those activities include shelf examinations and Performance Assessments (OSCEs).

If the requested excused absences are not approved, the student may appeal the decision with the following procedure: The student writes a letter to the Associate Dean of Undergraduate Medical Education (UME). The Associate Dean of UME will then review the request to evaluate the appropriateness, reasonableness and feasibility of the request and make a final judgment about whether the time off will be granted. The decision of the Associate Dean of UME is not appealable.

Responsible Office:	Office of Undergraduate Medical Education
Approving Body:	Curriculum Committee
Date of Revision:	8/1/07; 5/31/17
Scope:	Medical Students; Faculty