

Absence Reference Guide and FAQ for Undergraduate Medicine

Attendance and Engagement

An excellent level of attendance and engagement is important for academic success and is a key expectation of medical students as required by the School of Medicine, the University of Nottingham and the General Medical Council (GMC).

On rare occasions, students may need to notify the School of an unforeseen or planned absence from the course, and it is important that this absence is reported in the correct manner to the relevant personnel.

This document is a reference guide for students and provides several examples of unforeseen and planned absences as well as a list of Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ).

Students should use this reference guide alongside the School of Medicine Absence and Attendance Policy ([available on the SoM Policies Webpage](#)) to help them to report any unforeseen or planned absences in a timely manner. This not only demonstrates professionalism but also helps the School to identify where students may need any additional academic and/or Wellbeing/pastoral support.

Notification of Lateness

Students should conduct themselves in a professional manner, and this includes being punctual.

In instances where you are going to be late, it is courteous and professional to let the person who is expecting you know as soon as possible. Repeated instances of lateness or failure to let personnel know that you are going to be significantly late may be considered as a professionalism issue.

If you expect to be severely late and may not be able to attend for the whole day then you should submit an absence via the Absence Reporting Form and state the reason why you were unable to attend.

Unforeseen Absence

Below are some examples of unforeseen (i.e., unexpected) absences. These are unavoidable reasons that would not have been known until the day of the absence.

Example	Action	Comments
Physical/mental illness/ distress/sickness	Report unforeseen absence as a Personal Emergency, using the Absence Reporting Form	Additional support may be sought from Wellbeing
Illness of a dependent (e.g., offspring, spouse, family member)	Report unforeseen absence as a Personal Emergency, using the Absence Reporting Form	Additional support may be sought from Wellbeing
Domestic emergency (e.g., flood/fire/theft)	Report unforeseen absence as a Personal Emergency, using the Absence Reporting Form	Additional support may be sought from Wellbeing
Bereavement of a family member/relative/friend	Report unforeseen absence as Compassionate Leave, using the Absence Reporting Form	Additional support may be sought from Wellbeing
Clinical phase students only: resit examinations scheduled to occur during placements.	Report unforeseen absence as Academic Absence, using Absence Reporting Form	Other students (BMedSci and non-clinical) will not require this part of the form.

Planned Absence

Below are some examples of instances where students may wish to be absent from the course that can be anticipated in advance, i.e. a Planned Absence. Students on the earlier (pre-clinical) years of the course should report known absences as a Planned Absence via their Absence Reporting Form.

For Clinical Phase students, a planned absence should be reported under “Flexible Leave” as outlined in the School of Medicine Absence and Attendance Policy.

Example	Action	Comments
Armed forces / military interviews	Report absence as Planned Leave – BMedSci, GEM and Foundation Year students Report absence as Flexible Leave – Clinical Phase students	Complete School of Medicine Absence Reporting Form
Armed forces / military training	Report absence as Planned Leave – BMedSci, GEM and Foundation Year students Report absence as Flexible Leave – Clinical Phase students	Complete School of Medicine Absence Reporting Form
Attendance at a funeral	Report absence as Compassionate Leave – all courses	Complete School of Medicine Absence Reporting Form
Attendance at a wedding	Report absence as Planned Leave – BMedSci, GEM and Foundation Year students Report absence as Flexible Leave – Clinical Phase students	Complete School of Medicine Absence Reporting Form
Attendance at a conference	Report absence as Planned Leave – BMedSci, GEM and Foundation Year students Report absence as Flexible Leave – Clinical Phase students	Complete School of Medicine Absence Reporting Form
Attendance and presenting own University work at a conference	Report absence as Planned Leave – BMedSci, GEM and Foundation Year students Clinical Phase students: Submit request via Conference Leave option on CP Absence reporting form. You will need to provide evidence via the absence reporting form, so your request can be considered by your Phase Lead.	Complete School of Medicine Absence Reporting Form Clinical phase students: select Conference Leave via the School of Medicine Absence Reporting Form and provide necessary evidence.

Example	Action	Comments
Counselling appointments or appointments related to mental health	<p>BMedSci, GEM and Foundation Year students: Due to more flexibility in timetables it is expected that students will make appointments when they are not due to attend in-person sessions.</p> <p>Clinical Phase students: Can be agreed informally with where the student is placed at the time.</p>	<p>If the appointment requires a full day of absence, then this should be completed on the School of Medicine Absence Reporting Form.</p> <p>Students can seek further support from their Personal Tutor and/or the Wellbeing team: SS-Sup-MedHealthSci@exmail.nottingham.ac.uk</p>
Duke of Edinburgh Award	<p>Report absence as Planned Leave – BMedSci, GEM and Foundation Year students</p> <p>Report absence as Flexible Leave – Clinical Phase students</p>	Complete School of Medicine Absence Reporting Form
Exams for Scholarships or similar	Can be agreed informally with where the student is placed at the time	Contact the person running the affected session(s) to inform them of the absence.
Holidays [should not be taken in term time]	<p>BMedSci, GEM and Foundation Year students are expected to schedule all holidays during non-term time.</p> <p>Clinical Phase students should report holidays as Flexible Leave.</p>	Complete School of Medicine Absence Reporting Form

Example	Action	Comments
Hospital or GP appointment	<p>BMedSci, GEM and Foundation Year students: Contact the person running the session to inform of absence and review recordings of the session to catch up.</p> <p>Clinical Phase students: One-off, or short-term appointments can be agreed informally with the placement provider.</p>	<p>If the appointment requires a full day of absence, then this should be completed on the School of Medicine Absence Reporting Form.</p> <p>For longer term/ongoing health issues, it is the student's responsibility to make the University aware so that an appropriate plan can be considered, and additional support provided where required.</p>
Illness/bereavement of a close relative/friend	Report absence as Compassionate Leave – all courses	Complete School of Medicine Absence Reporting Form
Interview – Academic Foundation Programme / Foundation Year	Can be agreed informally with where the student is placed at the time.	Contact the person running the affected session(s) to inform them of the absence.
Jury service	It is possible for the University to request that Jury Service is deferred. The student should contact the MEC team, who can provide a letter.	
Paid work for the University of Nottingham	<p>BMedSci, GEM and Foundation Year students – ½ days working should be outside of academic hours. Full day/s would require an absence form to be submitted.</p> <p>Clinical Phase students should report under Flexible Leave</p>	Complete School of Medicine Absence Reporting Form

Example	Action	Comments
Planned surgery	Planned medical operations or surgeries should be discussed with the Year lead, Course Director or Director of Student Wellbeing to determine if these should be reported as a Planned Absence or Sickness Absence. Medical certification may be required.	More significant surgery and long recuperation periods may require the student to interrupt their studies.
Religious Observance	The University's guidance is at: Religious Observance during assessments. Religious Observance during placements.	Clinical Phase students may wish to use Flexible Leave for anything that falls outside of the University's policy.
Sporting participation at national level	Student should consult with Year Lead/Course Director.	For training that will require significant commitment and time, it may be appropriate for the student to consider suspending their studies if training for an event at national/international level. Flexible leave could be considered for much shorter periods of training.
Sporting/Music/Drama participation at university level	Clinical Phase students should report under Flexible Leave.	Students on the courses below will have Wednesday afternoons with no timetabled activity which will allow them to participate in sports or other recreational activities: BMedSci, GEM and Foundation Year

Example	Action	Comments
Witness in court	Student to discuss with the Course Director.	<p>Student Wellbeing Team is also available to provide support to the student where necessary:</p> <p>SS-Sup-MedHealthSci@xm.ail.nottingham.ac.uk</p>
<p>Visa renewals both within the UK and overseas</p>	<p>Short term absences can be agreed locally, but complex cases that may require an extended period away from the University should be highlighted to the relevant Registry and Academic Affairs (RAA) team member by the student so that an appropriate plan or level of support can be put into place by key School faculty.</p>	<p>RAA enquiries online</p> <p>Additional information at: Student Services Visas and Immigration</p>

Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ)

What are the attendance thresholds for the course?

Students are expected to have an excellent level of attendance and you should be able to account for any absence, either for foreseen or unforeseen circumstances by completing the absence form, as per the Absence and Attendance Policy.

Attendance across the course is monitored, locally at sites and by the school. Where concerns around an individual's absence is detected, whether this has been reported through the required mechanisms or not, this will usually be followed up to establish if there are issues that require further support or intervention.

All students are required to be familiar with the University's [Regulations Governing Attendance and Engagement](#).

What are the implications if I don't use the forms to notify of my absence?

If you send an email, without the using the Absence Reporting Form, you will be advised by University staff or the local team at your clinical placement that the correct procedure needs to be followed. If this remains outstanding, unauthorised absence will be recorded for you.

Persistent and repeated failure to submit the relevant form may be regarded as a professionalism issue and indicator of lack of engagement, which would then be followed up by a member of staff as per the University's [Regulations Governing Attendance and Engagement](#) which could also lead to the submission of an intervention form on the grounds of lack professionalism.

Does an absence form need to be submitted if I need to request time to be away for part of the day (e.g., a doctor's appointment)?

No, unforeseen, planned / flexible leave forms only need to be submitted if a whole day's attendance is going to be affected. If a student is unable to attend a particular session that has been timetabled, please discuss this with either the person taking the lecture or teaching and/or the administrative team at your placement so that they are aware.

Repeated instances of part-day absences may have an impact on students' ability to successfully complete a placement or the requirements of a module and may be viewed as a professionalism issue.

Therefore, any ongoing issues that affects attendance should be discussed with relevant personnel, such as the Wellbeing team, personal tutor, senior tutor/clinical sub dean, or the Course Director/Director for Student Wellbeing.

What happens if I am going to be late or need to leave early? Do I need to complete a form?

Generally, if you are going to be late or must leave early, a form isn't required but you would need to let the relevant person know in good time. For late arrivals, this would generally be the relevant administrative team: at your placement if you are in clinical years, or the lecturer taking the session for BMedSci or Derby-based courses. If you must leave early, you should let the person who is taking the session know.

The Unforeseen absence form asks me to approximate how many days I will be absent for – I am not sure how much time I will need?

Please estimate to the best of your ability based on the nature of your unforeseen absence. If the duration of your absence changes, please submit a new absence form to report any additional days taken.

Once you return to your studies you will need to fill in a 'Return to Studies Form' that will be emailed to you on completion of the Absence Reporting Form.

If you are on a clinical placement, you may need to consult the guidance given regarding each Trust's policy on contagious and infectious illnesses.

Flexible leave – Clinical Phase Students only

I have booked Flexible leave, but I've been unexpectedly away for other unforeseen reasons. Should I still take my Flexible Leave?

If a combination of unforeseen absence and flexible leave has a significant impact on your attendance on a placement as a whole, you should consider whether this places you at risk of failing your attachment. It is advised that you should discuss this with your supervisor or an appropriate member of staff at your placement. You can also speak with the Wellbeing team if you require extra support:

SS-Sup-MedHealthSci@exmail.nottingham.ac.uk

Are there any restrictions as to how much Flexible Leave I can take within an attachment?

There is a fixed allowance of Flexible leave across each clinical phase. These are listed in the Absence/Attendance policy. You should also consider whether a concentrated period of absence, planned or unplanned is likely to place you at risk of failing an attachment.

For all 4–6-week attachments, it is recommended that you take a maximum of 2 days flexible leave. For all 2-week attachments (such as the Specialty Skills rotations in FFP) you should take a maximum of 1 day of flexible leave. Where a student's request for flexible leave is greater than this agreed allowance, 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 lead's decision via email.

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.

How much notice do I need to give to book Flexible Leave?

Attachment Type	Notice Period
GP Primary Care	At least 5 working days
Other clinical attachments	At least 2 working days

How will I know if my Flexible Leave has been approved?

When submitting the Absence Reporting Form, your Flexible Leave will automatically be approved if it meets the criteria specified on the form and the Absence and Attendance policy. You may receive a message that your Flexible Leave is rejected if the form is incomplete or not completed correctly, or if your request clashes with a listed exclusion period and cannot be authorised.

Please ensure that you have let the relevant people at your placement site know that you will not be in attendance for their sessions.

What happens if I am not able to use the Flexible Leave that had been booked in advance?

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 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 leave.

If a placement has had 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 as long as they request the change in advance of the session taking place.

In addition, if students are too unwell to attend, this would be classed as Sickness Absence, and students can request Flexible Leave being taken at the time to be reinstated so that they will have the option to take it at another time. However, students will be required to follow the School Sickness Absence Process and submit the relevant documentation, for example, a Self-Certification Form, GP Note or Hospital Admission confirmation as evidence before any Flexible Leave can be reinstated.

If your request for Flexible Leave has been approved, and you are unable to take it for reasons that are outside of your control e.g., sickness, please let us know:

MS-UGStud-Absent@nottingham.ac.uk

How do I book Flexible Leave or report an unforeseen absence during SSMs?

Please submit a flexible leave form or report your unforeseen absence via the absence reporting form as normal, so the school can keep a clear record of your absence and provide support where necessary.

However, for any absences or leave taken during a Special Study Module (SSM) placement, you will need to ensure you have also informed your SSM supervisor/team directly. Their contact details are available via the SSM catalogue on Moodle. The form you submit will ask you to confirm you have liaised with your SSM supervisor directly over your absence and you will need to do this, as the form does not automatically inform individual SSM supervisors.

Are there any restrictions as to how much conference leave I can take within an attachment?

There is no fixed allowance for leave to deliver university work at conferences, but you should consider whether a concentrated period of absence, planned or unplanned is likely to place you at risk of failing an attachment.

For all 4–6-week attachments, it is recommended that you take a maximum of 2 days leave to attend a conference. For all 2-week attachments (such as the Specialty Skills rotations in FFP) you should take a maximum of 1 day of leave for this purpose. Where a student's request for conference leave is greater than this, their request will need to be reviewed by their phase lead before it can be processed. Students and their placement coordinators will be notified of the lead's decision via email.

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.

Additional Information / Useful Links

School of Medicine Policies relating to attendance and engagement:

Act of Professionalism: [School of Medicine Act of Professionalism](#)

Absence and Attendance Policy: [SoM Policies and Regulations Webpage](#)

University of Nottingham policies – applicable to all students:

Extenuating Circumstances: [Extenuating Circumstances Guidance](#)

Policy and support for Pregnant students and students with very young children: [Pregnant students and students with very young children](#)

Quality Manual – Regulations Governing Attendance and Engagement: [Registration Attendance and Study](#)

Services for students – Religious Observance:

[Religious Observance during assessments](#)

[Religious Observance during placements](#)

Visa Conditions (International Students)

[Visa Conditions](#)