

Proposed Revision of the UF Attendance Policy

Prepared by Angela S. Lindner, Associate Provost for Undergraduate Affairs
Fall 2021

Background/Rationale for Change: The current wording of our Attendance policy as relating to Absences (see below) is not clear, and, in recent years, an increasing number of faculty have called to question whether the listed acceptable reasons for an excused absence from class are at the judgement of the faculty member. The current wording of this policy first appeared in the UF Undergraduate Catalog in 1993 (see below) and has been carried forward every year to date. A re-evaluation of the wording of this policy to ensure alignment with the current intent of our policies and practices is warranted. Additional minor changes in wording of other components of the Attendance policy are also proposed for the purposes of streamlining and ensuring consistency with current practices.

Proposed Revisions:

ATTENDANCE POLICIES

<https://catalog.ufl.edu/UGRD/academic-regulations/attendance-policies/#absencestext>

Absences

Students may only participate in classes if they are registered officially or approved to audit with evidence of having paid audit fees. The Office of the University Registrar provides official class rolls to instructors.

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Students are responsible for satisfying all academic objectives as defined by the instructor. Absences count from the first class meeting.

Acceptable reasons for absence from or failure to engage in class include illness, Title IX-related situations, serious family and other (e.g., accident) emergencies, special curricular requirements (e.g., judging trips, field trips, professional conferences), military obligation, severe weather conditions, religious holidays, participation in official university activities (e.g., music performances, athletic competition, debate), and, court-imposed legal obligations (e.g., jury duty or subpoena), Other reasons (e.g., a job interview or club activity) may be deemed acceptable if approved by the instructor.

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If feasible, a student in a situation that allows an excused absence from a class or any required class activity must inform the instructor as early as possible prior to the class.

Students shall be permitted a reasonable amount of time to make up the material or activities covered during absence from class or inability to engage in class activities because of the reasons outlined above.

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If a student does not participate in at least one of the first two class meetings of a course or laboratory in which they are registered, and they have not contacted the department to indicate their intent, the student can be dropped from the course. Students must not assume that they will be dropped, however. The department will notify students if they have been dropped from a course or laboratory.

Moved up [2]: Students cannot participate in classes unless they are registered officially or approved to audit with evidence of having paid audit fees. The Office of the University Registrar provides official class rolls to instructors. ¶

The university recognizes the right of the instructor to make attendance mandatory and require documentation for absences, missed work, or inability to fully engage in class. After due warning, an instructor can prohibit further attendance and subsequently assign a failing grade for excessive absences.

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Religious Holiday

At the University of Florida, students and faculty work together to allow students the opportunity to observe the holy days of their faith. A student should inform the faculty member of the religious observances of their faith that will conflict with class attendance, with tests or examinations, or with other class activities prior to the class or occurrence of that test or activity. The faculty member is then obligated to accommodate that particular student's religious observances. Because students represent a myriad of cultures and many faiths, the University of Florida is not able to assure that scheduled academic activities do not conflict with the holy days of all religious groups. Accordingly, individual students should make their need for an excused absence known in advance of the scheduled activities.

The Florida Board of Education and state law govern university policy regarding observance of religious holidays.

The following guidelines apply:

- Students, upon prior notification to their instructors, shall be excused from class or other scheduled academic activity to observe a religious holy day of their faith.
- Students shall be permitted a reasonable amount of time to make up the material or activities covered in their absence.
- Students shall not be penalized due to absence from class or other scheduled academic activity because of religious observances.

If a faculty member is informed of or is aware that a significant number of students are likely to be absent from class because of a religious observance, the faculty member should not schedule a major exam or other academic event at that time.

A student who is to be excused from class for a religious observance is not required to provide a second party certification of the reason for the absence. Furthermore, a student who believes that they have been unreasonably denied an education benefit due to religious beliefs or practices may seek redress through the student grievance procedure.

Illness

~~A student who is absent from class or any required class-related activity because of illness should contact their instructor, if feasible, as early as possible prior to the missed class or activity.~~

Students shall be permitted a reasonable amount of time to make up the material or activities covered in their absence.

Students should contact their college by the deadline to drop a course for medical reasons. Students can petition the **Dean of Students Office** to drop a course for medical reasons. The university's policy regarding **medical excuse** from classes is maintained by the Student Health Care Center.

Twelve-Day Rule

Students who participate in university-sponsored athletic or scholarly activities are permitted to be absent 12 scholastic days per semester without penalty. A scholastic day is any day on which regular class work is scheduled as defined in the approved university calendar.

The student or student's advisor must notify the instructor as early as possible prior to the anticipated absence to allow ample time for accommodations. Instructors must be flexible and not penalize students when re-scheduling during-term and final exams, class assignments, and other required activities and must follow the UF Attendance Policy herein and UF Examination Policies. As noted in the UF Examination Policies, during-term exams should be re-scheduled no later than before the end of the semester, while final exams no later than 90 days after the originally scheduled exam time. However, instructors are encouraged to re-schedule final and during-term exams, assignments, and other activities as soon as possible after the last day of the absence and must not penalize the student in any way.

A group's schedule that requires absence of more than 12 scholastic days should be adjusted so that no student is absent from campus more than 12 scholastic days. Students who previously have been warned in writing by their instructor about the impact of absences on their individual class performance should not incur additional absences, even if they have not been absent 12 scholastic days. The student is responsible to maintain satisfactory academic performance and attendance.

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Moved up [1]: Students shall be permitted a reasonable amount of time to make up the material or activities covered in their absence. ¶

Review List: Provost Leadership Team; Mary Parker, VP Enrollment Management; Steve Pritz, Registrar; Donna Kolb, FAS; Heather White, DSO; UCC (vote); APC (vote)
1993-1994 UF Undergraduate Catalog:

REGISTRATION POLICIES

Committee require any college or school to grant a degree by waiving any of these regulations.

Withdrawals

It is each student's responsibility to make every effort to complete the full term at the university. Any student who withdraws after the deadline published in the University Calendar shall be assigned grades of WF (withdrew failing) in all courses and will be subject to suspension and exclusion regulations.

Students on academic probation who withdraw from the university prior to the final date published in the calendar will continue on probation until their grade point deficit is reduced to zero.

Students on University Committee on Student Petitions probation must meet the terms of probation specified by the committee.

Students who withdraw from all courses for medical reasons should contact the Office for Student Services, Division of Student Affairs, for procedural information.

Attendance Policies

Administrative Provisions

Students are not authorized to attend class unless they are officially registered or approved to audit with evidence of having paid audit fees. Following the end of the drop/add period, the Office of the University Registrar provides evidence of proper registration to instructors through distribution of final class rolls and class roll addenda.

Students who do not attend at least one of the first two class meetings of a course or laboratory in which they are registered, and who have not contacted the department which offers the course to indicate their intent, may be dropped from the course if the department chair deems this action necessary to provide space for other students. The department will notify students dropped from courses or laboratories under this provision by posting a notice in the department office. Students may request reinstatement on a space-available basis if documented evidence excusing the absences is presented to the department chair.

NOTE: Students must not assume that they are automatically dropped if they fail to attend the first few days of class.

Attendance Policy

Students are responsible for satisfying the entire range of academic objectives as defined by the instructor. For students whose names appear on the initial class roll, absences count from the first class meeting.

In general, reasons which may be acceptable for absence from class include: illness, serious family emergencies, special curricular requirements (e.g., judging trips, field trips, professional conferences), military obligation, severe weather conditions, religious holidays, and participation in official university sponsored

activities such as music performances, athletic competition, or debate. Absences from class for court-imposed legal obligations (e.g., jury duty or subpoena) must be excused. Other sound reasons may be offered by the student.

Twelve-Day Rule

Students who participate in athletic or extracurricular activities are permitted without penalty 12 scholastic day absences per semester from the university. (A scholastic day is any day on which regular class work is scheduled.) Instructors must be flexible when scheduling exams or other class assignments.

The 12-day rule applies to individual students participating on an athletic or scholastic team, for example. Consequently, a schedule which requires absence of more than 12 days for any group should be adjusted so that no individual student is absent from campus for more than 12 scholastic days.

Students who previously have been warned for absences or unsatisfactory work in any course should not incur additional absences, even if they have not been absent from the university for 12 scholastic days. It is the student's responsibility to maintain satisfactory academic performance and attendance.

Discretionary Review Days

The last two days of classes in the fall and spring semesters may serve as discretionary review days. Instructors may, at their discretion, conduct a final examination review during this time. There are no Discretionary Review days during the summer terms because final examinations are given during regular class periods.

Illness Policy

Students who are absent from classes or examinations because of illness should contact their professors. The student should contact his or her college, by the published deadline, to drop a course for medical reasons. After the college petition deadline, students may petition the University Senate Committee on Student Petitions to drop a course for medical reasons. A student who must withdraw from all courses for medical reasons should contact the Office for Student Services.

Last Week of Classes

No final or comprehensive examinations, projects, or term papers may be scheduled or be assigned during the final week of class. Written papers and/or oral presentations and periodic testing announced at the beginning of the term and in the course syllabus may be collected or presented, provided they do not serve as a final examination. Weekly or daily tests, if scheduled in the syllabus, are permitted; hourly or major exams are not. Take-home examinations assigned as final examinations can be due no earlier than the regularly scheduled final examination. Laboratory sections are exempt from this policy.

Religious Holidays

The Board of Regents policy statement governs university policy regarding observance of religious holidays:

- * Students shall, upon notifying their instructor, be excused from class to observe a religious holy day of their faith.
 - * While students will be held responsible for material covered in their absence, each student shall be permitted a reasonable amount of time.
 - * No major test, major class event, or major university activity shall be scheduled on a major religious holiday.
 - * Professors and university administration shall in no way penalize students who are absent from academic or social activities because of religious observance.
- The University of Florida urges faculty and administrators not to schedule exams or major events on evenings or days that will be observed as holy days by a significant number of students. Students who ask to be excused from class for religious reasons will not be required to provide second-party certification.

Grades and Grading Policies

Student grades are permanently recorded in the Office of the University Registrar.

Credit: The word credit as it is used in this catalog refers to one semester hour, generally representing one hour per week of lecture or two or more hours per week of laboratory work.

Passing Grades and Grade Points ⁽¹⁾

A	4.0
B+	3.5
B	3.0
C+	2.5
C	2.0
D+	1.5
D	1.0
S	0.0/Satisfactory

(1) The degree-granting college may require a minimum grade of C on particular courses.

Non-Punitive Grades & Symbols — No Grade Points

W	Withdrew
H	Deferred grade assigned only in a modular course or in exceptional circumstances as approved by the Office of the University Registrar.
N*	No grade reported: not in GPA
I*	Incomplete: not in GPA

Failing Grades — No Grade Points

E	Failure
U	Unsatisfactory
WF	Withdrew failing
NG	No grade reported
I	Incomplete

Comments from APC members prior to November meeting:

Elizabeth Wood:

Would it be possible to add a statement informing students about the [Instructor Notification](#) portal through DSO? I use this exclusively when dealing with things that involve medical information (e.g. a COVID-19 status). I find many students, and faculty, don't know about this mechanism.

"Students are encouraged to provide documentation through the UF Instruction Notification portal, located here: <https://care.dso.ufl.edu/instructor-notifications/>"

I have reached out to Dr. Heather White, our Dean of Students, to learn more about the intention of this service for students.

Amanda Phalin:

Thanks, Liz. I was going to reply with a similar comment. I would appreciate an edit of

"The university recognizes the right of the instructor to make attendance mandatory."

To

"The university recognizes the right of the instructor to make attendance mandatory AND REQUIRE DOCUMENTATION FOR ABSENCES AND/OR MISSED WORK"

I have made this revision.

Or similar.

I began using the DSO instructor notification system after multiple instances of faked doctor notes, family deaths, etc. The vast majority of students do not behave in this manner, but those who do create an uneven playing field for the rest of their peers, so I think it's important to mitigate it as much as possible.

Amanda Phalin:

...it's not 100% clear to me if the 12-day rule refers to 12 days total, or 12 days per class. If it's the former, I don't think individual professors have access to that information (i.e., what other classes/days students are missing), so they can't keep track of it, and policy/expectations for faculty may need to be clarified. If it's the latter, 12 days per class, that is a significant amount. It's about 40% of classes for a semester long course and almost

100% of classes for a module course. I wonder if a clearer and easier to manage/enforce policy would be to set a maximum percentage of a course a student can miss, say 20% of each class? So the rule would become the 20% rule instead of the 12-day rule?

The 12-Day Rule is intended for organized, UF-sanctioned groups and is mainly applied to our student athletes and athletic teams. I have no such awareness of any other groups using or needing to use this Rule. At the beginning of the semester, Hawkins Center advisors sent notices to student-athletes' instructors informing them of the days the students will be out of class because of competition. This list does not include dates for post-season competition in the event that the team does well during season; however, the advisor informs the instructors of these post-season dates as soon as they are aware of them.

The instructor is not intended to globally ensure compliance with this Rule but, rather, attends to their class and whether the student's related absences are harming the student's learning. Note that the instructor can require that the student attend class if the instructor believes and communicates that the student's performance in the class will be severely impacted beyond a certain number of absences. That number is very specific to the course and to the student and requires strong assessments and clear and frequent communication with the student.

Angela Bascik:

A few questions about the portal:

Are undocumented events also noticed to faculty by the DSO? (Is the DSO taking student's attestation as enough proof of the reason for some absences?)

Are DSO documentation standards actually screening for the "fake notes"

Amanda mentions?

Does the DSO want to become the "excuse note" generator for the whole university?

Will the volume become unwieldy?

A caveat about the proposed language: The portal explicitly excludes a number of absence justifications that the university accepts, so it doesn't cover all needs for documentation that an instructor might demand.

Perhaps it should be specified that only "documentation of emergency, illness, or compassionate leave" should go through the portal? (Disability-related absences that already have established DRC accommodations, UF sponsored event absences, military obligation absences, religious observance absences, scholarly activity absences are all listed as things that should not be documented through the portal.)

As noted above, I've reached out to the Dean of Students for more information about the intention of this web site. I was not aware that the DSO had created this web site, and I want to ensure that the DSO is the proper location for it, as it appears to be clearly related to academic policies.

As for the 12-day rule, it affects primarily students in sports such as swimming and track. (I've had Olympians in my classes before who nearly met that limit due to international meets. Coaching staff usually provides a list of dates that will be missed and they know to keep it under 12 days.) Are there any others regularly hitting this limit? Can such a limit even be applied to disability-related absences, religious absences, or military obligation absences?

See comments above about the 12-Day Rule. To answer the last question, no, not globally. We must provide the instructor and the student the right and freedom to recognize that each class and each student create unique circumstances that must be sorted through case by case.

Amanda Phalin:

Re the DSO documentation standards, it is my understanding that if a student says they have an issue, the DSO takes their word for it. I don't think this system 100% prevents students from submitting fake documentation, but I do think it serves as a deterrent: A student will probably think more carefully about submitting false information to a university-level office. That a student makes the effort to get the notification also confirms for me they do need the lenience.

My office, in partnership and guidance of our Student Advisory Council for Undergraduate Affairs, is creating an academic policy web site to better familiarize both faculty and students of our academic policies and practices. This instructor notification help tool for students might be better positioned on this envisioned site to ensure that the language is consistent with our current policy language. I would like to have further conversation with faculty to ensure that such a system would be welcomed and effective.

Michael Fang:

I would suggest to revise "serious family and other (e.g., accident) emergencies" to just "serious emergencies", which is basically what it means when we use "other" :-)

While I understand the logic of this recommendation, I request that we keep the wording as it is. If "family" emergencies are not clearly spelled out, many faculty will deny the student the right

to an excused absence for this reason. Here's an example in which we need to have more detail than less!

