



AOP 12.09: Class Attendance & Reporting Absences

PURPOSE

The purpose of this Academic Operating Policy and Procedure (AOP) is to establish the policy related to student class attendance at Mississippi State University.

REVIEW

This AOP will be reviewed every four years or whenever circumstances require an earlier review by the Associate Provost for Academic Affairs (APAA) with recommendations for revision presented to the Provost and Executive Vice President.

POLICY

Upon registration, the student accepts the responsibility of attending all classes and completing all in-class and out-of-class work that the instructor formally assigns. When absence from class is essential, the student must inform the instructor through a designated means of communication and provide satisfactory documentation of the impending absence unless prescribed otherwise in the syllabus. If possible, all arrangements should be made prior to the absence. The student should discuss and document the scope and time frame for completion of missed work with the instructor in an agreed-upon timely manner. The student should recognize that failure to comply with this documented, mutually agreed-upon procedure could result in a grade penalty, if prescribed in course syllabus.

An attendance policy is the purview of an individual instructor, subject to the limitations described later in the document. A policy should include, but is not limited to, how the instructor defines class attendance, particularly as it pertains to in-class responsibilities that go beyond the student's mere presence in the classroom, how attendance relates to student learning outcomes, the extent of credit or penalty, how excused and unexcused absences are measured, and how all absences are recorded.

Each instructor must describe his or her attendance and participation policy in the course syllabus. If the instructor has a prescribed policy, he or she should describe that policy in class; inform students in writing how attendance will be measured; maintain current, verifiable attendance records; and recognize that failure to comply could constitute grounds for grade appeal.

It is the responsibility of the university to ensure the highest academic standards; to recognize that events occur beyond the personal control of students or faculty; to establish procedures that apply equally to on-campus and distance-learning students; to acknowledge that diverse course offerings and student learning outcomes mandate diverse attendance policies; and to provide procedures that assure appropriate resolutions of disputes.

Best practices would dictate if attendance and participation are used in the evaluation of a student's performance, passing or failing a course should not rest solely on class attendance and participation.

The instructor's department head will supervise all class attendance policies so as to assure compliance with departmental standards and university policy.

PROCEDURES

Excused Absences Defined

These approved excused absences are not subject to instructor discretion in course attendance penalties:

- Participation in an official university activity with authorization from an appropriate administrator sponsoring the activity (e.g., Department Head or higher). If the validity of the activity is questionable, the matter should be referred to the Office of the Provost and Executive Vice President for final resolution.
- Death in a student's immediate family to include a student's parent, legal guardian, sibling, grandparent, grandchild, spouse or partner, as well as natural, adopted and/or in-law children.
- Participation in legal proceedings or administrative procedures that require a student's presence.
- Religious holy day.
- Illness that is too severe or contagious for the student to attend class.
- Required participation in military duties.
- Mandatory admission interviews for professional or graduate school that cannot be rescheduled.

An illness or injury of a student's immediate family (to include parent, legal guardian, sibling, grandparent, grandchild, spouse or partner, as well as natural, adopted and/or in-law children) is eligible for excused absences, but is subject to the instructor's discretion.

University or other organized events intended to provide personal enrichment or entertainment will not be considered university authorized activities as it pertains to course attendance and will not qualify as an excused absence.

It is the student's responsibility to obtain valid documentation from a physician or clinical psychologist that contains the date and time the student sought medical consultation and/or treatment and present that documentation to the instructor upon returning to class. The instructor may ask the student to obtain verification of their excused absence through the Dean of Students Office.

Excused Absences and Grades

Excused absences shall not result in attendance or grade penalties. Use of a drop grade will be considered as a penalty. When excused absences occur on days of scheduled exams and/or quizzes or other measures of academic progress (e.g., assignments) listed on specific dates in the course syllabus, the instructor will provide a student with an opportunity for a comparable evaluation prior to or after the absence. It is the student's responsibility to initiate a request of making up missed exams or other measures of academic progress in a timely manner, and the instructor should communicate a response to such requests in a timely manner.

If a student accrues a significant number of excused absences and/or unexcused absences, then the instructor should contact the student about the best course of action regarding the timely completion of the course or withdrawal from the course.

Reporting Absences

Attendance should be reported for all students. Faculty are encouraged to report absences, especially for freshmen, in a timely manner. The university information system (Banner) supports the ability to report absences at any time as frequently as desired. An excused absence is still reported as an absence.

All absences and last dates of attendance (where applicable) will become a part of the student's file in the Registrar's Office. Instructors may report absences to the Division of Student Affairs at any time they feel it appropriate to do so and are expected to report students with continued consecutive absences.

Attendance of Online Classes

Student attendance in an online class should be explained in the course syllabus. A student will be considered to be in attendance in an online class when the student; a) participates in a course activity (e.g., discussion board); and b) is in communication with the course instructor regarding a course topic within a specified time frame. Logging into an online course without active participation does not constitute attendance. When students who are enrolled in an online course are aware of necessary absences, they should inform the instructor as soon as is possible so that other arrangements can be made.

APPROVED:

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Associate Provost for Academic Affairs

05/03/2016
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