

Excused Absences Guidelines during the COVID-19 Pandemic

Given the diversity of class sizes, formats and environments at Ohio State, attendance requirements and the ability to accommodate absences can vary significantly. This will be especially true this year. This document aims to provide a fair and workable framework for faculty and students to use as they address the need for students to miss face-to-face classes to comply with university rules. It also includes sample text for a syllabus statement about absences.

Adherence to University policies. **Students should not be penalized for following University orders regarding isolation or quarantine.** Absences are expected to be more common during the COVID-19 pandemic and may be required for students to comply with university orders to limit face-to-face contact for those who have been exposed to the illness, test positive or who have symptoms. Students may need temporary accommodations for in-class activities while awaiting test results, SLDS support or adjudication of conduct processes.

Setting expectations. **It is critical that there be open and timely communication between faculty and students about the expectations for attendance and the need for absences.** Students, faculty and other instructional staff are expected to work together with respect and integrity to define and enact the appropriate curriculum adjustments.

Medical documentation. **Students are not required to provide external medical documentation to support an absence related to COVID-19**, as they may be discouraged from seeking medical attention to mitigate exposure to COVID, may not pass the daily health screening due to symptoms or may be quarantining following contact with someone who has COVID-19. Faculty should be sensitive to the need to protect the privacy of the individual and to maintain compliance with [institutional data policies](#). Per university guidance, [students are not expected to disclose COVID test results](#) to faculty and faculty should not ask for or share any information about student diagnoses.

Faculty encountering unusual or difficult circumstances are encouraged to consult with their chair or Dean, or to seek feedback from the [Student Advocacy Center](#), [Office of Legal Affairs](#), [Office of Undergraduate Education](#) or the [Graduate School](#).

Note: Student absences from their classes are governed by [Faculty Rule 3335-9-21, Absences, which states](#): “Each department or school may make its own rules relative to occasional absences by students from scheduled activities. If, however, a student is absent from a course to such an extent as to imperil his or her credit, or is notably irregular in attendance, it shall be the duty of the instructor concerned to report the facts promptly to the dean of the college in which the student is enrolled. The dean may take such action as deemed appropriate.”

Sample text for a syllabus statement about absences:

This text can be modified to include specific expectations for documentation, make-up work, etc.

Continuous engagement with this course is essential to learning the material. Students are expected to attend class and engage with assignments and discussion prompts for every scheduled meeting, participating at least once per week for courses with fully remote participation. Students who need to miss class or who are not able to participate due to illness (COVID-19 or other illnesses), exposure to COVID-19, care for family members exposed to COVID-19 or other reasons are expected to contact the instructor as soon as possible to arrange for accommodation. Students in special situations or those requiring specific, long-term or other accommodation should seek support from appropriate university offices including but not limited to: [Student Advocacy](#), [Student Life Disability Services](#) and the [Office of Institutional Equity](#).