



POLICY TITLE

Attendance Policy for Clinical Phase

PURPOSE AND SCOPE

This policy outlines the attendance policy for the Clinical Phase and the procedure students must follow to obtain an excused absence and defines consequences for excessive absences.

RESPONSIBLE PARTY AND REVIEW CYCLE

The Clinical Affairs Committee will review the policy in even-numbered years, or as needed, and submit to the Academic Excellence Committee for approval.

ARC-PA REFERENCE(S)

A3.01: Program policies must apply to all students, principal faculty, and the program director regardless of location.

A3.02: The program must define, publish, make readily available and consistently apply its policies and practices to all students.

A3.15: The program must define, publish, consistently apply and a make readily available to students upon admission: (g) policies and procedures for student grievances and appeals.

HISTORY OF APPROVALS AND UPDATES

Approved by Academic Excellence Committee, June 17, 2021.

DEFINITIONS

- Absence is defined as missing any portion of the shift (an hour, 1/2-day, full day)
- Tardy is defined as (for example: shift starts at 8:00 am and you show up at 8:00 am or after, you are considered tardy [unless prior notification to [both](#) the Director of Clinical Education and Preceptor])
- Excused absence is defined as an absence that is approved by the University and/or UNC-CH MHSPAS Program.
- Unexcused absence is defined as an absence that is not approved/scheduled by the University and/or UNC-CH MHSPAS Program.

POLICY

The professional standards and expectations in physician assistant school are similar clinical practice expectations beyond physician assistant school. Attendance to clinical assignments and required course activities is a full-time commitment and a measure of professionalism. Students must make every effort to attend required activities, using off days for personal activities to the greatest extent possible. **Part-time jobs, extracurricular activities, vacations, or need for childcare are NOT acceptable excuses for absences.** The UNC-CH MHSPAS Program clinical phase attendance policy is consistent with and aligns with the requirements and expectations for student attendance by UNC Chapel Hill Education Policy Committee, UNC School of Medicine, and the UNC School of Medicine Department of Allied Health Sciences Academic Affairs Committee.

1. **Students are required to obtain approval for all absences from clinic duties no matter the length (an hour, 1/2-day, full day) from ONLY the UNC-CH MHSPAS Director of Clinical Education. Preceptors cannot grant absences, nor can they excuse a student from clinical duties. Once the UNC-CH MHSPAS Director of Clinical Educator has granted the excused absence, only then does the student notify the preceptor.** Students must make up all excused and unexcused absences at the discretion of the UNC-CH MHSPAS Director of Clinical Education. Work that is not made up can result in comments in the UNC-CH MHSPAS Student Professionalism Encounter Form. **Failure to notify the UNC-CH MHSPAS Director of Clinical Education and preceptor of any absence from a rotation regardless of the reason or number of hours is considered an unexcused absence and the student will be referred to the UNC-CH MHSPAS Academic Excellence Committee (AEC) which may result in academic and/or professionalism probation, or dismissal based on severity.**
2. All students must “clock in” and “clock out” for each clinical shift in Microsoft Shifts.
3. Students must notify the UNC-CH MHSPAS Director of Clinical Education and the preceptor of any absences and/or missed clinic time prior to the start of the clinical shift or as soon as possible depending on the reason for the absence. Only the UNC-CH MHSPAS Director of Clinical Education and/or Campus Health can grant an approved absence from clinic. Preceptors cannot grant absences. If a student receives approval from the preceptor for the absence prior to notifying and receiving approval from the Director of Clinical Education, the absence will be considered unexcused. If a student fails to notify the UNC-CH MHSPAS Director of Clinical Education and preceptor of any absence and/or missed clinic time in an appropriate amount of time, the **absence will be considered unexcused.**
4. **Hospitalizations (to include Emergency Room visit):** Students must notify the UNC-CH MHSPAS Program Director (**email**), UNC-CH MHSPAS Director of Clinical Education (**by phone and email**), and UNC-CH MHSPAS Manager of Student Affairs (**email**) regarding any emergency department visit and/or hospitalization as soon as possible.
5. **Declining schedule shifts:** Students are not allowed to decline schedule shifts that were previously scheduled by the clinical site and/or preceptor prior to the start of the supervised clinical experience (SCPE) or during the SCPE. Shifts declined by the student will be considered unexcused absences and referral to the UNC-CH MHSPAS Academic Excellence Committee (AEC).
6. **Wayne UNC Health:** Students are required to follow the policies and procedures of all clinical sites. Wayne UNC Health requires students to clock in and clock out for verification purposes, joint commission compliance and safety. To align with Wayne UNC Health policies and procedures, all UNC-CH MHSPAS students rotating at Wayne UNC Health **must clock in and clock out during every clinical shift.** If a student forgets to clock in or clock out on a shift, the student should notify the UNC-CH MHSPAS Director of Clinical Education and the Medical Education Coordinator at Wayne UNC Health.

The UNC-CH MHSPAS Director of Clinical Education along with the Medical Education Coordinator at Wayne UNC Health will periodically review student's timesheet and schedule. Any changes in the student's schedule at Wayne UNC Health must be verified by the Medical Education Coordinator at Wayne UNC Health and UNC-CH MHSPAS Director of Clinical Education must be notified in advance of the schedule change.

If the student did not clock in and clock out during a confirmed shift that is on the schedule, this will be considered an unexcused absence unless the student can provide verification, they were on shift that day.

7. **Modifications to daily schedule once submitted to Director of Clinical Education:** For each supervised clinical practice learning experience (SCPE), students must submit a daily schedule by 11:59 EST on Thursday of the first week for each SCPE. Students must notify the UNC-CH MHSPAS Director of Clinical Education of any changes to shifts and/hours after the calendar was submitted for the current SCPE. Failure to notify the UNC-CH MHSPAS Director of Clinical Education of any changes to the daily schedule after submission of the calendar will be considered unexcused absence(s) and referral to the UNC-CH MHSPAS Academic Excellence Committee (AEC).
8. Students who accrue **more than one excused absence** in a four-week clinical course are at risk for receiving a grade of "Incomplete" based on the quality of make-up work and level of competence in meeting the learning outcomes and will be referred to the UNC-CH MHSPAS Academic Excellence Committee (AEC). The UNC-CH MHSPAS Academic Excellence Committee (AEC) reserves the right to recommend a course grade of "incomplete" based on the number of absences during the supervised clinical practice experience.
9. Students who accrue **one or more unexcused absence days** [during the clinical phase](#) of the program will be referred to UNC-CH MHSPAS Academic Excellence Committee (AEC). The UNC-CH MHSPAS Academic Excellence Committee (AEC) reserves the right to recommend that a student's lack of professionalism be noted in the UNC-CH MHSPAS Student Professionalism Encounter, which may result in academic and/or professionalism warning, probation, a course grade of "incomplete" or dismissal based on severity.
10. **Excessive tardiness (defined as three (3) or more tardies) during the clinical phase even if the student notified UNC-CH MHSPAS Director of Clinical Education and preceptor will be referred to the UNC-CH MHSPAS Academic Excellence Committee (AEC).** UNC-CH MHSPAS Academic Excellence Committee (AEC) reserves the right to recommend that a student's lack of professionalism be noted in the UNC-CH MHSPAS Student Professionalism Encounter, which may result in academic and/or professionalism probation or dismissal based on severity. **Although there are times when extenuating circumstances may cause a person to be late, students must understand tardiness is considered unprofessional in the workplace. Students should always plan in advance travel, parking, etc., so they are able to arrive on time to the start the clinic shift or round on patients.**

A. **EXCUSED ABSCENCE:**

Students may obtain an excused absence at the discretion of the UNC-CH MHSPAS Director of Clinical Education and/or its campus liaisons (Campus Health). Excused absences are **not guaranteed** except for medical reasons. **Students are not allowed to obtain prior approval of absence from their preceptor.** Students receiving prior approval from preceptor will be referred to the UNC-CH MHSPAS Academic Excellence Committee (AEC). Reasons for excused absences include:

- **Medical/illness:** Includes illness and medical appointments. There is no limit on absences for medical reasons. Students **must be evaluated** by Campus Health **or** their Primary Care Provider for **any** absences due to an illness. A medical providers note must be submitted to the program allowing the student to return to clinical duties.

Students with chronic illness that involve multiple absences must meet with the UNC-CH MHSPAS Academic Excellence Committee (AEC) to set up plan regarding absences and make-up. It is also a student's responsibility to contact the preceptor (**cc: UNC-CH MHSPAS Director of Clinical Education in the email**) as soon as possible to arrange make-up days and/or assignments.

Depending on the length of the acute and/or chronic illness, an "Incomplete" may be given in consultation with the UNC-CH MHSPAS Academic Excellence Committee (AEC) based on the number of absences, quality of make-up work and level of competence in meeting the program-defined learning outcomes and competencies.

- **Close Family Member/Close Friend Emergency:** Students must provide a brief explanation when requesting an excused absence. Examples include, but are not limited to, funerals and medical emergencies of close family members or close friends that requires someone to be admitted to the hospital. **It is also a student's responsibility to contact the preceptor (cc UNC-CH MHSPAS Director of Clinical Education in the email) as soon as possible to arrange make-up days and/or assignments.** **Circumstances that require students to travel out of state and miss more than two days of clinic, the student will need to submit a leave of absence.**
- **Professional Meeting/Conference:** An excused absence is only granted when the student is a presenter. Student must submit conference documentation when requesting an excused absence. It is also a student's responsibility to contact the preceptor (**cc: UNC-CH MHSPAS Director of Clinical Education in the email**) as soon as possible to arrange make-up days and/or assignments.
- **Jury Duty:** Student must provide a copy of the summons when requesting an excused absence. It is also a student's responsibility to contact the preceptor (**cc: UNC-CH MHSPAS Director of Clinical Education in the email**) as soon as possible to arrange make-up days and/or assignments.
- **Religious holidays:** Per University policy, students are authorized up to two excused absences each academic year for religious observances required by their faith. Recurring excused absences (greater than two) for religious observances, students must complete and submit the [Religious Accommodation Form](#). Students should review the [UNC-CH Religious Accommodation Policy](#).

Depending on the number of excused absences during a single rotation, an “Incomplete” may be given in consultation with the UNC-CH MHSPAS Academic Excellence Committee (AEC) based on the quality of make-up work and level of competence in meeting the program required learning outcomes and competencies.

- **Weddings:** Students must request an excused absence for a wedding as soon as possible, no later than eight weeks prior to the event. Students must also submit a copy of the wedding invitation. Students must use their professional judgement to minimize absences to weddings and prioritize

attendance to only the most significant weddings. It is also a student’s responsibility to contact the preceptor (**cc:** UNC-CH MHSPAS Director of Clinical Education in the email) as soon as possible to arrange make-up days and/or assignments. **Circumstances that require students to travel out of state and miss more than two days of clinic, the student will need to submit a leave of absence.**

- **Perspective Job Interview(s)/Post-Graduate Training Program Interviews:** Students should utilize the last two weeks in November and first two weeks in December to schedule any perspective job interview(s) and/or Post-Graduate Training Interviews. If the student is unable to schedule the perspective job interview/post-graduate training interview during this allotted timeframe due to the perspective job/post-graduate training programs schedule, the student must contact the UNC-CH MHSPAS Director of Clinical Education to first discuss options prior to confirming an interview slot.
- **Required Training:** Students must provide details of the required training.
- **Military obligations:** Students needing to miss rotation days due to military obligations will not be counted as days missed, but given the length of absence, may be required to make up time at a later date. Student must provide a copy of orders or a signed memorandum from their Commander to the UNC-CH MHSPAS Director of Clinical Education

Students must understand the UNC-CH MHSPAS Director of Clinical Educator will take the request into full consideration and may consult the UNC-CH MHSPAS Program Director. The UNC-CH MHSPAS Director of Clinical Education may or may not grant an excused absence after consideration.

Student must submit requests in advance whenever feasible or as soon as possible. If granted an excused absence, it is the student’s professional obligation to notify the preceptors and site coordinators as soon as possible. It is also a student’s responsibility to contact the preceptor (**cc:** UNC-CH MHSPAS Director of Clinical Education in the email) as soon as possible to arrange make-up days and/or assignments. **If 4 hours of clinic time is missed, a 1/2 day will be documented. More than 4 hours of missed clinic time = a full day**

B. END OF ROTATION EXAMS/PROGRAM SUMMATIVE ASSESSMENTS/PACKRAT

Attendance is required at all examinations during the clinical phase. There will be **NO** make-up examinations given except at the discretion of the UNC-CH MHSPAS Director of Clinical Education and

ONLY for extenuating circumstances (e.g., illness, accidents, serious close family illness/emergency). It is unprofessional to be late for an exam. Students must be in their seats and have their computers set up before the posted exam time. Students who will be late for the exam must notify the Director of Clinical Education by text or phone as soon as possible. Students who are tardy may not take the exam until approved by the Director of Clinical Education and the remote proctoring service.

Students more than 15 minutes late who have not contacted the Director of Clinical Education regarding the extenuating circumstances, may not be allowed to take the exam, and will receive a zero for the exam. Students will be referred to the UNC-CH MHSPAS Academic Excellence Committee (AEC) and UNC-CH MHSPAS Academic Excellence Committee (AEC) reserves the right to recommend that a student's lack of professionalism be noted in the UNC-CH MHSPAS Student Professionalism Encounter, which may result in academic and/or professionalism warning, probation or dismissal based on severity.

C. CLINICAL SEMINAR COURSES

Clinical Seminar courses consist of five, 3–5-day courses that all students, regardless of current location of residence, must complete for program completion. The school will not exempt students from this *program to practice* learning experience, nor will it truncate the length of the courses. Given the nature of the course and the number of professional guest speakers presenting, students cannot easily make up, repeat, or replicate course activities. As such, students must attend the entire length of the course. Student's missing any day of the clinical seminar courses risk failing or receiving a grade of "Incomplete". All absences must be made up at the discretion of the Director of Clinical Education. If a student is tardy (showing up at 8:00 am when class starts at 8:00 am) this will count as a 1/2-day absence. UNC-CH MHSPAS Academic Excellence Committee (AEC) reserves the right to recommend that a student's lack of professionalism be noted in the UNC-CH MHSPAS Student Professionalism Encounter, which may result in academic and/or professionalism warning, probation or dismissal based on severity. Exceptions to this will be determined by the UNC-CH MHSPAS Director of Clinical Education on a case-by-case basis and if notification was made prior to showing up late to clinical seminar.

D. HOLIDAYS

While on clinical rotations, students **must only observe holidays** that are **only** observed by their respective clinical site. **If a student is assigned or may be assigned by a clinical site and/or preceptor to work on a holiday, the student may NOT request off for the holiday.**

E. CHALLENGING LIFE CIRCUMSTANCES

Challenging life circumstances may require extended absences (more than two (2) days in one rotation), and students should reach out to the UNC-CH MHSPAS Student Affairs, UNC-CH MHSPAS Director of Clinical Education, and their Faculty Advisor as soon as possible to develop a plan/consider a leave of absence.

F. NEW CHILD ADJUSTMENT POLICY

The purpose of this policy is to outline parameters for taking time away from the Master of Science Physician Assistant Studies Degree curriculum for family adjustments at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, Physician Assistant Program (UNC-CH MHSPAS). This policy is inclusive to all students. New Child Adjustment (NCA) will be extended to students without regard to their age, sex,

or gender and for any situation in which a new child is brought into a student's care, including but not limited to childbirth, adoption, foster care, or custody change.

The New Child Adjustment (NCA) Policy establishes the parameters by which students can take a predetermined amount of time away from their studies to care for a new child while remaining enrolled at UNC-CH MHSPAS Program.

While the NCA option exists to accommodate students wishing to graduate with their original class, this policy does not guarantee that all students who want an NCA will graduate on time, and students are still responsible for completing all graduation and course requirements. Certain policies are outside the control of UNC-CH MHSPAS, which may affect the extent of flexibility offered. It is recommended student elect to request a leave of absence during this period of time.

i. Initiation and Intent of an NCA

To pursue an NCA, students must contact UNC-CH MHSPAS Manager of Student Affairs as early as possible to plan their time away and prepare for any restructuring of their schedule if needed. While advance notice is ideal and provides the best options to students, UNC-CH MHSPAS Program acknowledges that there may be circumstances in which a new child is not always expected (e.g., emergency custody situations). In these situations, students should contact UNC MHSPAS Manager of Student Affairs as soon as possible to discuss options. All students enrolled in the UNC-CH MHSPAS Program must complete all graduation and course requirements within 36 months from the date of matriculation.

EXCESSIVE ABSENCES OR FAILURE TO MAKE UP ABSENCES

In the event a student accrues excessive absences or unexcused absences as determined by the UNC-CH MHSPAS Director of Clinical Education, the UNC-CH MHSPAS Director of Clinical Education and Faculty Advisor will first contact the student out of concern for well-being. After this discussion, the UNC-CH MHSPAS Director of Clinical Education reserves the right to refer a student to the UNC-CH MHSPAS Academic Excellence Committee (AEC). The UNC-CH MHSPAS Academic Excellence Committee (AEC) reserves the right to recommend that a student's lack of professionalism be noted in the UNC-CH MHSPAS Student Professionalism Encounter, which may result in academic and/or professionalism warning, probation or dismissal based on severity.

The UNC-CH MHSPAS Academic Excellence Committee (AEC) reserves the right to recommend that a student's lack of attendance be noted in the UNC-CH MHSPAS Student Professionalism Encounter, which may result in academic and/or professionalism warning, probation or dismissal based on severity.

In the event a student fails to make up absences according to expectations set by UNC-CH MHSPAS Director of Clinical Education, reserves the right to refer the student to the UNC-CH MHSPAS Academic Excellence Committee (AEC). The UNC-CH MHSPAS Academic Excellence Committee (AEC) reserves the right to recommend that a student's lack of professionalism be noted in the UNC-CH MHSPAS Student Professionalism Encounter, which may result in academic and/or professionalism probation or dismissal based on severity.



i. **Exceptions**

Situations will arise outside of exceptions listed which may lead to other prioritization about attending required activities. Absence requests must be requested formally through the UNC-CH MHSPAS Director of Clinical Education. The UNC-CH MHSPAS Director of Clinical Education will review the request, communicate with UNC-CH MHSPAS Program Director, as necessary, and provide a response. UNC-CH MHSPAS Students must notify preceptors and/or hospital attendings of absences if **absence is granted**.

PROCEDURE(S):

Students must notify by email and/or text the Director of Clinical Education of **any** absence (an hour, half-day, full day, etc.) in addition to submission of a request for **any** absence (an hour, half-day, full day, etc.) in Microsoft Shifts. **Preceptors cannot grant excused absences, nor can they excuse a student from clinical duties. Any missing requests will be considered an unexcused absence.** Required documentation, as outlined above, must be emailed to the UNC-CH MHSPAS Director of Clinical Education and UNC-CH MHSPAS Manager of Student Affairs at the time of request submission. The UNC-CH MHSPAS Director of Clinical Education will grant or deny the request within Microsoft Shifts. The Director of Clinical Education will provide a comment regarding any denied requests. Student will be notified through Microsoft Shifts of the decision regarding their request. Microsoft Shifts will maintain record of all excused and unexcused absences. Documentation provided to the UNC-CH MHSPAS Director of Clinical Education and Student Affairs will be retained in student's academic file.

The student must also notify the preceptors and site coordinators of their absence(s) (excused or unexcused) as soon as possible **after receiving approval** from the UNC-CH MHSPAS Director of Clinical Education. Students can check the number of excused absences in Microsoft Shifts at any time. If the student does not follow this procedure, the UNC-CH MHSPAS Academic Excellence Committee (AEC) reserves the right to recommend that a student's lack of professionalism be noted in the UNC-CH MHSPAS Student Professionalism Encounter, which may result in academic and/or professionalism warning, probation or dismissal based on severity **OR** an "Incomplete for a supervised clinical practice experience course" and/or "Deceleration in the clinical phase" may be given and/or result based on the number of absences, quality of make-up work and level of competence in meeting the program-defined learning outcomes and competencies.

APPEALS AND APEALS SUBMISSION

Any UNC-CH MHSPAS Student has the right to appeal any decision made by the UNC-CH MHSPAS Program and/or UNC-CH MHSPAS Academic Excellence Committee. The UNC-CH MHSPAS Student should review the [UNC Department of Allied Health Sciences regarding the policies and procedures for submitting appeals.](#)

PUBLISHED

- UNC PA Program Policies and Procedures web page:
<https://www.med.unc.edu/ahs/unc-pa/students/policies-proceedures/>
- UNC PA Program Student Handbook