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School of Medicine: Absence and Attendance Policy – Undergraduate Medicine

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Background

This policy outlines requirements and processes for Undergraduate Absence Reporting and Attendance monitoring in the School of Medicine.

This policy should be used in conjunction with the Absence Reference Guide (available on the [SoM Policies and Regulations webpage](#)), which provides further details, examples and Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ).

The policy provides guidance on the different types of absence and how these should be reported depending on the programme of study, and any notice periods or exclusions that apply.

Students are encouraged to look after their physical health and mental wellbeing and to seek additional help and support from the School and/or the Wellbeing team whenever required: SS-Sup-MedHealthSci@exmail.nottingham.ac.uk

The policy also outlines how student Attendance is monitored to meet requirements outlined by the School, University and the General Medical Council (GMC).

Key contacts

If you are studying GEM or Foundation Year and have any queries please email: ms-gem-mpt@exmail.nottingham.ac.uk

If you are studying BMedSci and have any queries please email: ms-early-years@exmail.nottingham.ac.uk

If you are on Clinical Placements and have any queries please email: ms-ugstud-absent@exmail.nottingham.ac.uk

Wellbeing Team:
SS-Sup-MedHealthSci@exmail.nottingham.ac.uk

Absence Reporting

Students should report all absences, including Unforeseen (on-the-day) absences, Planned absences and Flexible Leave (Clinical Phase) using the relevant forms in a timely manner.

This will ensure the correct personnel are notified and the provision of additional support from the School and the Wellbeing team where required.

Students are also expected to inform any additional personnel who may need to be aware of an absence, and to liaise with teachers, module convenors, and Local Education Providers (Clinical Phase) regarding any work missed.

Students should be aware that they are studying on a course that requires them to act in a professional manner, this includes being punctual and reporting absence in a timely manner.

When returning to studies after any Unforeseen (on-the-day) absence it is the student's responsibility to also complete a **Return to Studies Form** which will be sent via email. Completion of this form will ensure attendance records are up to date.

On the day sickness or unplanned absence should be reported, where possible, no later than 9:00 am via the **Absence Reporting Form**. Repeated instances of lateness or failure to let personnel know if you are going to be absent or significantly late may be considered as a professionalism issue.

Reporting different types of absence

Undergraduate Medicine at the University of Nottingham is comprised of a number of different programmes with differing course structures and holiday periods across Early Years and Clinical Phases. Therefore, different requirements apply depending on the type of absence being reported and the programme/year of study.

There is a single online [Absence Reporting Form](#) for students on the early (pre-clinical) years of the course (BMedSci, GEM, Foundation Year).

There is a single online [Absence Reporting Form](#) for students on the clinical phases of the course (FFP / AP).

Students should refer to the table below, and the accompanying [Absence Reference Guide](#), for an overview of how to report an absence in their specific programme/year of study and refer to relevant sections on **Unforeseen (on-the-day)** and **Planned Absences** in this policy for further details.

| | |
|---|---|
| Unforeseen Absence* | Early Years (Nottingham and Derby Students only. Lincoln students should reference their Moodle Homepage and Lincoln Course Handbook) Clinical Phase (all Programmes) |
| Covid-19* (symptoms, positive test and/or self-isolating) | Report as a Covid-19 Sickness Absence on the Absence Reporting Form |
| Sickness Absence* (up to and including 7 days) | Report as a Sickness Absence (self-certified up to and including 7 days) on the Absence Reporting Form |
| Sickness Absence* (> 7 days) | Report as a Sickness Absence (medically certified if > 7 days) on the Absence Reporting Form For long-term sickness absence students may also contact the Student Support and Wellbeing team for guidance and support. |
| Personal / domestic emergencies* | Report Unforeseen Absence as a Personal/Domestic Emergency on the Absence Reporting Form |

| | |
|---|---|
| Unforeseen Absence* | Early Years (Nottingham and Derby Students only. Lincoln students should reference their Moodle Homepage and Lincoln Course Handbook) Clinical Phase (all Programmes) |
| Compassionate Leave* | Report Unforeseen Absence as Compassionate Leave on the Absence Reporting Form Students may also contact the Student Support and Wellbeing team for guidance and support |
| Academic Absence (UoN resit exams only)* | Report Unforeseen Absence as Academic Absence for university resit exams. For use by clinical phase students only who may need to miss placement activity to attend resit examinations. |

| Planned Absence | Early Years Foundation Year with Medicine, GEM and BMedSci | Clinical Phase Foundations for Practice, Advanced Practice |
|---|--|--|
| Planned Absence (Notice period: 5 working days) | Report as a Planned Absence on the Early Years' Absence Reporting Form | Not applicable to Clinical Phase |
| Flexible Leave* (Notice period: 2 working days, or 5 working days for Primary Care) | Not applicable to Early Years | Report as Flexible Leave on the CP students' Absence Reporting Form |

*Clinical Phase students should also inform relevant personnel of any Unforeseen Absence or Flexible Leave.

Unforeseen (on-the-day) Absences

Students should report Unforeseen (on-the-day) absences, which could not have been foreseen in advance, such as sickness absence, personal/domestic emergencies, compassionate leave, and in the clinical phases absences related to resit exams (academic absences), on the relevant section of the online School of Medicine Absence Reporting Form and notify any additional relevant personnel if required.

Sickness Absence

Sickness Absence refers to illness related to both physical and/or mental wellbeing.

If students are struggling or need extra support during any Sickness Absence, they can speak directly with the Wellbeing team (SS-Sup-MedHealthSci@exmail.nottingham.ac.uk) and are also encouraged to contact their Personal Tutors, Course Leads or the Educational Supervisor at their placement setting (Clinical Phase).

Sickness Absence – Covid-19:

Students with symptoms of Covid-19, a positive test result, and/or required to self-isolate should report a Covid-19 related Sickness Absence on the School of Medicine Absence Reporting form.

Please note: Clinical phase students should also follow their local Trust's guidance on infection control if suffering from Norovirus or Covid-19 symptoms. Individual Trust guidance is accessed directly via each LEP.

Sickness Absence <7 days (Self-Certification)

Self-certified Sickness Absence, including physical or mental illness / wellbeing, may be taken at the student's discretion for a period of up to 7 days.

Students with a short-term Sickness Absence will be able to re-join their studies immediately. However, a **Return to Studies Form** will need to be completed stating how many days the student was absent for. A link to the Return to Studies form can be found in the automatic email you receive when you submit an unforeseen absence. It is the student's responsibility to catch up on any work missed.

Where students (BMedSci and non-clinical courses) have missed mandatory sessions, they should inform their relevant course administrator (below) and discuss missed work with the course lead and their Personal Tutor:

BMedSci: MS-Early-Years@exmail.nottingham.ac.uk

GEM/Foundation Year (Derby): ms-gem-mpt@exmail.nottingham.ac.uk

Where the Sickness Absence affects an assessment deadline, the student will need to consider whether the [Policy on Circumstances Affecting Students' Ability to Study and Complete Assessments](#) also applies.

Sickness Absence >7 days (Medical certification)

For health-related absences beyond 7 continuous days (including weekends), students must obtain a Medical Certificate signed by a medical practitioner and send a copy of this to the relevant school administrator:

GEM or Foundation Year: ms-gem-mpt@exmail.nottingham.ac.uk

BMedSci: ms-early-years@exmail.nottingham.ac.uk

Clinical Placements: ms-ugstud-absent@exmail.nottingham.ac.uk

Upon their return, a [Return to Studies Form](#) will need to be completed by the student stating how many days the student was absent for. It is the student's responsibility to catch up on any work missed.

However, where a student has a longer absence that may affect them being able to catch up on all the teaching/placement activities that they have missed, **the student must inform:**

- a) the University via relevant School administrator who will refer this to the Course Director and Director of Student Wellbeing.
- b) clinical phase students: their Local Education Provider (NHS Trust) to arrange catch up sessions where possible or to receive relevant teaching materials.

Where you require advice around non-emergency operations, please contact the wellbeing team (SS-Sup-MedHealthSci@exmail.nottingham.ac.uk) as far in advance as possible so they can provide guidance and support.

Personal & Domestic Emergencies

Emergency leave for Personal (e.g., carer) and / or Domestic (e.g., home, flood, fire, theft) matters should be reported under Unforeseen Absence on the School of Medicine online Absence Reporting Forms.

Compassionate Leave

Bereavement and/or Funeral leave for immediate and/or extended family or friends should be reported under Compassionate Leave. Students should select Compassionate Leave when completing the School of Medicine online Absence Reporting Forms.

The Wellbeing team will be notified of any Compassionate Leave to ensure students are also offered appropriate additional support.

Academic Absence

Clinical phase students only can report any unforeseen absences related to resit examinations that may cause them to miss time from their timetabled activities during placements. Students in earlier years of the course will not require this section of the absence reporting form.

Planned Absences

Planned Absences – Early Years

(Foundation Year with Medicine, BMedSci and GEM programmes)

Any requests for an absence known in advance, a “Planned Absence” should be submitted using the School of Medicine Absence Reporting Form 5 working days in advance of the absence. Any Planned Absence should not cover Mandatory Teaching Sessions.

Please note: “Flexible leave” does not apply to Early Years Programmes due to a more generous holiday allowance as part of their course structure. “Holidays” should not be taken in term time and Planned Absences should not extend further than 2 days. Requests which do not provide sufficient reasoning for their absence will be declined.

Planned Absence – Clinical Phases (Flexible Leave)

(Foundations for Practice, Advanced Practice)

Flexible Leave General Principles

Requests for any Planned Absences in the Clinical Phase are referred to as “Flexible Leave”.

It is the student’s responsibility to consider what clinical sessions and teaching they may miss when taking Flexible Leave during the Clinical Phase and notice periods or exclusions that apply (see below). The School/Clinical Placement may not be able to reschedule clinical learning opportunities.

Students should seek advice from their Local Education Provider (NHS Trust) regarding catching up on any missed clinical teaching sessions/learning outcomes to ensure they have access to the correct support and materials required to guarantee completion and sign-off of their placement

It is advised that students do not repeatedly miss the same educational activity. It is the responsibility of each student to determine if they have missed any key information or announcements whilst they have been on leave during the Clinical Phase.

Requesting Flexible Leave

Students should select “Flexible Leave” on the School of Medicine online Clinical Phase Absence Reporting form, to request Flexible Leave.

Following submission of the form students will receive an email of acknowledgement that the form has been received. It is the student’s responsibility to check that the form is completed correctly and to ensure that Flexible Leave requests are not used during Exclusion Periods (see below) and adhere to this policy.

Taking Flexible Leave

Submission of a Flexible Leave request through the School of Medicine Absence Reporting Form will automatically inform the student’s local attachment administrator or coordinator that they are requesting Flexible Leave. You must liaise with the Trust to discuss missed teaching sessions, however, please be aware that there is no obligation on the Trusts to reschedule clinical learning opportunities.

Please note, an extended period of absence away from a clinical phase placement could put you at risk of not being signed off as you may not have met all the learning requirements. If you are not signed off by the end of a rotation, plans to re-train may have to be put in place.

Before taking Flexible Leave, it is the responsibility of the student to let other key individuals know that they wish to take leave. This may include informing any of the following:

- Undergraduate Coordinator
- Clinical Teaching Fellows

- GP Placement Provider
- Clinical Supervisor
- SSM Provider (FFP only)
- Clinical Group members

Please note this is not an exhaustive list.

Flexible Leave Allowance

The Flexible Leave allowance for each stage of the Clinical Phase is as follows:

| Clinical Phase | Flexible Leave Allowance (days) |
|--------------------------|--|
| Foundations for Practice | 5 Days Maximum 2 days in any 6-week attachment (if more than two days are required, your request will need to be reviewed by your phase lead before it can be processed) |
| Advanced Practice | 5 Days Maximum 2 days in any attachment (if more than two days are required, your request will need to be reviewed by your phase lead before it can be processed) |
| Any 2-week attachment | Maximum 1 day 2-week attachments include Specialty Skills (ENT/Dermatology/Ophthalmology) in FFP (if more than 1 day is required, your request will need to be reviewed by your phase lead before it can be processed) |

Where a student's request for flexible leave is greater than the agreed allowance, as per the table above, their request will need to be reviewed by their phase lead before it can be processed. If a student requests more than the agreed allowance they will need to provide a reason for their request, and any information they provide will be considered by the phase lead when they make their decision. Students and their placement coordinators will be notified of the phase lead's decision via email.

Flexible Leave – Exclusion Periods

Flexible Leave during the Clinical Phase is subject to the following Exclusion Periods:

1. Teaching sessions centrally delivered by the School of Medicine
2. Centrally and locally delivered induction events
3. Your individual Formative OSCE session
4. Summative assessments

Flexible Leave – Notice Periods

Students must complete Flexible Leave requests with a minimum of 2 full working days' notice, or 5 working days for their GP Primary Care attachment. These notice periods do not include the date of flexible leave itself. Working days do not include weekends or bank holidays. If you have not provided enough notice, your request for leave will not be authorised.

If you submit a request for more than the agreed allowance, as per the table above, your form will automatically be submitted to your phase lead for approval or further discussion. Therefore, please allow adequate time for your request to be considered.

Flexible Leave Records

Requests for Flexible Leave will be received by the School Administration who shall record the amount of Flexible Leave taken and will monitor this to ensure that the allocated allowance for the year is not exceeded.

If you submit a late request for flexible leave and have not provided enough notice of the request, or you report flexible leave retrospectively, please note your leave may still be recorded but the absence will remain unauthorised.

Any instances where Flexible Leave is not used responsibly or does not adhere to the rules outlined in this policy, may be flagged to the relevant year lead/Course Director.

Cancelling Flexible Leave

Due to operational changes in the clinical environment, it is sometimes necessary to make changes to student timetables at relatively short notice. Whilst the School and Clinical Placements provider will endeavour to keep these changes to a minimum, such changes may result in students missing something they were not aware of when they booked their Flexible Leave.

If the School or a Clinical Placement has to make a last-minute change to a teaching session due to clinical or operational issues, students will be allowed to cancel their Flexible Leave request.

If a student is too unwell to attend, this would be classed as Sickness Absence and the student may request (by contacting ms-ugstud-absent@exmail.nottingham.ac.uk)

that any Flexible Leave being taken at the time is reinstated so that they have the option to take this at another time.

However, before any Flexible Leave can be reinstated, students will be required to follow the School of Medicine Sickness Absence process and submit the relevant documentation, (e.g., a Self-Certification Form, Medical Certificate or Hospital Admission confirmation) as evidence.

Planned Absences – Religious Observance

Students should let the Education Centre know as early as possible if they require an absence for religious observance.

The University's guidance for religious observance during placements can be found in the Quality Manual: [Adjustment to placement on religious grounds](#). Students may wish to use Flexible Leave for anything that falls outside of the University's policy.

Students who are unable to take **examinations or assessments** on a particular day during published examination periods for reasons of religious observance, should follow the University's reporting protocol at the earliest opportunity: [Religious Observance in examinations](#).

Absences for essential military training

A small number of students receive sponsorship and support from the armed forces during their medical course and as such require periods of mandatory military training prior to graduation. The University has signed the military covenant which grants students in this situation an additional 10 days of leave in order to attend these training activities. The Education Centre will support you to arrange these types of absences when they are required, but students in this situation must approach the medical school in the first instance to discuss their leave so an appropriate plan can be put in place with your Local Education Provider.

Absences for High Performance Athletes

A small number of students are classed as High Performance Athletes during their medical course, and as such may require additional periods of time off for training and competing. The University is committed to supporting all students that it classes as HPAs, and as such the Education Centre will support you to arrange these types of absences when they are required, but students in this situation must approach the education centre in the first instance to discuss their leave so an appropriate plan can be put in place with your Local Education Provider.

Please note however, you must be classed as a High Performance Athlete by the University of Nottingham in order for the above to apply to you. The education centre works closely with the UoN Department of Sport each year, to confirm formal lists of HPA students.

Attendance at a conference or external leadership/management activity

If you have been invited to deliver your own university work at a conference or to represent the University in an external leadership/management activity, you can apply for leave from your placements for this via the relevant section of the CP School of Medicine Absence and Attendance Policy. This means you will not use your flexible leave allowance, but you still need to formally request this leave via the university.

If you are requesting more than 2 days of absence from a 4 or 6-week attachment, your request will need further approval from your phase lead. Any requests such as this will be reviewed by the relevant phase lead, and you will hear the outcome of your request directly from the absences team.

This part of the form requires you to provide evidence pertaining to your request.

If you wish to attend a conference or an external leadership/management activity, but you are not delivering your own university work or representing the University at the event, then please report your absence as flexible leave.

Attendance Monitoring

Attendance

Student attendance and engagement are monitored and governed by university regulations.

Students must attend all teaching activities necessary for the pursuit and successful completion of their studies, undertake all associated assessments and attend meetings and other activities as required by the School.

The School of Medicine operate a University QR code system for capturing attendance at physical teaching sessions. This attendance data will also feed into the University of Nottingham Engagement Dashboard.

During the Clinical Phase, Local Education Providers will also capture student attendance at teaching and clinical sessions according to local practice. However, processes for attendance monitoring across placements are currently under review.

Attendance data from placement sites will be shared with the School.

Engagement

The Student Engagement Dashboard is a welfare initiative that helps enable staff to identify students who are struggling and reach out with an offer of academic or wellbeing support.

The dashboard collates data on student use of digital learning tools, as well as attendance data for in-person teaching, to provide key members of academic and support staff with an overview of each student's academic engagement.

If a member of staff notices a significant change in the levels of a student's academic engagement, their personal tutor or a member of the Support and Wellbeing team may reach out with an offer of support.

Further details can be found at: [Student Engagement Dashboard](#)