

Student Absence Guidelines for Faculty

Students are expected to attend class regularly, as regular attendance is one of the most important contributors to student success. However, students may occasionally need to miss class due to illness, emergency, or a campus-sponsored activity. In such cases, students are responsible for notifying faculty of their absences and arranging to make up missed work.

The University of Massachusetts Lowell does not have a common attendance policy for students (with the exception of a Senate-approved policy for student athletes); such policies are left to the discretion of individual faculty members. Any attendance policy should be clearly articulated on the class syllabus. (See below some sample *suggested* language to adapt - if applicable - to your own classes).

This guidance does not supersede any designated appropriate accommodations as authorized by Student Disability Services.

Verification of Appointment

- Health Services does not provide “excuse notes” for routine illnesses, injuries, or mental health problems that may lead to missed classes or assignments. This policy is consistent with the recommendations of the American College Health Association. In certain circumstances (for example, if a student has a communicable disease, or is hospitalized), a nurse practitioner may recommend a student not attend classes for a specified period of time and faculty will be notified, with permission of the student.
- Please refrain from requiring a “verification of appointment” notice from students. We need to reserve our Wellness Center resources for students with critical medical needs.
- To allow students with *routine* illnesses or other issues some flexibility, faculty may wish to develop policies that do not require onerous documentation efforts.

Student Privacy and Medical Documentation

- Due to federal privacy laws (FERPA and HIPPA), faculty may not ask students specific questions about their health or require medical information from students.
- Faculty must not share information about a student’s health with other students or staff, including whether a student has tested positive for Covid-19.
- If students are registered with Disability Services, faculty will be notified of any necessary accommodations that need to be made.
- In the case of a **student missing a major exam, presentation, or other significant graded activity**, it is reasonable for faculty to require evidence of emergency, keeping in mind the federal privacy laws noted above. If you have questions about how to proceed in a specific situation, please reach out to your dean’s office or the Vice Provost for Academic Affairs.

Long-term illnesses or Emergencies

- In some cases, students have **longer-term illnesses and emergencies** that require them to miss several classes. Often in these cases, students will be able to provide documentation and guidance from a medical professional (such as the appropriate protocol for a concussion), but they are not obligated to provide specific medical information.
- In case of a longer-term illness, faculty are encouraged to make reasonable adjustments to encourage class completion, but occasionally it may be necessary for a student to withdraw from a class if circumstances prevent them from completing the work (such as is the case with labs or experiential learning courses). This is a determination that students should make in consultation with their faculty members and advisors. Please note that the decision to withdraw from one or more courses may impact a student's financial aid. Please advise students to consult with the Solution Center to make an informed decision.

Examples of absence policy language for faculty syllabi (please note that this is *not* mandatory language for faculty – these are suggestions that faculty can use as a template only if they find them helpful.)

“Students may miss up to two [*or three, or whatever you decide*] classes for personal or medical reasons. Further absences will result in a penalty of [*specify impact on grade*].”

“In the rare case of a prolonged medical or personal absence, please contact me as soon as possible so we can discuss whether it is advisable for you to remain in class, and if so, to come up with a plan for you to make up missed work.”

“Students may not make up missed quizzes. However, to accommodate illness or absence, I will drop students' two [*or whatever*] lowest quiz grades. Please do not ask to make up a quiz because you were sick. This ‘drop-2’ policy exists to allow you to miss a quiz due to illness without damage to your grade.”

“Students may make-up two [*or one or three or whatever*] missed quizzes to accommodate illness or absence.”