Foundation Phase Attendance and Leave Policy

The goal of this policy is to support students in identifying time needed during the pre-clinical curriculum to take care of personal matters and to attend to life events that require limited time away from class while balancing learning and accountability to classmates. For larger concerns and need for time away (i.e., more than two days away from class), please consult Student Affairs directly by emailing OSA deans shared email.

The TEC 2.0 curriculum has multiple open afternoons each week. Students should plan appointments such as doctor visits, therapy, regular home and car maintenance and other business during free, non-curricular afternoons.

In the event of an unanticipated need to be absent from class or planned, fixed-date need (e.g., family wedding), students may use an excused half day. Below is detailed information about how excused half days may be used and how students should request them.

I. What are “excused half days”?  
- Excused half days are intended to allow a student to miss scheduled class time for illness, delay of transportation (such as car breakdowns), family emergencies, urgent medical care (i.e., not routine doctor’s appointments) or other similar needs. Students are not required to submit documentation, doctors’ notes, or other justification for taking an excused half day.
- Students are allotted four excused half days per semester for unplanned health/wellbeing needs or personal/family matters.
- A half day is defined as 8 AM to 1 PM or 12 PM to 5 PM.
- If a student takes time away from class that spans the morning and afternoon (e.g., 10 AM – 3 PM), the use of two excused half days is required.
- A student cannot take more than two half days during any course (including 6-week medical sciences courses, the semester-long Patient Centered Care (PCC) course, and the semester-long Social and Health Systems (SHS) course).
- A student cannot take a half day during an exam or major assignment in any course or during resource-intensive sessions such as patient encounters and labs. The only exception to this rule is for Peer Accelerated Learning (PALS) quizzes, which may be made up if they are missed during an excused half day.
- Half days do not carry over to the next semester.
- Half days cannot be taken the day before or after a university holiday.

II. Should I use an excused half day for religious observance?  
- No, the School of Medicine (SOM) follows the University’s Religious Accommodations Policy for religious observance.
- To apply for a religious accommodation, fill out the form available at the link above and follow the instructions for submission to the RAAC.
• The form must be submitted to Equal Opportunity and Compliance (EOC) Office with [OSA Deans shared email] copied at least 10 business days before the accommodation/absence is needed (per university policy).

• Students are expected to make up any missed work (including but not limited to assignments, labs, quizzes, exams) in a timely manner and should arrange with their instructor plans for alternative completion deadlines.
• Students with approved religious observance accommodations will not need to deduct excused half days from their semester allotment.
• A student may be granted additional religious observance accommodations beyond the university-approved two days per calendar year at the discretion of the SOM.

III. How do I document that I am taking an excused half day?
• Requests for half days should be submitted through [Qualtrics form] as soon as the need becomes apparent and not later than the start of any class session during that half day.
• Students are responsible for monitoring their use of half days in Canvas and for not exceeding the allotted number.
• If a student is absent from a small group session (SHS, PCC, or CBL), instructors or course managers are responsible for checking Canvas to see if a student has requested an excused half day for that session. If a student is absent and unaccounted for in Canvas, Student Affairs will initiate a safety check.

IV. How do I document my attendance in all my different classes?
• Students will badge into all required curricular sessions including large-group PALS sessions, case-based learning (CBL), SHS, and PCC meetings, class meetings, and anatomy/micro labs.
• If you are unable to badge in for any reason (broken badge reader, etc.) in a small group session (CBL, PCC, SHS), you are responsible for checking in with your instructor and asking them to manually mark you present in Canvas.
• Please remember that it is a violation of the Foundation Phase Professionalism Standards as well as the UNC Honor Code to badge into a session and leave or to misrepresent your attendance or any classmate’s attendance in any way.

V. What should I do if I’m sick?
• If a student is ill and cannot come to class, they should use an excused half day. This includes time needed for mental health.
• Students should report via Qualtrics that they are using an excused half day no later than the beginning of the class they will miss.
• If you are sick on an exam day or other day when excused half days are not allowed (physical or mental health), follow the procedures listed in section VIII below.
• Please note that if you are not present and have not submitted a half day notice, Student Affairs will initiate a health and safety check.
• Students are expected to follow the COVID exposure and symptom protocol on the SOM website.
• Any time missed due to isolation while awaiting test results should be submitted as an excused half day.
VI. What happens if I have exhausted my excused half days OR have met the allowed number of half days in any one course and need additional time away from class?

- If a student needs to take time off beyond the allotted four excused half days, the student must email the [OSA deans shared email] as soon as they become aware of the need for time away from class.
- If a student is ill during an exam, major assignment, or resource-intensive session, they should submit for an excused half day so that they are known to be safe and accounted for.

VII. How will I make up work that I miss when I take an excused half day?

- CBL: Students will be required to review the case and write a one-page response to the “high-yield discussion questions” and other questions embedded within the case and submit it to their CBL facilitator.
- PALS: Students must make up missed PALS quizzes if they use an excused half day. Makeup sessions will be held for PALS quizzes on Fridays at 12:30 PM in the Active Learning Theater.
- SHS, PCC, & Anatomy: Students must communicate directly with their facilitator/tutor/instructor and agree on a make-up assignment. Students are expected to complete the makeup assignment defined by the instructor on the agreed upon timeline.

VIII. What happens if I miss class and don’t submit for a half day, if I miss class and have used up all my half days, if I exceed the allotted number of half days in any one course, or if I miss class on an exam day or other day when excused absences are not allowed?

- Steps taken regarding a student’s failure to follow attendance and excused half day procedure:
  - 1st occurrence: Student has an in-person meeting with one of the Student Affairs deans or Senior Director of Student Affairs and the student’s advisor. Goal: To make sure that the student has a clear understanding of the policy and to plan for not missing more than the allotted number of half days in the future.
  - 2nd occurrence: Student is reported to Committee on Professionalism Education (CoPE) and must take all subsequent steps. Goal: To discover and address any underlying barriers to professional behavior regarding attendance.
  - 3rd occurrence: Student will be required to appear before the Student Progress Committee (SPC) Goal: To determine whether a student has the professional demeanor necessary to continue at the SOM.

- Failure to take any of these steps in a timely manner will result in escalation to the next level.
- An unrequested absence will be deducted from the bank if all four are not already used.
- The first step (in-person meeting with student affairs dean and advisor) will be taken regardless of whether the Student Support Committee (SSC) has deemed the event “excused” or not.

OMSE has the discretion to grant additional excused days for extenuating circumstances and/or to engage students in discussion of longer leaves as needed.