

Absence and Leave Policy

School of Medicine

Faculty of Medicine and Health Sciences

January 2024

Definitions

Disability is defined in the Equality Act 2010 as a physical or mental impairment which has a substantial and long-term adverse effect on an individual's ability to carry out normal day-to-day activities.

Long-term sickness absence is a period of sickness absence which lasts for 20 working days or more.

Reasonable adjustments are changes to the learning environment and / or learning arrangements that allow learners with disability to study safely and without disadvantage.

Unauthorised absence is where the absence notification or certification procedure has not been followed or the reason for absence doesn't meet the criteria for authorisation.

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Purpose

In line with the MB ChB General Regulations, the Medical School stipulates that all students must meet the standards and learning outcomes defined by the General Medical Council in 'Outcomes for Graduates 2018' in order to successfully graduate. The nature of the MB ChB programme, the design of the curriculum, group work and self-directed learning structure do not allow for repeated missed sessions or for sessions where students have not been fully engaged. Therefore, students are expected to attend punctually and engage with 100% of all scheduled programme activities in order to give them the best chance of success on the programme.

This policy outlines requirements and processes for Undergraduate Absence reporting, authorisation and monitoring in the School of Medicine. The policy provides guidance on the different types of absence and how these should be reported, and any notice periods that apply. It also outlines the principles of monitoring absence and supporting students to improve their attendance as well as referral into the concerns process where appropriate.

Scope

This policy applies to all years of the MB ChB programme and it should be read in conjunction with the engagement monitoring policies in place within each phase of the programme

Policy Details

This policy has been developed to provide a supportive and professional learning environment that maximises the chance of academic success and limits the consequences for students when genuine absences do occur.

Attendance Expectations

- The MB ChB programme is only taught full-time and cannot be studied part time. Students are expected to attend punctually and engage with 100% of all scheduled programme activities in order to give them the best chance of success on the programme. All engagement will be face to face unless notified otherwise.
- Students must undertake all associated assessments and attend meetings, and any other activities, deemed to be compulsory for that student by the School.
- The School will provide students with a structured timetable and a schedule of learning events. The School will also give clear notification of all meetings and additional sessions outside of the timetable for which attendance is compulsory
- Teaching locations vary across the programme and between students, but all students should expect to attend activities on campus as well as to travel to our partner hospitals and GP surgeries and to a variety of other healthcare settings and community locations.
- Attendance and engagement with all scheduled teaching sessions activities and meetings at the scheduled time and place is mandatory.
- Students are responsible for planning their living and travel arrangements in order that they arrive on time. Late arrival may be recorded as absence or non-engagement if deemed appropriate by the person leading the session.

- Non-attendance without prior authorisation must only take place in exceptional and unforeseen circumstances. Failure to report absences in a timely manner may result in the absence being classed as “unauthorised”.
- Student attendance and engagement are governed by the MB ChB General Regulations.
- The School may terminate the studies of any student who persistently fails to attend, or engage with, the programme for which they are registered without medical or other good cause for doing so.

Absence reporting

- Students must demonstrate professional attitudes and behaviour during the programme that are consistent with the high standards expected of a doctor, this includes reporting absence because of illness or exceptional personal circumstances.
- Students should report all absences, using the relevant forms in a timely manner. This will ensure the correct personnel are notified and the provision of additional support from the School and the Wellbeing team where required.
- A student who fails to follow the absence reporting procedures set out in this document will be considered to have taken unauthorised absence and may be referred to the concerns process.
- Students should be aware that although an absence may be considered justifiable, a student must be able to meet the learning outcomes of the programme before they can progress. Students who fail to meet the learning outcomes of a programme, even where evidence supporting the absence exists, will not be eligible to progress.

Reporting different types of Absence

- Absences are divided into two main categories either unforeseen or exceptional absences.
- Exceptional Absence should be requested as far as possible in advance where the absence is planned (e.g., funeral or representing the University in an official event). Where an absence occurs unexpectedly and advance notification is not possible because it could not have been pre-empted (e.g., in event of illness), it is expected that students will inform the School on the first day of any period of absence by completing the Exceptional Absence or sickness notification form on the VLE.
- Where a student is unable to access the form, typically in an emergency situation, the absence should be reported directly to the School by email (fmhs-studentsupport@buckingham.ac.uk)
- Where it is impossible for a student to report on the first day of absence, students should report at the first possible opportunity (normally no later than 3 days after the first day of any period of absence) and provide explanation of the reasons which prevented them notifying their absence earlier.
- Late notification of absence, without good cause, will only be permissible in exceptional circumstances. If late notification of absence is not accepted this will result in an unauthorised absence being recorded.

Unforeseen Absences

Students should report any unforeseen absences, which could not have been planned for in advance, such as sickness absence, personal emergencies and compassionate leave on the day of the absence, before the relevant teaching session begins if possible.

Sickness Absence

Sickness Absence refers to illness related to both physical and/or mental wellbeing.

Sickness Absence < 5 working days (Self Certification)

Students will be able to 'self-certify' sickness absence for up to one week (five working days) during teaching periods by completing a self-certification sickness form before the relevant teaching sessions begins.

If the sickness period extends beyond 5 working days, the student must seek medical advice and obtain evidence from their GP or hospital to accompany their sickness form.

The self-certification process does not apply during assessment and qualifying examination periods. If students need to be absent from assessments due to illness, they should declare themselves "unfit to sit" to the student support team on the assessment day and seek medical advice. Students should then submit medical evidence for approval through the mitigating circumstances process before the published deadline on the VLE.

Students with a short-term Sickness Absence will be able to re-join their studies immediately.

Sickness Absence > 5 working days (Medical Certification)

For health-related absences beyond one week, students must obtain a Medical Certificate signed by a medical practitioner and attached to the sickness form.

In all cases, medical evidence will only be accepted from the student's registered GP, Occupational Health or professional specialist and not from any family or friend irrespective of whether they are medically qualified.

Students with health-related absences beyond one week will be referred into the health concerns process until they are fit to resume their studies.

Depending on the length of time away and what was missed, sick leave may require an action plan and/or conditions for return to be put into place to mitigate any educational impact that may have occurred.

Authorised periods of absence should not normally exceed 4 weeks in total across the academic year. Students with health-related absences 4 weeks in total may be required to suspend their studies.

Students with a long-term Sickness Absence and/or who have suspended studies for reasons of ill health may require occupational health clearance before they re-join their studies.

Exceptional Absences

- The Medical School recognises that there may be exceptional circumstances that may prevent a student from attending on a particular day. If such circumstances arise, students should submit an exceptional absence request form at least 14 days in advance of the

proposed absence including evidence of the need to be elsewhere on the requested date(s). Any requests must be supported by evidence where applicable.

- Exceptional absence is NOT additional holiday entitlement and should only be requested where absence cannot reasonably be avoided.
- Exceptional absences will not be approved during assessment periods.
- Requests for exceptional absence during teaching weeks that are submitted within the 14 day timeframe will be reviewed by the student support team and will be either approved or rejected before the proposed absence date.
- Each request will be considered on an individual basis and decisions will be made using the criteria stated in the examples below as a guide and, where necessary, at the discretion of the student support lead. Examples of potential reasons for exceptional absence, suggestions for appropriate evidence and guidance criteria for approval are included within the appendix.
- Decisions may also take into account the number of absences already recorded or approved for the student, the timing within the year or programme, the teaching activities planned for the day(s) being requested and/or the contents of any support plans or learning agreements in place for the student. Where appropriate, advice may also be given as to how the proposed absence might be mitigated or avoided.
- Exceptional absence requests that are submitted retrospectively or within 14 days of the absence date will not be approved unless it is clear from the evidence provided that the circumstances were of a nature that was incompatible with the expected timeframe.
- Individual requests must be made for each period of absence, it is not possible to include a series of non-consecutive dates within one request.
- The Medical School reserves the right to refuse requests for absence or to request further information. If an exceptional absence request is rejected, a reason will be provided and the student may resubmit the request with further detail and/or evidence if they wish.
- If a request is rejected but the student takes the time off anyway, this will be recorded as an unauthorised absence and deemed as evidence of unprofessional conduct and a professionalism concern will be raised.

Compassionate Leave

- Compassionate Leave may be requested in the case of bereavement or if a close family member or dependent has either a severe life-threatening illness or severe accident.
- The amount of leave granted will depend on the circumstances and will be dealt with on an individual basis in consultation with the Student Support Lead and also the relevant Phase Lead or Dean if necessary. However, authorised periods of absence should not normally exceed 4 weeks in total across the academic year. Students who request extended absence beyond 4 weeks in total may be required to suspend their studies.
- Depending on the length of time away and what was missed, compassionate leave may require an action plan and/or conditions for return to be put into place to mitigate any educational impact that may have occurred.
- The student support team will be notified of any Compassionate Leave to ensure students are also offered appropriate additional support.

Voluntary suspension of studies

- A student may be permitted to suspend their studies and take a leave of absence from the University only with the prior agreement of the Dean of the Faculty of Medicine and Health Sciences, or a designated nominee, for a specified period, normally up to one academic year.
- Only in exceptional circumstances will applications for a suspension of studies in excess of one academic year or further extension of suspensions of studies be considered. Any such applications should be made in writing to the Dean of the Faculty of Medicine and Health Sciences, who shall, informed by specialist advice, if necessary, determine what conditions, if any, shall apply to the permission.
- Periods of absence due to a suspension of studies count towards the allowed maximum period of registration, and a student may not normally be allowed to return to the University to complete their studies once they have reached their maximum period of registration, normally 7 years.
- A student can request to suspend their studies for the following reasons:
 - Medical reasons, certificated by an appropriate doctor,
 - Maternity/paternity/adoption leave;
 - Bereavement;
 - Other valid personal reasons;
 - Personal financial hardship;
- The University will request documentary evidence to support any request for a suspension of studies.
- Applications under this regulation should be made to the medical school as early as possible, and no later than six weeks before the date of a student's next end of year progression point. Applications received after this date will only be considered in the case of bereavement, sudden illness or accidental injury.
- During periods of suspension, students are requested to respond to any communications received from the University regarding re-registration. These written communications will normally be received no later than one month before the period of suspension is due to complete.
- Failure to respond to communications within the specified timeframe may result in the termination of studies.
- International students on a student visa are responsible for ensuring that they meet all visa requirements during the time their studies are suspended.
- Students cannot withdraw or suspend their studies within 6 weeks of their next end of year progression point date or prior to results being published from recent assessments.

Recording of Absences

- Once submitted by the Student, absences will be logged within the Student Record System and processed in line with UK General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR).
- All absences will be reviewed and either be approved, not approved or marked as pending should further information be required.
- The absence is recorded as unauthorised where there is no advanced notification or known reason provided, or if request for leave has previously been rejected.

- Absences that are logged though the engagement monitoring processes that are not accompanied by an approved absence request will be recorded in the student record system as unauthorised absences.
- Absences that are not notified to the staff member a student is due to report to may be recorded in the student record system as unauthorised absences.
- Student attendance and engagement data will be recorded and retained for the duration of a student’s studies with the University and may be retained for 6 years following departure from the University.
- The use of data in this way is based on the principal of legitimate interest, and supports our duty of care to students, which arises from the University’s contract with students. Low engagement may indicate a need for support and the use of data to help identify such students ensures that appropriate interventions can be considered and offered if necessary. Where students are studying under a Sponsored Visa the University has a legal obligation to confirm attendance and engagement for the UKVI. For this reason, it is not possible for students to opt out of the collection of student attendance and engagement data.

Monitoring of absences

- Attendance and engagement with programme activities will be monitored according to the separate engagement policies for each phase of the programme and any unauthorised absence or non-engagement will be reported through referrals to the faculty student support team to ensure students have appropriate support.
- Students referred due to unauthorised absence and/or non engagement will work with the student support team to develop an action plan to overcome any barriers to engagement and catch up on missed learning opportunities.
- Persistent non-engagement with the programme or evidence that support intervention to facilitate attendance and/or engagement is not improving the situation will result in a referral to the concerns process.
- Professionalism concerns will be raised for persistent unauthorised absence or misuse of the absence reporting process and may result in a referral to the fitness to practise process.
- Sickness and approved exceptional absence records will be monitored weekly during term time by the faculty student support team and at each review, students will be allocated one of the categories below based on their overall absence/non-engagement and any known reasons for them.

Category	
Satisfactory	Any student absence requests are minimal, appropriate and do not show a pattern of non-engagement with the programme
Low level non engagement	a) There is a low-level pattern of non-engagement with the programme due to authorised absences or declared sickness leave. b) There is a low-level pattern of non-engagement with the programme that includes multiple incidences of unauthorised absence.

	<p>The students will be offered an opportunity to meet with their personal tutor or the faculty student support team to discuss barriers to engagement, relevant support routes and to develop an action plan to include how to catch up on missed academic content. They may be referred to the student support team by their personal tutor for further support if necessary.</p>
<p>Repeated or regular non-engagement</p>	<p>a) There is repeated or a pattern of authorised absence from the programme at a rate that may represent a trajectory towards unsatisfactory engagement.</p> <p>b) There is repeated or a pattern of absence from the programme at a rate that may represent a trajectory towards unsatisfactory engagement and that includes multiple incidences of unauthorised absence.</p> <p>The student will be required to attend a meeting with the faculty student support team to document an action plan to improve the engagement going forwards. The student will be monitored on a regular basis (normally weekly) with follow up meetings with the faculty student support team arranged as necessary. Students with unauthorised absences at this stage will be notified that further unauthorised absence will result in a professionalism concern being raised and escalation to the persistent unauthorised non-engagement category.</p>
<p>Unsatisfactory engagement</p>	<p>There is a concerning pattern or rate of absence or more than 3 weeks have been missed in any one academic year. Further supported remediation is likely to be necessary and action plans will be reviewed by a senior member of the student support team. Health concerns may be raised, and students may be asked to attend Occupational Health appointments. Students will be reminded of engagement expectations and relevant support and informed that if their engagement cannot be improved in the short term, they should consider suspending their studies.</p>
<p>Persistent unsatisfactory engagement</p>	<p>This is for students with primarily authorised absence that has not resolved or substantially improved within a month after an unsatisfactory engagement notification or who have missed a significant proportion of learning opportunities in a single academic year for any reason. Professionalism concerns and/or health concerns may be raised or escalated where appropriate. Students will be issued with a warning that their engagement has fallen below the expected standard, and they are at risk of compulsory suspension of studies, along with any conditions of continued study (to be agreed with the Dean) and a review date at which compulsory suspension may be considered.</p>
<p>Persistent unauthorised non-engagement</p>	<p>This is for students with a continued pattern of unauthorised non-engagement with the programme without evidence of mitigation or with evidence of misuse of the absence system. A professionalism concern will be raised, and students will be issued with a warning that their engagement has fallen below the expected standard, and they are at risk of compulsory suspension or withdrawal from studies. They</p>

	will also be notified of any conditions of continued study (to be agreed with the Dean) and a review date at which compulsory suspension or withdrawal of studies may be considered.
Compulsory suspension or withdrawal from studies	This is for students with a continued deterioration, failed improvement in engagement following a warning or who have missed so much time that it is no longer considered realistic for them to complete the necessary programme activities and/or meet the required learning outcomes in the time remaining within the academic year. The specific length of time missed will depend on many factors but would normally be 4 weeks of a single academic year. Students whose absences, for whatever reason, exceed limits defined above may be temporarily withdrawn from the programme, to return at the beginning of the year, or rotation, during which they withdrew, by the Dean of the Faculty of Medicine and Health Sciences, or their designated nominee. Where there are persistent unauthorised absences and/or failure to engage in concerns remediation processes, a student will be deemed in neglect of their academic obligations and their studies will be terminated. Students will have the right of appeal.
Improving	This is for students whose engagement record has improved substantially after having been unsatisfactory previously. Students in this situation will be considered as satisfactory for most purposes but may enter or re-enter the concerns process directly if there is a subsequent decline in engagement.

- Students allocated to categories other than the satisfactory category will be notified of their status and supported and monitored as indicated.
- Reviews will typically take place weekly during teaching periods and at each review, students can either stay in the same category or move to a different one. Students may be allocated any category that applies to their situation, there is no requirement to pass through all of the categories or to move in a particular order.

Support

The medical school understands that students may need support and guidance as they deal with issues leading to periods of absence. The faculty and wider university have a range of support services available to support students. Students are encouraged to look after their physical health and mental wellbeing and to seek additional help and support whenever required.

The steps above aim to support an improvement in engagement and consequently an improved chance of success on the programme from both academic and professional perspectives. During those steps, it is possible that broader support needs are identified that may have contributed to a student's absence. In such cases, it may be appropriate to refer the student to additional support.

Support for Health Condition.

Where there is an extended period of sickness absence or a concerning pattern of illness (e.g. the same day each week) or absences due to sickness alone reach the criteria for the unsatisfactory

category above, Student Support Team will arrange for a meeting to discuss the student's health and fitness to study on the programme. An exception to this might be where the absence is due to a single (but substantial) event and an imminent resolution is expected (e.g. a planned hospital admission with a relatively short recovery time) or where the absence is solely due to a student's disability and there are reasonable adjustments in place that mitigate the impact of those absences (students in this situation should refer to the reasonable adjustments policy).

An important part of this process will be to ensure that adequate support structures are in place for the student. An academic support plan to be put in place, which must include a period of catch-up of learning opportunities.

The medical school will support students with sickness absence and health concerns through the student support team, the wellbeing skills and diversity team, the occupational health team and the reasonable adjustment policy where appropriate. In order to do this, the medical school may request further medical evidence and/or require the student to attend an Occupational Health appointment and in some cases, the medical school may recommend that a student suspends their studies on a temporary basis.

Where students have been off sick for a period or have deferred their studies due to health, they may be required to attend an Occupational Health assessment prior to returning to studies.

In cases where a student's sickness record or the management of a health condition means that they may be a danger to themselves, their colleagues or their patients, students should be referred to the fitness to practice process. In consultation with the student support lead, the patient safety lead and the Dean, this referral may be accompanied by conditions of continued study or a compulsory temporary suspension of studies in line with the general regulations.

Academic support

Most academic requirements to catch up due to absence will be relatively low level and can be monitored via personal tutors without the use of the academic concerns process. However, academic support referral may be required in circumstances where students have a need for complex or bespoke academic support or monitoring of progress.

In the context of absence and leave, this may include students who have conditions attached to their studies such as removal from placement or students who have suspended their studies and return within the same academic year. This might also be relevant to students who have missed components of mandatory training that are not due to be repeated within the current academic year.

Responsibilities

Students are responsible for:

- Attending and engaging in all timetabled learning/teaching sessions associated with their programme of study as instructed, and ensuring they have their participation recorded. All teaching will be face to face unless notified otherwise.

- Notifying in advance, using the appropriate form, that they expect to be absent from timetabled classes.
- Notifying any unforeseen absences as soon as practically possible.
- For sickness lasting more than 5 days, submitting a medical certificate, or other relevant evidence, to student support.
- Ensuring that they check their University of Buckingham email account on a regular basis for any formal notifications/communications.
- Making full use of any support mechanisms within the University which may help facilitate successful completion of their programme
- Notifying the medical school in writing if they face any difficulties accessing recommended support
- Ensuring they catch up on any missed academic content from instances or periods of absence or leave.

Academic/ teaching staff are responsible for:

- Reminding students of the importance of attendance and engagement at learning and teaching sessions through induction and throughout the programme.
- Monitoring engagement with teaching activities in line with the relevant engagement policy
- Signposting students whose attendance and engagement are giving cause for concern to support services available within the School or University.

Faculty of Medicine and Health Sciences is responsible for ensuring that:

- Regular reviews are taken of attendance/absence data and communications are made to students whose attendance and engagement are giving cause for concern in a timely manner.
- Appropriate systems are in place at School level for students to provide notification of planned absences or report any unexpected absences.
- Authorised periods of absence should not exceed 4 weeks in total across the academic year. Students who request extended absence beyond 4 weeks in total may be required to suspend their studies. Any requests for extended periods of absence will be subject to approval by the Dean.
- Data is reviewed for patterns of non-attendance and where appropriate referring students to their Personal Tutor for discussions on reasons for pattern. (FMHS Engagement Policy)
- All students have access to a Personal Tutor.
- There are regular reviews of students' progress on their programme, including attendance, completion of assessment requirements and academic achievement, and that appropriate action is taken either to help students achieve their academic aims or, where students are failing to engage with the programme, provide appropriate guidance.
- Students are advised of the support available to them, whether provided by the School or elsewhere.
- In the case of the cancellation of a teaching session or absence of a member of teaching staff, students are informed at the earliest opportunity of the alternative arrangements for the class.

Data

- All engagement data will be processed in line with UK General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR).
- Student data will be collected and analysed in compliance with the University's Data Protection Policies, and according to the terms outlined within this Data Use Policy. The use of data in this way is based on the principal of legitimate interest, and supports our duty of care to students, which arises from the Faculty's agreement with students. Low engagement, and or absences, may indicate a need for support and the use of data to help identify such students ensures that appropriate interventions can be considered and offered if necessary.

Additionally, where students are studying under a Sponsored Visa the University has a legal obligation to confirm attendance and engagement for the UKVI.

For this reason, it is not possible for students to opt out of the collection of student engagement data.

- Student Engagement and absence data will be recorded and retained for the duration of a student's studies with the University, and may be retained for 6 years following departure from the University
- Students have a right to view the data that is held about them, and student details will be provided in electronic format on request. Students should allow 3 weeks for their request to be processed.
- Only staff directly involved in teaching and supporting students will have access to engagement and absence data and this will not be disclosed to parents, guardians or other third parties except in the following special circumstances.
 - UKVI Student Visa requirement

UK Visa and Immigration (UKVI) regulations mean that Student Visa holders are required to engage with their studies as a condition of their Visa. The University, as an immigration sponsor, also has statutory responsibilities to adhere to, as set out by UKVI. Evidence of attendance and engagement may be supplied to UKVI on request and failure to engage for a sustained period may invoke a statutory obligation to report absence to UKVI.

Related Policies

1 Phase 1 engagement policy

2 Phase 2 engagement policy

3 Concerns policy

Document Control

Date policy approved: October 2016

Date of policy review approval: February 2023, updated January 2024

Date of next policy review: Academic year 2024/25

Addendum

Annex Guidance on exceptional absences

Examples of potential reasons for exceptional absence, suggestions for appropriate evidence and guidance criteria for approval are included within the following subsections:

1.1.1 Medical Appointments

Wherever possible, medical appointments should always be made outside of scheduled teaching time. If appointments need to take place within teaching time, the absence request should be submitted as soon as the appointment date is known and the appointment letter should be supplied as evidence. Students are welcome to redact medical details from appointment letters if they wish as the medical school only needs to see the name of the organisation and patient and the date, time, location and broad purpose of the appointment.

1.1.2 Religious festivals

Many religions and beliefs have special festivals or spiritual observance days and given the complexity and condensed nature of the curriculum it is not possible to design a timetable which allows for all religious observance. Therefore, students may request leave for religious purposes and decisions will be made on a case-by-case basis following the general principles outlined below:

1. Approved absence for religious purposes should be for a limited period; normally one or two days in any given year.
2. Requests for leave must be made at least 14 days prior to the date of the event. Where the exact date of a religious festival is only known shortly beforehand, the first potential date should be requested 14 days in advance, and this can be updated up until the actual festival date if necessary. Requests submitted less than fourteen days prior to an event without prior consultation will not be approved.
3. Requests for partial absence from class for prayers or other religious activities on a regular basis will not be approved. Students should plan prayer times outside of scheduled sessions wherever possible and if this is not possible, students should make use of natural breaks within sessions, in consultation with the person leading each session if necessary.
4. Students are responsible for ensuring that any programme activities missed due to religious observance are caught up as much as possible in their own time. Missing course work or teaching activities due to religious observance will not be accepted as mitigating circumstances for failure in exams.
5. Every effort will be made by the Medical School to avoid a student being required to sit an examination on a day of religious observance. However, the Medical School reserves the right to hold examinations on such days if no alternative time is possible. Exceptional absence requests cannot be approved for assessment days.

1.1.3 Parental leave

The Medical School understands that some students, or their partners, will have a pregnancy or adoption during the programme and will need a period of leave. Individual days off for scans and midwife appointments etc. will normally be approved using the same principles as for medical appointments. For longer term leave requirements, the Medical School will facilitate the provision of maternity/paternity/adoption leave on broadly the same terms as if the student were in employment within the NHS. All students must however meet the standards set by the Medical School and GMC in order to progress within the programme and to graduate. This means that any substantial period of absence is likely to result in a delay to the date of graduation. Please see the 'Policy for Parental Leave for the MB ChB programme' for more details.

1.1.4 Visa/Passport renewals

Some international students may need to renew visas or passports during their time at the Medical School. Requests for leave must be submitted as soon as an appointment has been made and proof of the renewal requirement and appointment should be included with the request. Approved absence will normally be limited to the day of the appointment only. Students should make themselves aware of when their documents may need renewal and the routes to achieving this so that appointments can be made outside of teaching time wherever possible and within holiday periods if overseas travel is required.

1.1.5 Educational activities

Students may request leave from the programme if they wish to attend medical conferences or other educational activities. Leave will be considered provided the student is contributing to the event (e.g. by giving an oral presentation or a poster presentation) or achieving some valuable career training or work experience. Typically, the student will also be presenting work they have carried out on the programme and/or be representing and enhancing the reputation of the Medical School in some way. Requests for this category of leave should be preceded by a discussion with the Student Support Lead and evidence should be provided by the conference organiser or training provider. Approval will normally be allowed on only one occasion during the programme for a maximum of one week (5 working days) and this must not be during a summative assessment period.

1.1.6 Professional development

Students may wish to develop their professional interests by attending events such as seminars or careers fairs. Requests for leave for these purposes should include details of the event to be attended and evidence of having booked a place. Any such activity will not be approved if it would disrupt a period of academic catch up that has been put in place for the student or otherwise risk their academic progression so students with academic concerns are advised to discuss plans with the student support team before making any bookings. Approval within this category will normally be for a single day on only one occasion per year.

1.1.7 Extramural activities

Some students may be members of committees and if these are part of the University structure, then attendance at the committee is accepted as part of the normal student activity. It is, however, important to inform the relevant Block or Unit Lead of any absence. If students need to be absent to attend committees external to the University, exceptional absence requests are required and evidence of the student's role in the committee and the meeting invitation should be provided as evidence. Similarly, if students are members of sports teams or other groups unrelated to the programme and need to be absent to represent the University, they should submit exceptional absence requests with details of the event and their role within it. Committee/team membership that requires absence from the programme on more than 2-3 days per year should be discussed with the student support lead in advance of committing to the role.

1.1.8 Family or personal events

1.1.9 The faculty does not offer a personal holiday allowance during term time and therefore requests for absence to attend family events or other personal activities will not normally be approved. However, in exceptional circumstances, such as the wedding of an immediate family member or a funeral, absence may be authorised at the discretion of the student support lead or student support manager. Any such authorisation will normally be for one day only and will normally only be approved where the student has a satisfactory engagement record and where it is considered feasible for the student to catch up missed learning in their own time.

1.1.10 Other Exceptional Absence requests

The Medical School recognises that there may be other reasons why students may need to request a planned absence (e.g. to attend jury service) or why exceptional absences may be required at short notice on occasion (e.g. unexpected carer/dependant responsibilities or a car accident). Requests should be made at least 14 days in advance for planned events and on the day that the need becomes known for unforeseen events. Last minute requests should normally be for one day only.

All absence requests must be supported by appropriate evidence, and this should demonstrate why the student needs to be somewhere else or why they cannot attend where they are scheduled to be. Requests will be considered on an individual basis using the evidence provided. Students should remember that exceptional absences are intended to be exceptional. Repeated requests for similar reasons will therefore not be considered favourably, particularly if students have not taken appropriate action to resolve previous issues or prevent a situation from reoccurring.

Any requests associated with travel disruption, including strike action or weather etc. will be considered based on the situation in or formal guidance applicable to the area local to the student's base campus (phase 1) or base hospital (phase 2). Students who choose to commute long distances daily should therefore be proactive in considering how they will meet their attendance requirements if their usual travel routes are disrupted. Similarly, students who

travel away from their term time addresses during weekends or holiday periods should plan their return travel to allow for potential “routine” delays that might reasonably be anticipated.

Absence category flow chart

