

**Policy and Procedure for  
Excused Absences  
For Religious Holidays and Activities**

(A) Policy statement

Recognizing that the religious diversity of our students may result in conflicts between students' religious beliefs/practices and certain educational activities, PCOM will attempt to make accommodations that do not unduly burden faculty and staff, disproportionately affect the general student population involved in the affected educational activity, and where applicable, honor the primacy of our commitment to patient care, while ensuring that the requirements of the prescribed curriculum are upheld. Students who believe they have a need to be absent for religious reasons, from any exam, during any course, clinical activity, experiential activity, clerkship or other required educational activity, shall notify the relevant authority as soon as possible after an impending conflict becomes apparent – preferably prior to or at the beginning of the course, clinical activity, experiential activity, clerkship or other activity. If it is established that there is a legitimate basis for excusing a student, for religious reasons, from any exam, or be absent during a course, clinical activity, experiential activity, clerkship and other required educational activity, reasonable accommodations will be provided where possible, including the opportunity to take the exam or make up the part of the course, clinical activity, experiential activity, clerkship or other required educational activity in conflict, if this is indicated and consistent with curricular policies. Absences excused for religious holidays or observances do not relieve a student from responsibility for curriculum content during an absence. This policy is intended to allow students to exercise their religious beliefs while still continuing to meet their academic requirements. This policy is not intended to allow students to be granted excessive absences from the curriculum or to be granted significant alterations of the prescribed curriculum, regardless of one's religious beliefs.

(B) Purpose of policy

The purpose of this policy is to acknowledge respect for the religious diversity of PCOM students by providing excused absences in cases where genuine conflicts exist between students' religious beliefs/practices and educational activities. If it is established that there is a legitimate religious need for the affected student(s) to be excused from an examination or other required educational activity, an opportunity to make up the activity in conflict shall be provided if possible. Such accommodations must not unduly burden faculty and staff, must not disproportionately affect the general student population involved in the affected educational activity, must honor, if applicable, the primacy of our commitment to patient care and must not significantly alter the prescribed curriculum requirements.

(D) Procedure

1. During the didactic portion(s) of the student's curriculum, a student who believes they need an excused absence for religious reasons, shall make a request, in writing, to the Course Director with a copy to the Chief Student Affairs Officer in Philadelphia or Director of the Center for Student Affairs in Georgia, as appropriate, as soon as possible

after an impending conflict becomes apparent, preferably prior to or at the beginning of the block or other activity. Requests for excused absences, because of conflicts with one's religious holidays or observances, must be approved by the Chief Student Affairs Officer in Philadelphia or the Director of the Center for Student Affairs in Georgia, as appropriate, who may request additional information or documentation prior to rendering a final decision.

2. During the clinical/experiential portion(s) of the curriculum, students who believe they have a need for an excused absence shall make a request, in writing as soon as possible after an impending conflict becomes apparent, preferably prior to or at the beginning of the clinical activity, experiential activity, clerkship or other educational activity:
  - a. To the following, as appropriate to the student's program:
    - i. Assistant Dean of Undergraduate Clinical Education for Osteopathic Medicine in Philadelphia and Georgia
    - ii. Clinical Director for the Physician Assistant Program
    - iii. Assistant Program Director for the Forensic Medicine
    - iv. Director of Clinical Training for the Clinical PsyD Program
    - v. Director of Clinical Training for the School Psychology Programs
    - vi. Associate Director of the Program for the Master of Science in Mental Health Counseling Program
    - vii. Director of Experiential Education for the School of Pharmacy students in Georgia
  - b. Include the following
    - a. The date(s) the student is requesting an excused absence for and the reason for the request.
    - b. The date of the request and the student's signature.

Requests for excused absences during the clinical/experiential portion(s) of the curriculum must be approved by the appropriate person for each program, as listed above in (2.a.) or his/her designee, with input from the Chief Student Affairs Officer in Philadelphia or Director of the Center for Student Affairs in Georgia, as applicable, when necessary. Additional information or documentation may be requested, prior to rendering a decision

3. In the didactic portions(s) of the curriculum,, once an absence has been approved from any required educational activity, the Chief Student Affairs Officer in Philadelphia or Director of the Center for Student Affairs in Georgia, as appropriate, will notify relevant parties of the decision. Students are also encouraged to notify the relevant course instructor of their situation.

During the didactic portion(s) of the curriculum, if an excused absence has been granted from a written or practical examination, it is the responsibility of the \_\_\_\_\_ faculty, the \_\_\_\_\_ and the \_\_\_\_\_, where indicated, to decide when the make-up examination will be administered. Such accommodations must not unduly burden faculty and staff or disproportionately affect the general student population involved in the affected educational activity.

4. In the clinical/experiential portion(s) of the curriculum, once an excused absence has been approved for any clinical activity, experiential activity, or from any clerkship the appropriate person for each program, as designated in (2.a.), will notify the involved parties, including the faculty, instructors/preceptors and/or residents with whom the student is performing their clinical/experiential activity and the clinical/educational coordinator at the assigned/affiliated clinical/experiential site. Students are also encouraged to notify the relevant parties of their scheduled absence from any clinical responsibility.

During the clinical/experiential portion(s) of the curriculum, if an excused absence has been granted from a written or practical examination, it is the responsibility of the appropriate person in each program, as designated in (2.a.) or his/her designee, where indicated, to decide when the make-up examination will be administered. Such accommodations must not unduly burden faculty and staff or disproportionately affect the general student population involved in the affected educational activity.

5. When an excused absence has been granted during the didactic or clinical experiential portion of the curriculum, from required educational activities, an opportunity to make up the activity in conflict will be provided, when possible, if this is indicated and consistent with the course/clinical or experiential policy.
  - a. During the didactic portion(s) of the curriculum, it is the responsibility of the Course Director to decide if an opportunity for a make-up experience or assignment will be provided and whether or not a make-up experience or assignment is required. Many blocks, for example, do not provide make-up quizzes, though no points would be deducted if a student has an excused absence for any reason, including for religious observances. In addition, make-up experiences may stimulate the original experience that was missed or may involve an alternative assignment (e.g., writing a paper in lieu of missed attendance)
  - b. During the clinical/experiential portion of the curriculum, it is the responsibility of the appropriate person for each program, as listed in (2.a.) to decide if an opportunity for a make-up experience or assignment is required and whether or not a make-up experience or assignment will be provided. In addition, make-up experiences may stimulate the original experience that was missed (e.g., additional clinical hours) or may involve an alternative assignment (e.g., writing a paper in lieu of missed attendance)
6. Failure to follow these procedures will result in an unexcused absence. Unexcused absences will result in a grade of zero on any missed examination, quizzes, assignments, or experiences, and may result in failure of the block or clerkship. In addition, unexcused

absences may result in the filing of a Professional Behavior Report, which could lead to disciplinary action, up to and including suspension or dismissal.