MBChB
Attendance procedures and Leave entitlements

2015-16

http://www2.le.ac.uk/departments/msce/undergraduate/medicine
Table of Contents

Attendance and Leave Entitlements .................................................................................................................. 3

Requests for exceptional absence .................................................................................................................. 3

Compassionate leave .................................................................................................................................. 3

Educational activities ..................................................................................................................................... 3

Professional Development ............................................................................................................................. 3

Extramural activities .................................................................................................................................... 3

Duration of leave ........................................................................................................................................... 4

Sick leave ....................................................................................................................................................... 4

Maternity / Paternity leave .............................................................................................................................. 5

Religious festivals .......................................................................................................................................... 6

Attendance and absence procedures ............................................................................................................. 7

Phase 1 MBChB .............................................................................................................................................. 7

Phase 2 MBChB .............................................................................................................................................. 9

Attendance at teaching sessions ..................................................................................................................... 9

Performance of prayers during teaching hours and during clinical placements ........................................... 9
Attendance and Leave Entitlements

The University’s expectations about attendance are defined in Senate Regulation 4: governing student obligations (see http://www2.le.ac.uk/offices/sas2/regulations/documents/senatereg4-studentobligations.pdf). This applies to medical students. Below you will find information that relates specifically to your registration on the MBChB.

There is no rule allowing a proportion of time off before a student is deemed unsatisfactory. Satisfactory attendance is 100%.

Requests for exceptional absence

All students have certain defined periods of leave during each year of the course. Any student requiring further leave from the course must ask permission well in advance from the Medical School. Four weeks’ notice is normally required (except compassionate leave). The following principles will be used to decide if permission will be granted:

Compassionate leave

If a close family member or close friend has either a severe life-threatening illness or severe accident then the student will be entitled to request compassionate leave. The same would obviously apply for bereavement. The amount of leave given would depend on the circumstances and will be dealt with on an individual basis.

Educational activities:

A number of students request leave to attend medical conferences or other educational activities. Leave will be granted provided the student is contributing to the conference by giving a presentation or by having a poster presentation. Typically these would be the result of previous work within the course. There is an expectation that the student would be representing the University and enhancing the reputation of the Medical School. This would normally be allowed on only one occasion.

Professional Development

Some students will be members of committees. If these committees are part of the University structure, then attendance at the committee is accepted as part of the normal student activity. It is nevertheless important to inform the relevant consultant or undergraduate coordinator of any absence. Students may also be members of national committees. Any leave requirements should be discussed with the Medical School and decisions will be made on an individual basis. Providing the meetings are limited in number, then permission would normally be granted. The decision would also depend on the particular block involved and the timing of any assessments. There may be other events linked with professional development. In all cases, permission must be obtained and decisions will be based on the general principles already outlined.

Extramural activities

These activities would typically include sporting events or charity related events. Other special events will be considered on an individual basis. Any request would have to be carefully and fully justified. The guidelines we will follow are:

- The period of leave will be for a maximum of one week. The exact period will depend on the nature of the request.
- If the student is attending a sporting event or charity-related event, they must be doing so as a representative of the University. There is a clear expectation that their participation will enhance the reputation of the Medical School.
- The period of absence should not occur at a key time in a unit or block, and should not coincide with an assessment.

September 2015
Duration of leave

Phase 1

Because of the apprenticeship nature of Undergraduate Medical training, the longest time in total per academic year that a student may be absent is as follows:

FIVE YEAR COURSE: two weeks (10 working days) during Year One and/or Year Two, and one week (5 working days) during the first half of Year Three prior to the Primary Professional Exam.

FOUR YEAR COURSE: two weeks (10 working days) during Year One, and one week (5 working days) during the first half of Year Two prior to the Primary Professional Exam.

This regulation will apply regardless of the reason for the absence. Students who exceed this threshold cannot continue on the course but can apply for Suspension of Studies. This Process is defined in the Medical School document entitled ‘Suspension of Studies’.

Phase 2

The longest time that a student may be absent from the Junior Clinical Rotations is three weeks (15 working days) in total and the longest time that a student may be absent from the Senior Clinical Rotation is three weeks (15 working days) in total. The reason that the chosen maximum time is 3 weeks is that the maximum leeway in the programme for a student to ‘recover’ lost clinical apprenticeship is 3 weeks. In the case of a student in the Junior Clinical Rotation the student will not be able to sit the IPE exam but can instead gain the three weeks missed apprenticeship experience during the gap between the IPE and IPE Resit Exam and then sit the IPE Resit Exam. In the case of a student in the Senior Clinical Rotation, the student will not be able to sit the Final Professional Exam but can instead ‘recover’ lost clinical apprenticeship in the 3 weeks at the end of the Senior Clinical Rotation. Such a student will take the Final Resit Exam and will have reduced time for their Student Elective. Students who exceed the three week threshold cannot continue on the course but can apply for Suspension of Studies. This Process is defined in the Medical School document entitled ‘Suspension of Studies’.

Sick leave

Students are able to ‘self-certificate’ for up to one week (5 working days). The medical school will keep a record of all sick leave. If the student is ill for more than one week, then he/she must obtain a sick note from the GP or consultant. Where students are ill for prolonged periods or on repeated occasions, then this information will be made available to the Professionalism Concerns Group. An important part of this process will be to ensure that adequate support structures are in place for the student. It may be appropriate for students with repeated ill-health, or prolonged ill health (e.g. 2 weeks in Phase 2) to withdraw from the course temporarily (i.e. request suspension of studies).

Note: if students find themselves having to deal with difficult situations and are concerned about taking leave, it is much better to come and discuss the matter early. This applies even if the medical school has to make contingency plans, which may or may not be required. In addition if an acute situation develops, the student should email the medical school and leave appropriate contact details.

These requirements are set, not only to ensure that you learn efficiently but also so that you understand the professional attitudes and responsibilities that are inherent in good attendance. The amount of annual leave available for students in Phase 2 is limited, and is equivalent to that of a Foundation Doctor. We are fully aware that there will be a range of other occasions when you may need to take leave. The key principle is that you must ask permission to take leave and you must keep the appropriate people informed.
The five-day ruling is suspended during the examination periods and during resit examination periods, when it is the responsibility of students to seek medical help as soon as possible for any ill health experienced during, or near to, the examinations. A medical certificate must be produced to explain any exam absence.

It is the responsibility of those students who are required to produce medical evidence of fitness to continue or resume study, to acquire such evidence by the date specified to them by the School Office/Registry.

**Maternity / Paternity leave**

The Medical School understands that it is inevitable that some students, or their partners, will have a pregnancy during the course, and will need a period of leave. The first principle is that all students must meet the standards set by the Medical School and General Medical Council in order to graduate. Within that requirement, we will facilitate, as a minimum the provision of maternity leave on broadly the same term as if the student were in employment. It must be accepted however, that this will in some cases delay the date of graduation.

All women who become pregnant during the course will be entitled to take a minimum period of leave preceding and following the expected date of delivery. The nature of the medical course means that depending on the timing of the due date a student may need to take a much longer period than this minimum leave in order to return to the course at an educationally appropriate point.

Students are strongly advised to delay adoption of young children until after they graduate, but in the unlikely event of the adoption of a baby, one partner will be entitled to the same period of post adoption leave as a student who has given birth to a baby.

A woman who becomes pregnant whilst a medical student, will normally withdraw temporarily and completely from the course before the expected date of delivery. The usual time for withdrawal will be at 34-36 weeks gestation. This should be discussed with the Occupational Health Service who will provide appropriate advice.

The temporary withdrawal will normally continue for a period of 6 to 8 weeks post-delivery, though the precise time of return will depend upon circumstances, so the period may be considerably longer.

The Medical School has separate guidance for all students on the maximum time a student may be away from the course and these guidelines would also have to be met. As a consequence the normal pattern is for a student to take a period of Suspension of Studies for up to a year and re-join the course at an appropriate point. There will be a limited number of situations where the delivery date falls over, or close to, a holiday period and the total period of absence remains within the guidelines allowing for the student to continue with their year cohort.

Depending on timing this may permit graduation at the normal time, or after a delay of 12 months. There will be similar implications if the student is not able to sit either the Intermediate Professional Examination or the Final Professional Examination. The exact decision will depend on the individual circumstances and will be discussed with each student.

In Phase 2 every effort will be made to organise reasonably family-friendly placements for the first block after return, but it must be recognised that any further concessions will, in an overstretched system, inevitably disadvantage other students and will not normally be allowed. Some students may request a longer period of maternity leave. This will be discussed at an individual level.

All students whose partner becomes pregnant will be entitled to a short period of leave (normally 2 weeks) following the delivery of the child, provided that this does not occur at a key time in a unit or block (e.g. assessments unless the student accepts that their graduation may be delayed as a result).

Examples:

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September 2015
A student with an expected date of delivery during the junior rotation of Phase 2.

The period of withdrawal will normally begin before the expected date of delivery, but a student may complete a block with the approval of the Occupational Health Service. The earliest return time is at the beginning of the block after 8 weeks post-delivery, though a slightly earlier return may be allowed subject to occupational health approval. Since the student has missed a whole block they will not be able to take the first sit of the Year examination (IPE). Depending on the timing and the nature of the block that has been missed it will be necessary to either take the re-sit IPE as the first sit or to take Suspension of Studies.

A student with an expected date of delivery in the senior rotation of Phase 2

The same principles will apply as in the junior rotation, but the Final Professional Examination will normally be delayed until June, when it will be taken as a first sit. If successful the graduate will start Foundation Year normally.

In summary, it is possible to complete the course on time with a period of maternity leave, but this will require the break to be very short. Taking a longer break, or more than one pregnancy will delay graduation, and put a student at risk of not completing within 7 years, which is a GMC requirement.

Religious festivals

Many religions and beliefs have special festivals or spiritual observance days and a student may request leave. All requests for leave will be considered sympathetically. Given the complexity of the curriculum it is not possible to design a timetable which allows for all religious observance. As certain components of the course are regarded as core and compulsory, permitting students to be absent from these components may disadvantage them when it comes to examination.

The following principles will be followed:

- Request for leave for religious purposes should be for a limited period; normally one or two days in any given year.
- The request must be made in a similar manner to that for exceptional absence.
- Requests for leave must be made at least 14 days prior to the date of the event. Some religious festivals are based on the lunar cycle and that the exact date is only known shortly beforehand. However, the date is predictable within one or two days and the request should indicate this. The request must be made via the normal route and using the standard ‘leave request’ form. Providing leave has been granted, the exact date can be confirmed as soon as it is known. Requests submitted less than fourteen days prior to an event will NOT be approved.
- Every effort will be made by the Medical School to avoid a student being required to sit an examination on the day of religious observance. However, the Medical School reserves the right to hold examinations on such days if no alternative time is possible.
- Students are responsible for ensuring that any course work missed due to religious observance is covered at a subsequent time. Missing course work because of religious observance will not be accepted as mitigating circumstances for failure in exams.
- Students who miss sessions because of religious observance, without prior approval as outlined above, will be deemed to be absent without approval.
Attendance and absence procedures

Punctuality

Background

Punctuality is an essential requisite of a qualified doctor and foundation year doctors are required to be punctual at all times. The Medical School has therefore developed regulations regarding punctuality in order to help students prepare for their future careers. As a general principle, students should plan to be present at all teaching 5 minutes before it is timetabled to start. Absences recorded as a consequence of lateness will contribute to the overall attendance profile of a student.

Phase One

Lectures

Students should not enter a lecture if they are more than 10 minutes late. The nature of lectures is such that if students miss the start of a lecture they will not be able to understand the latter parts of the lecture. In addition, arriving late at a lecture is disruptive.

Small Group Teaching

The attendance registers will be removed at 10 minutes. At 10 minutes the tutor will ask all students present to ensure they have signed the register. The register will not be available for signing after that point. Students who arrive after 10 minutes will be deemed to have been absent but will be allowed to remain at the small group teaching because the nature of such teaching is that they can still contribute and learn.

Clinical Skills [at the Medical School and RKCSB]

Students should plan to arrive 5 minutes prior to such teaching and must be present at the start of the teaching. Students who are not present at the start of the teaching will not be allowed to attend. It is not possible to teach clinical skills unless the student is present for the whole session.

Phase Two

In Phase Two of the course the same punctuality requirements apply to medical students as do apply to qualified doctors. A student who is not on time is late. This will be taken into account as part of an assessment of professionalism by the supervising consultant[s].

September 2015
Phase 1 MBChB

Phase 1 of the MBChB is delivered largely on campus. In addition, you will have a small amount of teaching in the hospital setting as well as in the community.

You are expected to attend all teaching that is scheduled for you. However, we know that occasional absence is unavoidable. But you MUST offer an explanation for any absences from taught sessions that you may have, just as you will be required to do once you have qualified. Failure to do so is considered to be evidence of unprofessional conduct and your behaviour will be monitored more closely.

In years 1 and 2, you will have vacation periods at Christmas, Easter and Summer. These dates will be made available to you each year.

In year 3, you will restart 3 weeks prior to the start of the University term and have a shortened Christmas vacation prior to the start of Phase 2 in February of year 3.

Below is how we expect you to manage any absence in Phase 1:

- For unexpected absences (e.g. short-term illness) students should:
  o Notify the Unit Lead that you will be absent
  o As soon as possible on your return to Medical School, complete a self-certification for absence form available on Blackboard.

- For absences that you know about in advance (e.g. long-standing out-patients appointment) students should:
  o Complete a student request for exceptional absence form, available from the Medical School Office in the MSB foyer. These forms should be completed and submitted at least one week before the expected date of absence. If not, they will not be considered (except in the case of compassionate leave). Please note, that it is by no means guaranteed that your request will be granted.

- If you forget to sign the register for a particular session students should:
  o As soon as possible, complete a self-certification for absence form available on Blackboard, explaining that you forgot to sign the register.

Absence monitoring in Phase 1

It is a University and GMC requirement that attendance is monitored. However, the Medical School has found that this requirement has been invaluable in allowing us a mechanism to detect early students who are experiencing a range of difficulties and require pastoral or other support.

Student attendance is recorded on a student database. Every Monday the attendance of students the preceding week will be analysed. Students who have been absent for more than a total of 3 teaching sessions will be sent a first warning e-mail. Further absences (defined as additional 2 or more missed teaching sessions, up to a total of 7 absences) will lead to a second absence warning e-mail with a request to complete a pro-forma designed to allow students to identify the root cause of their inability to meet the requirement for attendance. Students who continue to accrue further additional absences resulting in the issue of a third and final warning will be required to meet the Phase 1 Lead. Any further absence will lead to referral to the Head of Department who may declare the student in Neglect of their Apprenticeship and/or Academic Engagement Obligations.

September 2015
Phase 2 MBChB

The following additional principles apply to leave during the latter two and a half years of your course:

Phase 2 is a full time apprenticeship and is considered the same as full time employment.

- Attendance throughout normal working hours and any programmed out-of-hours experience is compulsory.
- If you are ill and unable to attend, you must notify the undergraduate coordinator so that a message can be left with the relevant consultant’s secretary, and self-certify using the Blackboard system. The rules about self-certification and medical certificates are as if students were employed by the hospital.
- If you wish to request leave you should complete the exceptional leave form available on the medical school website; your request will be considered, and you will receive a response by email.

Much of the learning in Phase 2 is opportunistic and is dependent on students being within the clinical environment to make use of that particular opportunity. There are a large number of additional teaching sessions, which are arranged by consultants and other staff within individual hospitals. These are valuable and important and it is essential that students at the hospital avail themselves of these sessions. They form the basis of your learning and your preparation to be competent doctors.

Attendance at teaching sessions

Teaching session within the blocks: Attendance at all didactic teaching sessions is compulsory.

Sign-up sessions: For these, students will be expected to sign up at the beginning of the block or the week. Once you sign up you will be expected to attend and will be marked as unsatisfactory if you do not do so.

The attendance at the end of the block must be signed off by the Admin or Education lead for the block. Each lead will have access to attendance registers for the teaching events. They will also have feedback from the consultant and other clinical staff. The lead will require evidence that the student’s attendance is satisfactory in order for them to be signed off.

Performance of prayers during teaching hours and during clinical placements

During clinical placements students will be expected to spend the day on the ward participating in ward rounds, clerking patients, attending clinics and theatre sessions. The GMC ‘Good Medical Practice’ states that you must “make the care of your patient your first concern”. Medical student clinical attachments are regarded as an apprenticeship. On some occasions you will have direct responsibility for patient care, while on the remaining occasions you will share that responsibility with the clinical team. In these settings the care of the patient is your first concern. During the clinical day there are likely to be natural breaks when it is possible to go and pray. It is not appropriate to leave a clinical area to which you have been formally attached if there is direct clinical work taking place and in which you are included. This encompasses ward rounds, clinics and theatre sessions. In some blocks students will be expected to help run the ward with the junior staff and to involve themselves in patient care. In the Acute Care Block for example student are specifically allocated to shifts and to be part of the clinical team. In these settings it is not appropriate to leave the environment without permission and while clinical activity is on-going. However, even in these settings there will be a number of natural breaks that can be utilized. Some clinical attachments will be more flexible and it will be possible to leave the clinical environment for short periods. In all cases if you do wish to leave the clinical environment, other than during natural breaks, then you need to seek permission from the consultant in charge before the start of the session.

Teaching sessions will also be arranged during the clinical attachments, and these may be seminars, bed-side teaching, X-ray meetings or observed clinical practice. It is not appropriate to leave during a teaching session. Again, there will almost certainly be natural breaks before and after set teaching times.

September 2015