



**DALHOUSIE
UNIVERSITY**

FACULTY OF MEDICINE

UGME Illness + Short-Term Leave

Frequently Asked Questions

Dalhousie University Faculty of Medicine, UGME

Last updated: March 2026

First and foremost, we want to remind everyone of the importance of prioritizing your health and the health of those around you. If you are feeling unwell, we encourage you to take the time needed to rest and recover, rather than attending in-person activities while sick. Taking time off due to illness is not something that will be held against you. Medical illness includes relapse of a diagnosed psychological illness.

We understand that medical school is demanding, but taking care of yourself is essential. Staying home when sick not only helps you recover faster but also reduces the risk of spreading illness to your peers, instructors, and patients, some who may be immunocompromised.

Please note that an absence form must be submitted in all circumstances. Links to these forms can be found below and access to virtual links can be found on Brightspace.

If you require clarification or need assistance, please contact:

CBMC: CBMC@cbu.ca

DMNB: dmnb.leave@dal.ca

DMNS: ugme@dal.ca

IMPORTANT LINKS:

- [Pre-Clerkship Absence Form](#) (for *all* absences – single day or longer)
- [Clerkship Absence Form](#) (for *all* absences – single day or longer)
- [Dalhousie UGME Policies and Regulations](#)
 - Forms listed above as well as all other UGME policies and procedure

IMPORTANT NOTES:

Please note that the parameters around missed time, forms, and approval process are different for pre-clerkship and clerkship. Please review the [policies and procedures](#) carefully for your respective Med year.

This document contains information on *short-term* absences. For information on long-term leave of absence, please visit UGME's policy page linked above.

For all absences, you are required to:

- Fill out the appropriate UGME leave form ([Pre-Clerkship Absence or Clerkship Absence](#) form)
- Specify how you plan to meet the objectives of any mandatory sessions that will be missed. You may contact your tutor/preceptor if you require direction on how to meet the missed objectives.
 - **Pre-Clerkship students:** identify on the absence form how you plan to master the objectives of your missed session(s) and connect with your tutor to operationalize your plan.
 - **Clerkship students:** connect with your preceptor to identify how you plan to master the objectives of your missed session.

*Specific scenarios and examples are listed throughout this document.

I HAVE A VIRUS OR OTHER UNEXPECTED SHORT-TERM ILLNESS, WHAT DO I DO?

For *urgent*, short-term medical leave (for example: flu, stomach bug, relapse of a chronic illness or other unexpected short-term illness):

- Notify your preceptors and/or tutors of your absence no less than 1 *hour* in advance of sessions.
- Fill out the appropriate UGME leave form ([Pre-Clerkship Absence or Clerkship Absence](#) form). If you are unable to submit the form on the day of your illness, please ensure it is submitted as soon as possible after the absence has occurred.

I HAVE A BEEN GIVEN A MEDICAL APPOINTMENT WITH ONLY 1-2 WEEKS' NOTICE, WHAT DO I DO?

For short-notice medical leave (for example: you have been given an appointment for diagnostic testing with only 1-2 weeks' notice):

- Connect with Student Affairs to review your situation for any support needed.
- Notify your preceptors and/or tutors of your planned absence as soon as possible. **Clerkship students, please see page 10 for further important details.*
- Fill out the appropriate UGME leave form ([Pre-Clerkship Absence or Clerkship Absence](#) form) with as much notice as possible. Note the reason for leave as medically necessary.
- Specify how you plan to meet the objectives or any sessions that will be missed.

I HAVE A SCHEDULED, PLANNED MEDICAL PROCEDURE AND REQUIRE TIME-OFF, WHAT DO I DO?

For expected short-term medical leave (for example: you have a pre-planned surgery and require time-off):

- Connect with Student Affairs to review your situation for any support needed.
- Notify your preceptors and/or tutors, or departmental administration.
- Fill out the appropriate UGME leave form ([Pre-Clerkship Absence or Clerkship Absence](#) form) with as at least 6 weeks in advance, if possible. Note the reason for leave as medically necessary.
- Specify how you plan to meet the objectives or any sessions that will be missed.

I AM REQUESTING TIME OFF FOR NON-MEDICAL / PERSONAL REASONS, WHAT DO I DO?

- Fill out and submit the appropriate UGME leave form ([Pre-Clerkship Absence or Clerkship Absence](#) form) at least 6 weeks in advance. *For an urgent personal matter, no advance notice is required, however Student Affairs support is required.*
- Specify how you plan to meet the objectives or any sessions that will be missed.
- Note that all requests are **pending** until reviewed by the campus specific Associate or Assistant Dean in UGME (and, additionally, the clinical department for clerks) and may not be approved. **Do not make travel plans or book any travel within curriculum time prior to obtaining appropriate approvals.**
- **Pre-clerkship:**
 - Upon receipt of an approval notification from UGME, contact tutors and preceptors to inform them of any absences and connect with facilitators to operationalize your plan to meet the missed session objectives.
- **Clerkship:**
 - During clerkship, **leave requires final approval by the clinical department; approval by UGME is one required step and does not constitute final approval of a request for leave.**
 - Upon receipt of an approval notification from UGME *and* the clinical department, contact tutors and preceptors to inform them of any absences and connect with facilitators to operationalize your plan to meet the missed session objectives.

WHAT HAPPENS WHEN I CONTACT STUDENT AFFAIRS WITH QUESTIONS REGARDING POSSIBLE LEAVE?

Please reach out to Student Affairs for leaves that may extend to more than one day to ensure that you have quick access to confidential advising and support.

After you contact Student Affairs, the campus specific Assistant Dean or staff in your Student Affairs office will arrange a meeting with you to discuss your needs in confidence. No details are shared with UGME or your tutor/preceptor.

When students are uncertain about whether they need a leave of absence and what the potential impacts might be, they may have options including a leave, an accommodation, or both. If Student Affairs supports your request, our staff will help you contact UGME to determine the next steps. Student Affairs cannot approve your leave; UGME (and ultimately clinical departments in clerkship) are responsible for the approval process. Student Affairs will discuss, support and advocate for requests that require leave and meet leave policy. UGME will then take academic standing and amount of time-off already granted into consideration to consider leave requests fairly and determine the disposition of the request.

If you are receiving medical or psychological care, Student Affairs staff will request that you provide a brief letter (paper or electronic) from the relevant health care practitioner supporting your leave request if it is for a total of three days or longer or in the event you are requesting an exam deferral. Confidential medical documents are kept at the Student Affairs office in a locked file or in password protected electronic files.

I AM PRESENTING AT A CONFERENCE, HOW MUCH TIME CAN I APPLY TO TAKE OFF?

To qualify for academic leave, you must be *presenting* (either in person or a poster) or *officially representing the University* (e.g. CFMS position-holders). Leave is not granted to attend conferences for networking purposes. Please note that conference leave will not be granted during OSCEs, PIERs, and Rural Week

You may be approved to take academic leave to present at a conference; in most cases, this will constitute reasonable travel time to and from the conference, as well as the day of the actual presentation. Proof of acceptance for a presentation or an invitation to attend in an official capacity is typically required. The amount of time granted may differ depending on the location of the specific meeting.

OTHER MEDICAL SCHOOLS GIVE A SET NUMBER OF PERSONAL DAYS. WHY IS THIS DONE DIFFERENTLY AT DAL MED?

The leave policies at Dal are designed to promote and teach professionalism skills that you will need as you have increasing levels of responsibility in patient care. When you are a resident and staff physician, you will need to arrange coverage for your clinical and academic commitments to cover requests for time-off, and requests would often need to be discussed with your department leadership for approval. For scheduled personal time or vacation, many clinical departments require up to 3 months' notice of the request.

PRE-CLERKSHIP STUDENTS (MED 1 AND 2)

I MUST MISS A SINGLE DAY. WHAT SHOULD I DO?

Fill out the [Pre-Clerkship Absence form](#) no less than 1 *hour* in advance of sessions and indicate how you intend to meet the session objectives. If “*I will be missing Skilled Clinician Sessions*” is selected, a notification is automatically sent to the Skilled Clinician coordinators when the form is submitted. It is the student’s responsibility to notify preceptors or tutors of any absences. Notification is **not** to be via a classmate on your behalf unless you are unable to make the notifications yourself.

I UNEXPECTEDLY HAD TO LEAVE DURING A MANDATORY SESSION. WHAT SHOULD I DO?

Fill out the [Pre-Clerkship Absence form](#) and indicate how you intend to meet the session objectives. It is the student’s responsibility to notify preceptors or tutors of any absences and develop a learning plan to make up missed mandatory curriculum. If you had to leave a session due to triggering content, we strongly encourage you to reach out to Student Affairs for support.

I MUST MISS MORE THAN ONE DAY FOR MEDICAL REASONS. WHAT SHOULD I DO?

If your request will extend past one day and is due to medical reasons, please contact a Student Affairs resource for support. After connecting with Student Affairs, please fill out the [Pre-Clerkship Absence form](#). After you fill out the Absence form, it goes to the campus specific Assistant or Associate Dean, UGME, for approval. Following approval, you will receive an approval notification, and the curriculum coordinators will also receive notification. It is the student’s responsibility to notify preceptors or tutors of any absences. It is also the student’s responsibility to develop a learning plan to make up all missed objectives.

Example: If a student has an unexpected short-term illness, they can take time off; however, students are asked to contact Student Affairs for any absences beyond 1 day and would require Student Affairs support and/or medical documentation.

I WOULD LIKE TO REQUEST MORE THAN ONE DAY OFF FOR ANTICIPATED ACADEMIC OR NON-ACADEMIC REASONS. WHAT SHOULD I DO?

If your request is due to academic reasons (presentation at a conference, receipt of an award, etc.) or non-academic reasons (social event, wedding, etc.), please fill out the [Pre-Clerkship Absence form](#) at least 6 weeks in advance. Clearly define the reason for your request and how you propose to master the objectives of missed sections. Failure to provide the required information when completing the form will delay processing. **Do not book or plan travel until you have received approval.** Academic and non-academic short-term leave will not be granted during OSCEs, PIERs, and Rural Week.

After you complete and submit the form, the campus specific Associate Dean, UGME receives the request for review. If approved, you will receive an approval notification, and the curriculum coordinators will also receive notification. It is the student's responsibility to notify preceptors or tutors of any absences and make up missed objectives.

Students should consider their leave request as **pending** until they receive approval from the Associate Dean. Missed time that has not been approved will be considered an unexcused absence.

Many factors are considered when deciding whether anticipated academic and non-academic short-term leave is granted. This may include the reason for the leave, the ability of the student to ensure that any missed curriculum is adequately made up, the length of leave requested, prior periods of leave requested and/or granted, and the student's academic record.

I MUST MISS SKILLED CLINICIAN OR PROCEDURAL SKILLS OR IPE. WHAT CAN I DO?

Students should make every effort to schedule any routine appointments around mandatory sessions. If you have an emergent or urgent appointment, please reach out to Student Affairs for support and fill out and submit the [Pre-Clerkship Absence form](#). If approved, the Skilled Clinician coordinator will reach out to assist you with rescheduling.

PRE-CLERKSHIP ABSENCE FORM

Save × Cancel

New item

* Campus Location

New Brunswick
 Nova Scotia

* Med Year

Med 1
 Med 2

* Leave type

Academic
 Non-Academic
 Medical

* Start date

8/14/2023 00 : 00

* End date

00 : 00

* I will be missing Skilled Clinician Sessions

* I will be missing IPE Sessions

* Describe how you will master the objectives of the missed sessions

Additional student comments

* I would like additional help to make up the objectives.

CLERKSHIP STUDENTS (MED 3, 4, 5)

You may request time-off from a clinical rotation for medical care. This can be done professionally by:

- Asking your preceptor about upcoming clinical schedules.
- Choosing the best time for both your learning needs and that of the service, including best efforts to not disrupt call schedules.
- Letting your preceptor know in advance and ask permission to be absent for the necessary time.
- Adhering to the requirement to submit a [Clerkship Absence Form](#) at least 6 weeks in advance.
- Ensuring patient handover for the time you may be absent, if within a workday.
- Informing your preceptor of your expected return time and returning to the service as soon as possible. If absent for an appointment, as soon as you can after the appointment.

You may request time-off from a clinical rotation for other reasons, however all time-off requests will be carefully considered and may not be granted. All requests for time-off during clerkship must be approved by UGME **and** the supervising department of the rotation affected.

Please note that the following step differs from Pre-clerkship leave; the final approval for time-off requests lies with the department. Even if your leave is approved by UGME, ***the department may decline your request (especially on certain rotations)***.

Requests for time-off during mandatory sessions (such as OSCEs and PIER) will be denied unless there is an emergent medical concern, as attendance for all skills and seminars is compulsory.

I UNEXPECTEDLY, OR DUE TO ILLNESS, MUST MISS A SINGLE DAY. WHAT SHOULD I DO?

- Complete the [Clerkship Absence Form](#) no less than *1 hour* in advance of the beginning of your clinical experience to notify UGME.
- Contact anyone who needs to know you will be absent. These may include your immediate preceptor, tutor, a Chief Resident you may be working with on rotation, and/or relevant departmental administrators. ***Leaving a message with the hospital switchboard, ward clerk, or fellow clinical clerks is not considered adequate notification.*** Ensure with these communications that there is a plan for any on-call duties that you may miss to be covered.

This is especially important for clerks who may require being excused from being on call on an emergent basis.

Reach out to Student Affairs for any leave beyond one day or if you just want support.

I MUST MISS A SINGLE DAY FOR A FUTURE MEDICAL APPOINTMENT. WHAT SHOULD I DO?

You should make every effort to schedule any routine appointments around mandatory sessions and scheduled clinical rotations. You are required to:

- Fill out the [Clerkship Absence Form](#) as far in advance as possible.
- Notify preceptors and/or the relevant departmental administration as far in advance as possible of your planned and approved absences.

MY MEDICAL APPOINTMENT IS WEEKS AWAY AND HAS BEEN APPROVED. I WILL BE ON A DIFFERENT ROTATION AND ON A DIFFERENT SERVICE BY THEN. HOW DO I LET MY PRECEPTOR KNOW?

- Fill out the [Clerkship Absence Form](#) as far in advance as possible. as far in advance as possible.
- Email the rotation administrator and, if known, your preceptor, once you know their name to inform them of the appointment and how much time you will need. In the email let them know that you are looking forward to working with the service and aim to minimize any time-off service but need to attend an appointment.

MY PRECEPTOR SEEMS UNHAPPY ABOUT THIS REQUEST. WHAT SHOULD I DO?

You can let them know that you remain committed to learning. It can feel awkward to take care of your needs when patient care and service learning are also priorities. If you feel concerned that taking the necessary time will impact your evaluation or the quality of your learning, please contact Student Affairs.

I WOULD LIKE TO REQUEST TIME-OFF (SINGLE DAY OR LONGER) TO ATTEND A PERSONAL EVENT. WHAT SHOULD I DO?

- Fill out the [Clerkship Absence Form](#) at least 6 weeks in advance. The request will be reviewed by UGME and should be considered pending until you receive notification that it is approved or denied.
- If the request is supported by UGME, it will then be forwarded to the clinical department for final approval.

WHEN SHOULD I NOTIFY UGME OF MY PREGNANCY?

By 20 weeks gestation, pregnant clerks must advise their campus specific Assistant Dean Clerkship of their due date so that information can be conveyed by UGME to any services to ensure on call duties are appropriately adjusted for 28 weeks and onward. At this same time, clerks should also advise of their intended parental leave plans and submit the appropriate LOA form. If the LOA date changes, a revised form will need to be submitted.

I AM WRITING MY MCC EXAM - CAN I REQUEST TIME-OFF TO DO THIS DURING PIER OR AN OSCE?

The MCC exam is not a university exam and has flexibility for when students may write. Requests for leave to write the MCC exam during PIER or an OSCE will not be granted as attendance is compulsory for both PIER and OSCEs.

CLERKSHIP ABSENCE FORM

Please note that more options will pop up as you select your campus, leave type, med year, etc.

UGME Clerkship Short Term LOA

* Campus Location

* Leave type

* Med Year

Save
Cancel

* Start Date

 :

* End Date

 :

Please note: Statutory Holidays and weekends are not assumed days off during Clerkship. Clerks must indicate the complete period of time off requested.

If you are being released from call on the weekend before or after your requested time off, please include all of those dates. PIER sessions and COE are mandatory.

Preceptor Name (if known):