

POLICY TITLE

UNC Masters in Health Science Physician Assistant Studies (MHSPAS) Attendance Policy for the Preclinical Phase

PURPOSE AND SCOPE

This policy outlines the attendance requirements and exceptions for the Preclinical Phase, provides the procedure students must follow to obtain an excused absence, and defines the consequences of excess and/ or unexcused absences.

RESPONSIBLE PARTY AND REVIEW CYCLE

The Preclinical Affairs Committee will review this policy each even-numbered year, or as needed, and submit to the Academic Excellence Committee for approval.

ARC-PA REFERENCE(S)

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 make *readily available* to students upon admission:

- g) policies and procedures for student grievances and appeals

HISTORY OF APPROVALS AND UPDATES

Written by the Policy Review Committee December 19, 2023.

DEFINITION(S):

- Absence is defined as missing a scheduled day of classes or missing any single class session, lab session, or class event for any course within the UNC MHSPAS Preclinical Phase.
- Excused absence is defined as an absence that is approved by the UNC MHSPAS Program.
- Unexcused absence is defined as an absence that is not approved by the UNC MHSPAS Program.
- Tardy is defined as late arrival to any class session, lab session, or class activity.

POLICY

All students enrolled in the UNC MHSPAS Program, which is within the Department of Health Sciences¹, are expected to attend all scheduled class sessions, lab sessions, patient encounters, and any other scheduled class event. Students are expected to make every effort to attend scheduled class activities, and students are responsible for all coursework in all classes. Students are encouraged to use their time outside of class to fulfill all personal activities, and it is the student's responsibility to notify the appropriate faculty if they must miss a class and/ or class activity due to unforeseen or excusable circumstances.

UNC MHSPAS attendance policies are aligned and consistent with policies for UNC undergraduate students and graduate students.

1: [DHS Attendance Policy](#)

2: [Link Health Clearance Policy](#)

3: [University Policy for COVID-19 Related Absences](#)

4: [University Accommodations Policies and Forms](#)

5: [DHS Student Appeals and Grievances](#)

Preclinical phase students are allowed two (2) excused absences per semester. If a preclinical phase student has \geq two (2) absences in a single semester, \geq five (5) absences in the Preclinical phase, or if, per the discretion of the course director and/or the Director of Preclinical Education, the number of absences is deemed highly impactful with potential to limit the student's ability to achieve competency of course learning outcomes, the student will be referred to the UNC MHSPAS Academic Excellence Committee (AEC). The AEC may consider professionalism and/or academic probation, a course grade of "Incomplete," and/or program dismissal based on the absence's impact on academic performance.

Preclinical phase students are not allowed any unexcused absences. Any unexcused absence will prompt referral of the student to the UNC MHSPAS AEC for consideration of professionalism and/or academic probation, a course grade of "incomplete," and/or program dismissal based on the absence's impact on academic performance.

Any request for a prolonged period of absence (≥ 2 consecutive days) should prompt student discussion for a leave of absence (link leave of absence policy) with the UNC MHSPAS Director of Preclinical Education and the student's faculty advisor.

Excused Absences

1. *Hospitalization, Emergency Room Visit, and/or Medical Illness*
 - a. Any number of absences (with no limit) will be excused for medical illness and/or medical appointments.
 - b. Students should reference the Health Clearance Protocol² for all concerns about acute illness.
 - c. Students should review the UNC University policy regarding COVID-19³ related absences.
 - d. Students with a documented chronic illness that require multiple absences must meet with the AEC to prepare for required absences and make-up work as well as seek appropriate documentation for accommodations.
2. *Family or Close Friend Emergency*
 - a. Scheduled events such as a funeral or medical appointment, and sudden events such as death, illness, or hospitalization, may be considered an emergency.
 - b. Circumstances that require travel out of state and/ or absence ≥ 2 days in length will require discussion with the Director of Preclinical Education in addition to the Course Director for each course impacted by the absence. Prolonged absences may require a leave of absence.
3. *Professional Meeting or Conference*
 - a. Students will be provided an excused absence for attending any professional meeting or conference in which they are presenting original work.
 - b. Every effort will be made by the Preclinical faculty to protect time for student attendance at the annual AAPA conference.

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4. *Jury Duty*
5. *Religious Holidays*
 - a. Students are authorized up to two (2) excused absences each academic year for religious observances required by their faith.
 - b. If recurrent religious observances supersede 2 days, students must complete and submit the Religious Accommodations Form and review the UNC Religious Accommodations Policy⁴.
6. *Weddings*
 - a. Students must request excused absences for weddings as soon as possible in order to prepare for completion of make-up work.
 - b. Every effort should be made by the student to minimize absences and return to class sessions as soon as possible.
 - c. Only two (2) excused absences will be granted for weddings in the Preclinical Phase.
7. *Required Trainings*
8. *Military Obligations*
 - a. Any number of absences (with no limit) will be excused for military obligations.
 - b. Students with military obligations are recommended to meet with their advisor and/ or Director of Preclinical Education to plan any scheduled or expected absences in advance of the semester.

Tardiness

Students who anticipate being tardy to a class session, lab session, or class activity should notify the course director as soon as possible with an explanation of their circumstances. Tardiness due to routine circumstances, such as issues with transportation, personal scheduling conflicts, or misunderstanding of the course calendar, will be excused only at the discretion of the course director for the first event. Repeat tardiness due to routine circumstances will not be excused and will be considered an unexcused absence.

Students who are tardy to two (2) class sessions, lab sessions, or class activities will be responsible for explanation and discussion with their advisor and the Director of Preclinical Education, with consideration for referral to the AEC based on described student circumstances. Students who are tardy to > two (2) class sessions will be referred to the AEC for consideration of professionalism and/ or academic probation based on the impact on academic performance.

Make-up Work

Absences in any class session, lab session, or class activity will require the student to complete the missed work on their own time outside of class. Every attempt will be made by program faculty and course directors to provide 1) a recording of missed content (as appropriate for the specific course), 2) access to class resources, 3) covered course instructional objectives, and 4) class lecture content.

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However, the student will be held responsible for all course information and materials as per the course syllabus regardless of content missed.

Any missed assignments, quizzes, exams, or other assessments due to an excused absence may be completed at the discretion of the course director with consideration of student input. The student should consider the [UNC Honor Code](#) policy in any discussion of missed assessment content. If a student fails to complete a missed assessment of any type, the student will score a zero (0) on that assessment.

Any missed assignments, quizzes, exams, or other assessments due to an unexcused absence will be scored as a zero (0). Remediation will not be offered to students who score a zero (0) on any assessment due to an unexcused absence.

Tardiness to a scheduled assessment will result in less time to complete the assessment, regardless of academic impact. Tardiness \geq 15 minutes may, at the discretion of the course director or exam proctor, be considered an unexcused absence, prohibit the student from taking the assessment, and result in a grade of zero (0) for that assessment. Remediation will not be offered to students who score a zero (0) on any assessment due to excessive tardiness and/or an unexcused absence.

ABSENCE REQUEST PROCEDURE

Students should request all absences in the Preclinical Phase with as much advanced notice as possible. When possible, students should inform 1) the Director of Preclinical Education, 2) all course directors, and 3) their academic advisor of their intended absence with consideration of timing of make-up work. Students should make every effort to request an excused absence \geq 2 weeks prior to the event. In the case of an emergency or medical event, the student should inform the Director of Preclinical Education of their absence as soon as possible.

The steps to completing an excused absence include:

Student

1. Complete the Preclinical Absence Request Form
 - a. Select all missed class sessions
 - b. Select the rationale for the absence
 - i. If necessary, provide explanation and/or documentation
 - c. Sign the document
2. Upload the [Preclinical Absence Request Form](#) to the student site
3. Notify the Director of Preclinical Education of the absence request
4. Notify all course directors and your academic advisor of approved absences
5. Schedule make-up work as required

Director of Preclinical Education

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1. Approve or deny the absence request
 - a. Explanation provided for any denial
 - b. Document signed. This signed document will be housed in the student site (i.e., Teams)
2. Inform the student of the response to their absence request

Any denied request for an excused absence is considered final. The student has the right to appeal any denied absence request. Until an absence is considered excused, any time missed without approval is considered an unexcused absence.

APPEALS

Any UNC MHSPAS student has the right to appeal any decision made by the UNC MHSPAS Program and/or the UNC MHSPAS Academic Excellence Committee. The UNC MHSPAS student is encouraged to review the UNC Department of Health Sciences policy on student grievances to review the appeals process and consider appeal submission⁵.

PUBLISHED

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

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