

Missed Class Policy for University-Authorized Activities and Religious Accommodation

(Revised April 5, 2017)

Approved by the Faculty Senate

Obtaining a quality education requires a partnership between faculty and students. The overall University experience includes academic, service, co-curricular and extra curricular activities. These combined experiences represent integral components of a well-rounded University education and are part of the mission of Cleveland State University. In support of the overall educational mission of Cleveland State University, students should be encouraged to participate in service, outreach and extra curricular activities. Students who engage in University-authorized activities should not be penalized for their participation and engagement with constituencies outside the University. Students on University-authorized business also are under certain obligations to fulfill their role in the learning partnership. In recognition of this partnership of learning, faculty will provide reasonable effort to treat these students equitably and will not disadvantage students with policies that apply to only non-participating students.

For the purpose of this policy, University-Authorized Activities are defined as University-sponsored activities and performances students engage in with constituencies outside of the University and in academically sponsored on-campus performances or activities (i.e., dance or music recitals, theater performances). These include participation in activities approved by an academic unit (including conference presentations, artistic performances, and special events connected with coursework), intercollegiate academic and athletic competitions, and University approved off-campus student leadership opportunities.

Likewise, the University recognizes the core principle of respect for our students' intellectual and cultural diversity, including their right to exercise their freedom of religion including participating in a religious belief or practice, which may require missing a class or other academic obligation.

Class attendance. Regular attendance in class is expected of all students at the University. The individual faculty member has both the responsibility and the prerogative for managing student attendance. The faculty member's policy regarding attendance for each course should be written in the course syllabus and communicated to students during the first week of the semester.

(A) Absence for religious observation. Students may request an authorized absence from a class or academic obligation to observe religious holidays. Examples of reasonable accommodations for student absences for religious observation include but are not limited to: submitting assignments prior to the absence, rescheduling of an exam or giving a make-up exam; altering the time of a student's presentation; allowing extra-credit assignments to substitute for missed class work or arranging for an increased flexibility in assignment due dates, etc.

Upon registration for a class, the student is expected to examine the course syllabus for potential conflicts with holy days and to submit a Class Absence Authorization Form to the instructor as soon as possible. The student is also expected to make arrangements in advance (with the faculty member) to make up any missed work or in-class material within a reasonable amount of time. A reasonable accommodation, if granted, provides students the opportunity to complete appropriate make-up work that is equivalent and intrinsically no more or less difficult than the original exam or assignment. Faculty

should keep in mind that religion is a deeply personal and private matter and should attempt to respect the privacy of the student when making accommodations, discussing it only with University employees who need to know and not sharing it with other students. Additionally, any and all sincerely held religious observations must be accommodated and the student should not be questioned about his/her religious practices or required to submit supporting documentation.

Absence from classes or examinations for religious reasons does not relieve students from responsibility for any part of the course work required during the period of absence. If the student fails to satisfactorily complete any alternative assignment or examination, the instructor may apply the same grading consequences held for all students.

Complaints regarding denials of religious accommodations or other complaints related to this policy may be filed with the Office for Institutional Equity in accordance with its *Procedures for Addressing Complaints of Discrimination and Harassment*.

(B) Class absence for University-sponsored activities. While classes are conducted on the principle that regular attendance is expected, the University recognizes certain activities as legitimate reasons for absence from class. This policy recognizes participation in University-authorized activities, approved by the appropriate University authority as a legitimate class absence.

Sponsors of University Authorized Activities

Sponsors of University-authorized activities should evaluate each proposed activity to determine the educational value of the activity. To avoid interfering with the in-class educational process, this type of activity should be kept to a minimum.

Role of Sponsors of University Authorized Activities:

- Provide a list to each participant of all approved activities that might involve student absences from classes. The list should be given to the participants before the end of the first week (if possible) of the semester. In cases where the date and time of the scheduled activity is not known within this time frame, approval to schedule an activity which will result in student absences must be secured from the administrative officer directly above the sponsoring unit; *e.g.*, college dean, director of athletics, etc.
- Provide each participating student with a signed "Class Absence Authorization Form" for each of the student's affected classes at the time the list of activities is distributed or for subsequently scheduled activities.
- Retain copies of all signed "Class Absence Authorization Forms" for the semester.
- Seek resolution of conflicts with instructors.

Students

In no case is an excuse from class for a University-authorized activity to be interpreted as a release from class responsibility. Responsibility for materials presented in, assignments made for, and tests/quizzes given in regularly scheduled classes lies solely with the student. If a student misses class because of participation in a University-authorized activity, then a reasonable effort will be made to allow the student to make up the missed work at the convenience of the faculty member.

Role of the Student:

- Notify the instructor as early as possible in the semester of the upcoming activity. In cases of absences due to athletic competition or artistic performances, students must submit to the faculty member a copy of their schedule along with the “Class Absence Authorization Form.” Students are not excused from classes to attend on campus practices or rehearsals.
- Present a "Class Absence Authorization Form" to instructors in all affected courses and return the signed "Class Absence Authorization Form(s)" to the sponsor of the activity before the end of the third week of the semester.
- Be responsible for all material covered in class during their absence. Students failing to adhere to the proper procedure may jeopardize their absence as being classified as a University-Authorized Activity.
- Be responsible for completing any makeup work when provided resulting from the absence.
- Be subject to Student Conduct Code violations if this policy is misused.

Faculty

Faculty will include their class attendance policy in their syllabi given to all students in their classes at the start of the semester. Students will be provided a reasonable opportunity to make up any work (when possible) that is missed due to the previously described legitimate reasons. Even though any absence can potentially interfere with the planned development of a course, and the student bears the responsibility for fulfilling all course expectations in a timely and responsible manner, faculty will make a reasonable effort to provide students requiring a legitimate absence for a University-authorized activity with appropriate class materials, assistance and counsel.

Role of the faculty member:

- Judge the validity of student absences from class within the University’s approved guidelines and may require documentation for excused absences.
- Evaluate any reason, other than those listed above, for a student missing class and determine whether the absence is justified.
- Inform the student about assignments to be made during the absence, and make alternative suggestions for acquisition of the material missed.
- Provide a reasonable opportunity for a makeup examination if a legitimate absence occurs on an examination day.
- Inform the student in the syllabus of those class meetings that contain unique content for which an appropriate accommodation cannot be made.
- Resolve conflicts arising from a legitimate absence as provided in this policy through appropriate administrative channels as described in the appeals process.

Appeals

If a request for an excused absence for religious observation is denied, a student may submit a complaint to the Office for Institutional Equity in accordance with its *Procedures for Addressing Complaints of Discrimination and Harassment*. If a request is denied for University-authorized activities/business, as with any academic issue, students may exercise their right to appeal adverse attendance decisions in accordance with

departmental and University procedures. Appeals for absences due to University-authorized activities/business would adhere to the following process:

Proposed language for Academic Appeal for Class Absences:

If a student believes he or she has been treated unreasonably because of participation in a university authorized activity, he or she can appeal. In the stated University appeals process, the student should seek resolution of his/her problem at the appropriate lowest level of authority. If the problem is not resolved at this level, then he/she should present the case to successively higher levels of authority for further consideration of the grievance. The sequence of appeals at Cleveland State University is: (1) individual faculty member, (2) departmental chairperson and/or departmental grievance committee, and (3) the appropriate college dean. Students are also able to talk with the University Ombudsperson at any time during the dispute process. The existing Grade Appeals Committee would resolve any disputes that cannot be resolved at earlier steps in the appeals process. The sponsor of the activity will assist the student with the appeal and provide evidence of proper documentation and faculty notification of the class absence(s) in question.

Cleveland State University

University-Authorized Activity: Class Absence Authorization Form

My participation in the following University-authorized activity or observation of a religious holiday will cause me to miss the following class/classes. I understand that I am responsible for completing all course work that I miss. I appreciate your understanding and cooperation.

Student's Name _____ CSU ID _____

Course Number: _____ Section Number: _____ Day/Time of Class Meetings _____

Dates of classes missed due to University-Authorized Activities or religious holiday(s):

Reason for absence:

Sponsor's Name* Sponsor's Signature Phone Number Date Signed
(for University-authorized activities)

Faculty Name Faculty's Signature Phone Number Date Signed

Administrator's Name* Administrator's Signature Phone Number Date Signed
(If needed)

Students will return the signed form to the University activity sponsor who will keep a record of the student's absences on file.

**Please Note: Students should present this form to the faculty member by the first week of the semester. In cases where the date and time of the scheduled activity is not known within this time frame, approval to schedule an event which will result in student absences must be secured from the administrative officer directly above the sponsoring unit (e.g., College Dean, Director of Athletics, Dean of Student Life).*

Use this space for any faculty comments: