To: Third and Fourth Year Medical Students

From: Joycelyn Dorschier, M.D.  
Associate Dean for Student Affairs and Admissions

Subject: Procedure Regarding Excused Absences

Date: October 16, 2015

The success of students in their clinical years largely depends on active and consistent participation. One must be present in order to take full advantage of each learning opportunity. Any absence from clinical rotations may significantly dilute the effectiveness of that particular learning activity and may also reduce the level of trust between the preceptor and the student. As a result, and consistent with the University of North Dakota School of Medicine and Health Sciences professional behavior policy, as well as the Student-Learner contract, students are expected to be present and to participate in all clinical activities.

Accordingly, the following procedure has been established:

I. Third year students absent from clinical activities, either urgently or emergently, must:
   A. Notify the campus administrative staff and the preceptor and explain the reason for the absence as soon as it is practical. The campus administrative staff will notify the clerkship staff. A record of the absence will be maintained in the campus office.
   B. Make up any missed assignments as soon as possible as part of the course requirements for the time of the absence, a record of the required make up work will be maintained in the campus office.

II. Fourth year students absent from clinical activities, either urgently or emergently, must:
   A. Notify the campus administrative staff, and the preceptor and explain the reason for the absence as soon as it is practical
   B. Make up any missed assignments as soon as possible as part of the course requirements for the time of the absence a record of the required make up work will be maintained in the campus office.

III. For absences that are anticipated, the student must:
   A. Request an excused absence from the Campus Dean via the campus administrator. The Campus Dean will take the reason for the absence, ability to make up missed work, the requesting student's academic record and performance on clerkships and rotations into consideration. If approval is granted at the campus level, the student must then obtain the approval of the clerkship director and the preceptor. Approval will be demonstrated by obtaining signatures from all three individuals on an Absence Request Form. If any of the three do not approve the absence the student will not be excused.
   B. Make up any missed assignments as soon as possible (preferably prior to the absence) as part of the student's course requirements

IV. There are some instances where an absence is appropriate and although the final decision lies with the Campus Dean, typical events that would likely qualify as excused absences include but are not limited to:
   A. Personal illness;
   B. Death or serious illness of an immediate family member;
   C. Illness of a dependent family member;
   D. Certain unique life events (weddings, births, graduation, etc.) involving an immediate family member;
E. Certain and occasional transportation and/or weather-related obstacles;
F. National, regional or local meetings for which the student has official responsibility (such as an elected representative of the class);
G. Outside educational conferences or meetings of particular interest to certain students occur from time to time and may qualify, depending on the particular reasons brought forward by the student as well as his/her academic performance to date.

V. It should be noted that the granting or denial of a request for an excused absence may be based on the course content being presented that day and the ability of the individual to make up content on their own (either because of the importance of participation to understand the content or the academic ability of the student).

VI. Additionally, some issues, especially those regarding personal health and family concerns, may be relatively confidential in nature and the Campus Dean may use his/her judgment to make decisions regarding the indication for an excused absence as needed, depending upon the individual circumstances.

VII. Any student who misses more than three days in a rotation or clerkship may be required to make up the missing time. The amount of time will be determined by the clerkship director in consultation with the preceptor and the Campus Dean and need not be limited to the specific amount of time missed during the rotation.

VIII. Consequences of violation of this procedure:
A. The absence will be officially recorded as an unexcused absence/instance of unprofessional behavior and a letter to that effect will be sent to the student and a copy will go into the student's file.
B. The unexcused absence will affect eligibility for certain awards and offices;
C. Will preclude a student from obtaining an honors grade otherwise earned in that clerkship or rotation;
D. For those students who repeatedly abuse this policy, these actions may result in formal charges and investigation for unprofessional behavior through the policies and procedures set forth by the Medical Students Academic Performance Committee. This could lead to specific restrictions and requirements which could include being referenced in the Medical School Performance Evaluation (dean's letter), probation or dismissal from medical school.

JAD/cms
cc: Campus Deans
    Year 3 & 4 Course Directors
UND SMHS 3RD AND 4TH YEAR

EXCUSED ABSENCE FORM

Student Name

Rotation

Date(s) of absence

Reason for Absence

Makeup dates (for an absence of three days or more)

Campus Dean signature—denotes approval for student to proceed and discuss proposed absence with Clerkship Director and Preceptor. It does not imply approval for the Excused Absence.

Campus Clerkship Director

Preceptor

Campus Dean signature—to be obtained after the other signatures. Denotes final approval.