TEXAS TECH UNIVERSITY HEALTH SCIENCES CENTER EL PASO
Paul L. Foster School *of* Medicine

Medical Education Program Policy

Policy Name:	**Pre-clerkship phase attendance policy**				
Policy Domain:	Student attendance/curriculum engagement/professionalism		**Refers to LCME Element(s):**	3.5, 9.9	
Approval Authority:	Curriculum and Educational Policy Committee (CEPC)	**Adopted:**	4/15/2019	**Date Last Reviewed:**	October 2025
Responsible Executive:	Assistant Dean for Medical Education (Pre-Clerkship)	**Date Last Revised:**	October 2025		
Responsible Office:	PLFSOM Office of Medical Education	**Contact:**	Mirjana Babic, M.P.A. mbabic@ttuhsc.edu		

1. **Policy Statement**: Medical student attendance, which includes both their presence and engagement, is a vital component of medical education. Student participation is required in specific pre-clerkship activities, and their engagement in all pre-clerkship activities is expected. Attendance (and its components, presence and engagement) are considered elements of medical student professionalism and their personal and professional development, as outlined in the PLFSOM Educational Program Goals and Objectives, specifically:

    - Objective PRO-5.6 – "Demonstrate honesty and integrity in all professional and academic interactions"
    - Objective PRO-5.7 – "Meet professional and academic commitments and obligations"
    - Goal 8 – "Demonstrate the qualities required to sustain lifelong personal and professional growth"

    Student presence and engagement during activities correlate with academic success in medical school. Therefore, the school monitors medical student presence at specific sessions and expects sufficient medical student engagement in all pre-clerkship phase curricular activities. Expectations for medical student presence at a given academic activity will be communicated clearly to students before each activity. This policy does not apply to Leave of Absence situations. Please refer to HSCEP OP 77.05, "Student Leaves of Absence and Suspensions," for information regarding Leaves of Absence.
2. **Reason for Policy**: This policy defines the requirements or expectations for pre-clerkship phase student presence in support of the school's educational program goals and objectives and, and generally in support of student academic success.
3. **Who Should Read this Policy**: All students, members of the PLFSOM Committee on Student Grading and Promotion (GPC), pre-clerkship phase course directors and faculty, the PLFSOM associate and assistant deans for student affairs, the PLFSOM associate and assistant deans for medical education, all pre-clerkship course coordinators, and all Office of Student Affairs and Department of Medical Education staff.
4. **Resources**: This policy is primarily applied and supported by the PLFSOM Office of Medical Education, Department of Medical Education, and Office of Student Affairs. This policy is administratively maintained (reviewed, revised, and disseminated) by the PLFSOM Curriculum and Educational Policy Committee (CEPC).

5. **Definitions:**
    - **Absence**: Non-attendance or arrival 10 minutes or more after the scheduled start time for an assigned activity. Absences are recorded at the course level by the required activity. However, excused absences (planned or unplanned) may involve entire days, including multiple required activities. Excused absences (planned or unplanned) involving one or more required activities in the same day will be counted as one absence under Section 6.VII. For unexcused absences, each required activity missed shall be accounted for as one absence under Section 6.VII. An excused absence requiring only part of a day, as determined by the assistant dean for medical education (pre-clerkship phase) or their designee, shall be accounted for as one absence under Section 6.V and VI regardless of the number of required activities missed during the excused absence.
    - **Assigned activity**: Any educational program administrative or curricular activity assigned to a student (as disseminated via the school's learning management system software or in e-mails sent to the students via their official TTUHSC accounts)
    - **Attendance**: Timely presence in and attention to an assigned activity (may be monitored, and may be recorded and assessed for required activities)
    - **Critical summative assessment**: Critical summative assessments are graded activities involving performance standards that are obligatory to passing the overlying course or requirement. They are specified in the overlying course or requirement syllabus and disseminated via the school's curriculum and learning management systems or in e-mails sent to the students via their official TTUHSC accounts
    - **Engagement:** Active participation in the learning or discussion of educational material (includes both in-person and virtual components of the curriculum)
    - **Excused absence:** An excused absence is an absence (planned or unplanned) that meets the criteria outlined in Sections 6. V and 6.VI and has been approved by the assistant dean for medical education (pre-clerkship phase) or their designee**.** Excused absences may involve entire days, including multiple required activities, or only part of a day, as determined by the approving authority. When approved, an excused absence is recorded as one absence under Section 6.VII, regardless of the number of required activities missed per day.
    - **Graded activity**: Any graded activity that substantively contributes to the student's fulfillment of the overlying course objectives and to the student's final grade. All graded activities are considered required, but not all graded activities constitute critical summative assessments (see overlying course or requirement syllabi)
    - **Planned absence**: An absence anticipated and pre-approved by a student due to special circumstances consistent with Section 6.V below. Absences will be considered planned only if it is requested two or more weeks in advance.
    - **Professionalism concern card**: Professionalism concern cards are issued to students for significant professionalism lapses, such as an unexcused absence, and serve as formal documentation to address and remediate the concern.
    - **Required activity**: Any educational program administrative or curricular activity for which attendance is required (as disseminated via the school's curriculum and learning management systems or in e-mails sent to the students via their official TTUHSC accounts)

- **Tardy attendance:** Late arrival to an assigned activity, defined as arriving after the scheduled start time but less than 10 minutes late. For some time-sensitive assigned activities (such as OSCEs, Medical Skills, summatives, Team-Based Learning events and Anatomy/Microbiology labs), tardy admittance to an assigned activity may not be allowed and an absence recorded (consult course or requirement syllabi for the definitive list of activities that fall under these circumstances)
- **Unexcused absence**: An unexcused absence is any absence that does not meet the criteria for approval under Sections 6. V and 6.VI.
  This includes failure to request or obtain approval for a planned or unplanned absence, or failure to attend a required activity without valid justification.
  Each required activity missed without approval is recorded as one absence under Section 6.VII. Unexcused absences constitute a professionalism lapse and may result in the issuance of a Professionalism Concern Card under Section VIII.
- **Unplanned absence**: An absence unanticipated by the student and for which pre-approval is not possible – consistent with Section 6.VI below

6. **The Policy**:

General expectation of attendance and participation: Consistent on-time attendance and engagement demonstrate respect for the educational environment and are essential ways for monitoring student progress. Being on time and prepared to participate fully are essential to the effective work of learning teams. When it is necessary for students to be absent from a required activity, students must approach such absences with the same standard of professional responsibility required of practicing physicians. Students must report all absences from pre-clerkship required activities to the PLFSOM Department of Medical Education (see Sections 6.V, VI and VIII). An absence may be excused if it meets the criteria outlined below, outlined in 6.V and VI.

I. **Relation of absences to professionalism**: Unexcused absences from pre-clerkship phase required activities constitute a professionalism concern and are thus grounds for referral of the student to the GPC for review according to the criteria outlined below (see also the PLFSOM Policy on Grading, Promotion, and Academic Standing) – see also Section 6.VIII, below).

II. **Absences and academic responsibility**: Under no circumstances does an absence, or tardiness, relieve a student of meeting all assigned academic requirements. Regardless of the cause or status of an absence, students are responsible for the content, work, and academic performance standards associated with all missed activities. Students are also expected to meet any participation requirements and, for group/team-based activities, to equitably contribute to their group's learning (even in relation to missed activities). See section XII (Responsibility for make-up work).

III. **General school and faculty responsibilities related to this policy**:
Pre-clerkship faculty and Department of Medical Education staff are accountable for:

- Notifying students of their assigned activities via the school's curriculum management systems or by the student's official TTUHSC e-mail account
- Monitoring attendance for all required activities
- Notifying students of attendance concerns

- Establishing clear expectations for students regarding the timely completion of graded activities, critical summative assessments, and the scheduling of make-up activities/assessments when indicated as outlined below
- Acting fairly and in good faith under this policy

IV. **General student responsibilities related to this policy**:
Students are accountable for:

- Maintaining awareness of course policies related to attendance and participation. It is the student's professional responsibility to review the absence policy and specific attendance requirements for all assigned courses and activities.
- Accurately managing their schedules to ensure on-time preparation, attendance, and participation in assigned activities.
- Accurately confirming their attendance as and when required (misrepresentations of attendance, for oneself or others, is considered a professionalism concern for which a student may be referred to the GPC for academic review).
- Communicating professionally about absences according to the systems established and disseminated by the Department of Medical Education.
- All absences involving required activities (including all graded activities and all critical summative assessments) should be reported via the online absence management system (or alternative system, when indicated and disseminated by the Department of Medical Education) regardless of whether the student presumes the absence will be excused or not.
- Seeking the school's assistance (college mentors, OSA, the Office of Accessibility Services) if reoccurring personal circumstances interfere with their on- time attendance and participation.
- Accepting that faculty and school decisions under this policy shall be based on the specific relevant circumstances. Because of this, decisions rendered in any specific situation shall not be considered as establishing generally applicable precedents.

V. **Planned absences**: A planned absence from a pre-clerkship phase required activity must be reported a minimum of two weeks in advance (unless deemed unavoidable by the assistant dean for medical education (pre-clerkship phase) or their designee. Non-compliance will result in the absence being counted as unplanned). All absences should be reported via the online absence management system (or alternative system, when indicated and disseminated by the Department of Medical Education). Planned absences must be pre- approved by the assistant dean for medical education (pre-clerkship phase) or their designee. If a student is unable to access the online absence management system, requests should be sent to plfabsence@ttuhsc.edu. All reported absences should be based on compelling circumstances such as:

- Routine/non-acute medical and dental appointments
- Discretionary legal proceedings/consultations or other appointments for necessary professional services
- Essential personal/family events (weddings, graduations, etc.)
- Religious obligation/observance
- Scheduled conference presentations/unique programs/school-requested tasks

Requests deemed insufficient or excessive shall be denied – subject only to appeal to the assistant dean for medical education (or their designee) within 5 business days of the student's notification of the denial. Appeals must be submitted in writing or via the student's TTUHSC e-mail account and copied to the assistant dean for medical education (pre-clerkship phase) or their designee (plfabsence@ttuhsc.edu). Student appeals of a denied absence request should include a detailed explanation of the request and of the basis for the appeal.

If a student's absence request conflicts with a required activity that cannot be otherwise made-up or completed, the absence may adversely affect the student's grade or other performance assessments in the activity and its overlying course or requirement.

VI. **Unplanned absences**: Unplanned absences should be reported to the PLFSOM Department of Medical Education via the online absence management system (or alternative system, when indicated and disseminated by the) as soon as the circumstances reasonably allow (typically within 24 hours). In situations not involving critical summative assessments (as designated by the overlying course or requirement syllabus), the criteria for excused unplanned absences include:

- Acute illness (documentation of a directly related physician encounter is required for absences of three or more days)
- Participation in legal proceedings (with documentation)
- Serious illness or death of a family member (documentation may be required for multiple absences or absences of three or more days)
- Other personal, transportation related events (with documentation) or family emergency (with documentation)

In situations involving critical summative assessments (as designated by the overlying course or requirement syllabus), the above criteria still apply, but documentation is required in all cases (specifically including documentation of a directly related physician visit on the day of or before the absence).

VII. **Total unplanned/planned absences regardless of cause**: For the reasons outlined in Section 6.I above, there is a general expectation of consistent attendance and engagement in all required and optional sessions. As such, students are required to learn and understand how to apply the information provided in optional and required sessions.

- If a student accrues six excused absences during an academic year, their attendance record will be reviewed by their college mentor.
- Students will meet with the college mentor to:
    - 1. Review this policy.
    - 2. Review the nature (types and pattern) of the student's absences.
    - 3. Discuss corrective measures, available assistance, and support services as appropriate.
    - 4. Create and submit a formal plan (written or electronic) signed off by the student and college mentor(s). Plans may include expected modifications to the student's behavior; intention to utilize medical, social, psychological, financial, or other support services; or anything else deemed reasonable by the college mentor(s).

- If a student accrues greater or equal to 12 excused absences during an academic year, their record will be reviewed by their college mentor and the associate dean for student affairs (or designee).
- Students will meet with the college mentor and associate dean for student affairs (or designee) to:
    - 1. Review this policy.
    - 2. Review the nature (types and pattern) of the student's absences.
    - 3. Discuss any related corrective measures, assistance, or support services the student may need to consider.
    - 4. Review the required Remediation Plan.
    - 5. Discuss an action plan for GPC.
- The Paul L. Foster School of Medicine recognizes the importance of physical and mental health, and any student requiring additional flexibility may request support accommodations through the Office of Accessibility Services at any time. Students are encouraged to discuss their concerns and any potential accommodations with the Office of Accessibility, college mentors and the Office of Student Affairs before reaching the threshold of excessive absences, so the situation can be managed proactively instead of reactively.

VIII. **Unexcused absences**: All absences should be reported via the online absence management system (or alternative system, when indicated and disseminated by the Department of Medical Education) regardless of whether the student presumes the absence will be excused or not.

- As per Sections 1 and 6.I above, unexcused absences from pre-clerkship phase required activities constitute a professionalism concern and are thus grounds for referral of the student to the GPC according to the criteria outlined below (see also the PLFSOM Policy on Grading, Promotion, and Academic Standing).
- Referral of a student to the GPC based on unexcused absences shall be made by the associate dean for student affairs (or their designee).
- An unexcused absence from a required activity will result in reduced or no credit for that activity, depending on the specific course policy and the student's performance on any associated make-up assignments (if permitted).
- Alternatively, students may lose points toward their final grade due to unexcused absences, as outlined in the individual course syllabi.
- A **Professionalism Concern Card** will be issued for each unexcused absence.
- **First unexcused absence:** The student will meet with their college mentor(s) and receive a Professionalism Concern Card.
- **Second unexcused absence:** The student will be referred to the Office of Student Affairs, meet with the associate dean for student affairs (or designee), and receive a Professionalism Concern Card.
- **Third unexcused absence:** The student will be referred to the GPC by the associate dean for student affairs (or designee), meet with their college mentor(s) and the associate dean for student affairs (or designee), and receive a Professionalism Concern Card. The student will also be required to create and submit a formal plan (written or electronic) signed off by the student and college mentor(s). Plans may include expected modifications to the student's behavior; intention to utilize medical, social, psychological, financial, or other support services; or anything else deemed reasonable by the college mentor(s).

- An unexcused absence from a critical summative assessment may result in referral to the GPC for a professionalism concern. Referral in this circumstance will be at the discretion of the associate dean for student affairs (or designee).

IX. **Appeal or Dispute Process:** Students may appeal a decision regarding the classification of an absence as excused or unexcused by submitting a written request for review to plfabsence@ttuhsc.edu within five (5) business days of notification. The appeal should clearly describe the circumstances, include relevant documentation, and explain why the absence should be reconsidered. Appeals may include cases where absences were marked unexcused due to factors beyond the student's control (e.g., system errors, lost emails, or documentation inadvertently sent to a course director or coordinator instead of through the required absence management system). Appeals will be reviewed by the assistant dean for medical education (pre-clerkship phase) or designee to ensure due process and fairness.

X. **Missed graded activities and critical summative assessments**:

Missed graded activities and critical summative assessments due to planned absences: In requesting approval for a planned absence under Section 6.V above, it is the student's responsibility to review their assigned activities during the proposed absence, and to list in their request any graded activities and critical summative assessments they will miss (failure to declare a graded activity and/or critical summative assessment may result in no credit, and no make-up opportunity, for the activity/assessment). Requests for planned absences may be denied solely on the basis of their interference with the student's timely participation in assigned graded activities and/or critical summative assessments. For an approved planned absence involving missed graded activities and/or critical summative assessments, the student must contact the relevant course or requirement director to arrange a make-up activity or assessment. Make-up activities or assessments shall, whenever possible, be scheduled at the discretion of the course director within 2 business days immediately before or 5 work days immediately after the approved absence. As also noted under Section 6.V above, some required activities, including some graded activities, cannot be made-up or completed as intended (usually due to the team-based or experiential nature of the activity). Under these circumstances, the absence may adversely affect the student's grade or other performance assessments in the activity and its respective course or requirement.

- **Missed graded activities and critical summative assessments due to unplanned absences:** For an unplanned absence involving missed graded activities and/or critical summative assessments, it is the student's responsibility to contact the relevant course or requirement director as soon as possible, and no later than 24 hours after returning, to arrange for a make-up activity or assessment. Make-up activities or assessments shall, whenever possible, be scheduled at the discretion of the course director within 5 business days immediately after the student's return. As also noted under Section VI above, some required activities, including some graded activities, cannot be made-up or completed as intended (usually due to the team-based or experiential nature of the activity). Under these circumstances, the absence may adversely affect the student's grade or other performance assessments in the activity and its respective course or requirement.
- **Missed graded activities and critical summative assessments due to unexcused absences:** Missed graded activities or critical summative assessments due to unexcused absence will result in no credit for the activities or assessments (the student is then subject to the remediation policies of the overlying course or requirement).

XI. **Tardiness:** Repetitive tardiness demonstrates that a student has consistent difficulty arriving at class on time. For designated time-sensitive activities—such as Medical Skills, Team-Based

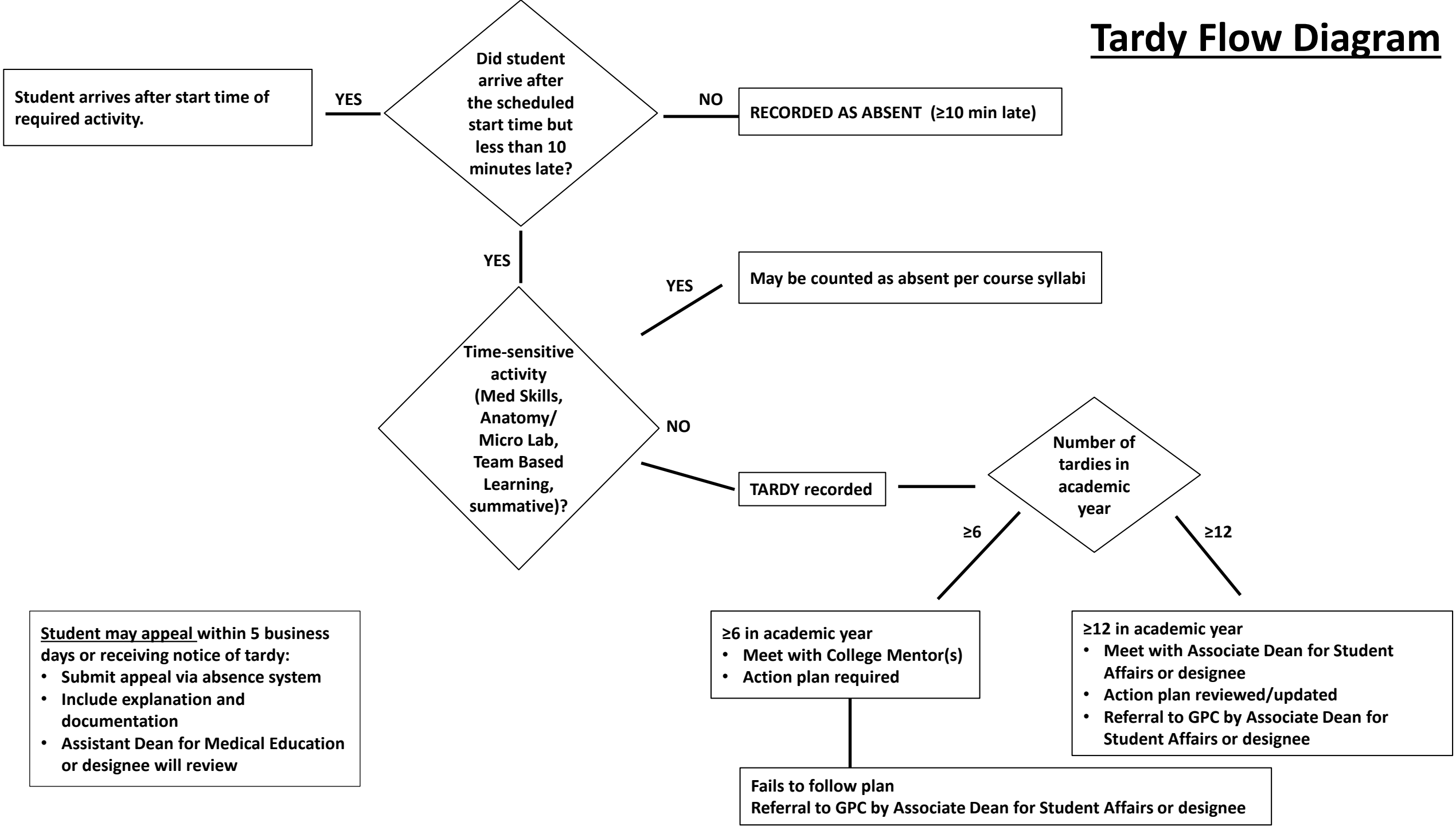
Learning activities, Summative exams and Anatomy or Microbiology labs—late entry may not be permitted, and students arriving late will be marked absent. A complete list of sessions with strict attendance policies can be found in the corresponding course or requirement syllabi.

a. **If a student is tardy to 6 or more of required sessions** they attended within the academic year, the student shall be required to meet with their college mentor(s). The student and college mentor(s) shall review the causes of the student's tardiness, determine if there is a pattern, collaborate to devise a solution to help address the student's tardiness, and create and submit a formal plan (written or electronic) signed off by the student and college mentor(s). Plans may include expected modifications to the student's behavior; intention to utilize medical, social, psychological, financial, or other support services; or anything else deemed reasonable by the college mentor(s).
b. **If a student is tardy to 12 or more of the required sessions** within the academic year, they shall be required to meet with the dean of student affairs (or their designee) for individual counseling and to review the plan created by the student and their college mentor(s). The student will be referred to the GPC, as this constitutes concerns with professionalism and meeting academic program requirements.
c. Tardiness involving a critical summative assessment may result in reduced time allowed for completion of the assessment (students may be denied compensatory time), exclusion from the exam (and associated loss of credit for the exam), and/or diversion to an alternative testing location/station.

XII. **Responsibility for make-up work**: To meet the objectives of any missed activity, students should review relevant learning materials, participate in any linked formative assessments, practice quizzes, or posted discussion questions, and consult with their classmates regarding the specific content covered in the activity. For missed required activities, regardless of cause, students should contact the course director to determine if make-up work is required. Course directors (or their designees) may issue alternative assignments for students to complete when they are absent from a required activity, regardless of whether the absence is excused or unexcused. Make-up work may be required even in situations where the student will not receive credit for a missed required activity based on the overlying course or requirement policy. Students must complete required make-up work by the faculty-assigned deadline, without reminders from the activity/course staff or faculty.

XIII. **Responsibility for the additional costs related to absences and tardiness**: In particular situations, unexcused absence from, or tardy attendance of, a required activity may result in a student being responsible for the additional costs incurred in making-up the activity (for example, the unbudgeted cost of providing a previously unplanned standardized patient).

Tardy Flow Diagram



Attendance (Absences) Flow Diagram

Need to miss a required activity?

YES

Planned (≥2 weeks)?

YES

Submit via absence system
Assistant Dean for Medical Education or designee approval

If approved, arrange make-up work with course director within 2 business days before or 5 days after return.

NO

- Report within 24 hours
- Criteria may include acute illness, legal proceedings, family emergency/illness, transportation issues.
- Provide documentation, as needed.

Excused or Unexcused?

EXCUSED

- Excused (counts as ONE marked absence per day absent)
- Assistant Dean for Medical Education or designee track totals across academic year

At 6 EXCUSED absences:
- Meet College Mentor(s); review causes; create plan

≥12 EXCUSED absences:
- Meet Mentor(s) + Associate Dean for Student Affairs
- Review/update plan; action plan for GPC

UNEXCUSED

- Unexcused Absence (counts as ONE marked absence per missed required activity)
- Professionalism Concern Card issued

Unexcused absence from summative:
May be referred to GPC

1st unexcused absence:
- Meet Mentor(s) + PCC

2nd unexcused absence :
- Meet Associate Dean for Student Affairs or designee + Professionalism Concern Card

3rd unexcused absence :
- Referred to GPC by Associate Dean for Student Affairs or designee
- Meet Mentor(s) + Associate Dean for Student Affairs or designee; action plan + Professionalism Concern Card

Student may appeal within 5 business days or receiving notice of absence:
- Submit appeal via absence system
- Include explanation and documentation
- Assistant Dean for Medical Education or designee will review

Tardy and Absence Definitions and Examples

Tardy Attendance: Late arrival to an assigned activity, defined as arriving after the scheduled start time but less than 10 minutes late.

Tardy Attendance Example:
If a session begins at 8:00 a.m., arrival between 8:01 a.m. and 8:09 a.m. is considered tardy attendance.

Absence:
Non-attendance or arrival 10 minutes or more after the scheduled start time for an assigned activity. Absences are recorded at the course level by the required activity.

Absence Example:
If a session begins at 8:00 a.m., any arrival at 8:10 a.m. or later is recorded as an absence.

Tardy and Absence Example Table:		
Required session starts at 8:00am		
ARRIVAL TIME	**CLASSIFICATION**	**EXPLANATION**
8:00:00 am – 8:00:59 am	**On time**	Arrived at or immediately after the scheduled start time.
8:01 am – 8:09 am	**Tardy attendance**	Arrived less than 10 minutes after the scheduled start time.
8:10 am or later	**Absent**	Arrived 10 minutes or more after the scheduled start time.