

Legitimate Absences and Makeup Work

Governing Policy

Legitimate Absences and Makeup Work: Crookston, Duluth, Morris, Rochester

Absence Limits and Makeup Work

1. How many absences can or should be allowed under this policy?

Absences allowed depend on course structure and academic discipline. There is not a set number of absences appropriate for every course or student situation. Departments are encouraged to consider having standards across their course offerings that instructors can use to determine what is appropriate in their field of study. If instructors have a defined number of absences allowed, after which students will be penalized, this should be listed in their syllabus and communicated to students no later than the first day of classes.

2. What if course requirements that have an impact on the course grade (such as participation in classroom discussions) cannot be made up?

If a student has a legitimate absence and has missed a class activity or assignment (e.g., small group discussion, in-class participation) that cannot be made up in exactly the same manner, the instructor may substitute another activity or assignment for the missed work. For example, some instructors have substituted participation in a blog or on-line discussion for class participation, or assigned a reflective essay. It

would be up to the instructor to determine an equitable appropriate substitution, based upon the nature of the course. If no substitution can be devised for a student who has a legitimate absence, the missing activity or assignment cannot be factored into determining that student's final course grade.

3. Can the format of a makeup exam be different from that of the regular exam (e.g., open-ended vs. closed-ended questions)?

Yes. The structure of makeup exams may differ from the format of the regularly scheduled exam, and is at the instructor's discretion. The instructor has flexibility and discretion regarding the nature of makeup exams. The key point is that an instructor has provided an equitable opportunity for makeup work due to legitimate excuses.

4. Can a makeup assignment be different from the original assignment?

Yes. The course instructor may determine that the nature of the makeup assignment differs from the original assignment. In some cases, it would not be possible for a student to complete the original assignment (e.g., to review a theater production which the student was unable to attend), and the instructor may determine an acceptable substitute assignment. The key point is that the instructor has provided an equitable opportunity for makeup work due to legitimate excuses.

Verification

5. What kind of verification is acceptable?

Verification, for any absence, can take many different forms (e.g., accident report; UM 1886: *Self-Reporting of Illness* form; documentation from a doctor, dentist, or other health care provider; jury service notice; obituary notice; accommodation letter from DRC). The verification can be provided after the absence, and would be expected as soon as reasonably possible and should not extend beyond the end of the term. Instructors are not required to request verification of absence, but may do so unless otherwise prohibited by this policy.

Instructors may not request verification for absences due to medical conditions related to pregnancy, childbirth, or lactation unless they

require verification for other medical conditions requiring similar absences.

6. What are the obligations for verification for medical absence?

Many short term illnesses do not require medical care and visiting clinics to receive medical verification for these conditions may be an unnecessary use of medical resources. In addition, for some conditions such as influenza, colds, and COVID-19, a student may be advised by their medical provider to treat symptoms at home to prevent spreading the illness to others.

In instances where verification is requested for physical or mental health related absences, it is sufficient for students to communicate with the instructor via email, phone, in person, or with UM 1886: *Self-Reporting of Illness Resulting in Absence from Class*.

Pregnancy, Lactation, and Family Events

7. Is time away from class for lactation covered as a medical condition related to pregnancy?

Yes, students who need to miss a portion of classes or labs may be excused for up to 60 minutes depending on designated lactation spaces available and distance from the classroom. Students should do their best to minimize interruptions to class time, especially for shorter class periods. Instructors should be sensitive to lactation needs, especially for class periods exceeding three hours. In all cases, students should discuss the arrangements with their instructors. To find more information on lactation spaces available, please see the *Lactation Resources Site*.

8. What accommodations should instructors allow for new parents?

Instructors are strongly encouraged to provide reasonable accommodations to student parents within the first three months of the birth of a child, adoption of a child, or placement of a foster child.

9. The policy mentions "bereavement." For what relationships would bereavement apply in this policy?

The death of a family member is typically included in the absences

related to bereavement circumstances. In addition, there may be other bereavement circumstances when a student is affected by the death of a person who was close to the student, and was not a relative (for example, the death of a roommate or friend). The student is responsible for explaining the circumstances and requesting to be able to make up the work. Instructors should consider the factors surrounding the bereavement, including cultural practices and distance traveled.

10. **Can attending a wedding or a graduation ceremony be considered an excused absence?**

It is at the instructor's discretion whether attending a wedding or a graduation ceremony is considered a legitimate absence for which makeup work would be accommodated. Attending a wedding is not in itself an automatically excused absence. Being part of a wedding party, or you yourself getting married, is not automatically an excused absence.

11. **Is a family vacation considered an excused absence?**

It is at the instructor's discretion whether a family vacation is considered a legitimate absence for which makeup work would be accommodated.

Religious Observances

12. **Is there an official list of religious observances related to legitimate absences?**

The [Office for Equity and Diversity's Calendar of Holidays and Religious Observances](#) is available on the UMN Google Calendar site. This list is not exhaustive and observances are not necessarily days when individuals will not attend work or school.

For questions about religious observances in general, as well as questions related to religious observances around bereavement or weddings or other events, the Office for Equity and Diversity can provide helpful guidance. For more information, see [Frequently Asked Questions: Reasonable Accommodations for Religious Beliefs and Practices](#).

Student Involvement

13. **Do the excused absences for student representatives to Student Senate, University Senate and Board of Regents meetings also apply to other student government roles?**

Other student governance bodies have the freedom to set their meeting times to minimize conflict with members' classes.

14. **How does this policy apply to students participating in educational experiences, such as a student government conference, or a competition, where the student is representing the University of Minnesota?**

Under these circumstances, the instructor has the discretion about whether to allow a student to miss a class session and to make arrangements for any makeup work. The instructor is permitted to do so, but is not obligated to do so.

15. **How does this policy apply to students who participate in team events that are not intercollegiate athletic events?**

Students who have not been officially excused from class must get permission, in advance, from the instructor to miss class and make up the work. Instructors are not compelled to accommodate students who miss class for participation in athletic events or other university-sponsored events that are not intercollegiate athletic events. Such teams (e.g., recreational sports teams, club sports, debate team) that wish to have the team officially excused from classes for a specific event under exceptional circumstances can seek permission from the senior academic officer for the campus. Such requests should be submitted as far in advance as possible, and are reviewed on a case-by-case basis.

16. **What is participation in a formal University hearing?**

Students may be called to formal university hearings to provide information regarding an alleged violation of the Student Conduct Code.

17. **Is voting considered a legitimate absence?**

Students are encouraged to participate in regional, state, national, or international elections and should minimize conflicts with courses. Polling is offered for up to a 12-hour time period, within which a student

can reasonably arrange a time to vote. Students may also arrange to vote by absentee ballot. If a student is unable to vote ahead of time or at a time that does not conflict with a class, absences may be permitted at instructor discretion. Instructors should take all factors into account when determining whether to excuse absences for scheduled class periods due to voting or to provide accommodations for makeup work.

Weather

18. How does this policy apply to weather related absences?

As indicated in the University's Policy on [Campus and Building Closing](#), regarding weather situations in which a campus remains open for normal operations, individuals are reminded to use their own judgment about their safety in deciding whether to report to work or attend classes. Students who determine they need to miss class should promptly notify their instructor and review the class syllabus regarding attendance and other class requirements. Instructors are encouraged, but not required, to be flexible in circumstances of inclement weather that can affect students and their dependents (e.g., unexpected school closings and daycare closures).

Late Registration

19. How does this policy apply to students who register late for a course (registration allowed without permission during first week of classes, and with instructor permission during second week)?

Students should promptly contact the instructor of any course they plan to add after the course has started. Instructors who plan to hold students accountable to make up work they missed before they were registered should inform the students of this when they approve registration, and inform the student if it will not be possible to make up some of the work (for instance, missing a quiz whose answers were already released to students, or missing an assessment on material that subsequently was examined in detail). If a class has graded work during the first two weeks of the term, and especially if some of the graded work will not be possible for a student to make up, noting this in the

syllabus and class notes would be helpful, especially if late registrants are common in the course. Alternatively, the class should be set up to restrict late registration.

Other Absences and Disputes

20. **How does this policy apply to unexpected, unavoidable circumstances that are not listed in item (2) of the policy as legitimate absences?**

The policy gives instructors the discretion to grant excused absences, on a case-by-case basis, upon a request from a student. An excused absence in one course is no guarantee of the same in another course. Instructors are encouraged, but not required, to be flexible in circumstances of unforeseen circumstances that can affect students and their dependents.

21. **What are students' options if they believe they have been wrongly denied the opportunity to make up work due to disagreement with the instructor about the legitimacy or unavoidability of an absence?**

Students can seek advice from their academic advisers about options. As one option, students may bring their concerns to the appropriate department head or director of undergraduate/graduate studies or professional program director. For disability related absences, students should follow the DRC grievance process.

Students on the Twin Cities campus may also choose to consult with the Student Conflict Resolution Center (SCRC) for advice and guidance. The SCRC assists students with resolving problems at an informal level, and an ombudsperson in the SCRC can provide confidential guidance about possible options. See the *Student Conflict Resolution Center* website for *SCRC contact information*.