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Academic Standards Subcommittee Minutes, January 13, 2022

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ACADEMIC STANDARDS SUBCOMMITTEE OF THE EDUCATION POLICIES COMMITTEE

Meeting held January 13, 2022, from 3:00-4:00 p.m. in Champ Hall and via Zoom.

MEMBERS

Present:

- Renee Galliher, Chair, Associate Vice Provost
- Mykel Beorchia, Advising
- Sterling Bone, Jon M. Huntsman School of Business
- Dan Coster, College of Science
- Fran Hopkin, Registrar’s Office
- Kacy Lundstrom, University Libraries
- Robyn Peterson, subcommittee secretary (ex officio; not a voting member)

Absent:

- Katie Burns, Division of Student Affairs
- Porter Casdorph, USUSA

AGENDA

1. New Business
   a. Comprehensive review of the Excused Absences policy (Fran Hopkin)
      i. Fran Hopkin proposed a review of the current Excused Absences policy, specifically those sections not reviewed by the committee last year. Fran and Renee explained that as the registrar’s office continues their “deep dive” of catalog content, additional policies in need of significant revisions may be brought to the Academic Standards Subcommittee for review. The committee members discussed updates to the Excused Absences policy and recommended the wording listed in the Attachment #2.
      ii. Motion to approve the proposed wording to the Educational Policies Committee made by Dan Coster. Seconded by Sterling Bone. The vote was unanimous for all present.

ATTACHMENTS

1. Proposed changes with markup.

Excused Absences
Attendance & Excused Absences

Introduction
Instructors set course content and structure and are responsible for determining if a student has met the minimum requirements for completion of the course. The university views class attendance as an individual student responsibility. Students are expected to attend class and to complete all assignments in accordance with individual instructor and course policies. The excused absence policy does not guarantee that students’ absences from a course will not negatively impact their success in the course. Furthermore, it is the students’ responsibility to ensure that excused absences do not conflict with clearly established instructor policies on course attendance and participation. A student requesting an excused absence is responsible for providing evidence to the instructor substantiating the reason for missed class or course deadlines/due dates. Excused absences may not exceed 20% of the class meetings. Students who are requesting an excused absence are expected to uphold the Student Code of Conduct.

There are multiple mechanisms that should be considered if absence from a class is necessary, including Incomplete (I) Grade and Withdrawal.

If a student is unable to complete all of the coursework because of extenuating circumstances, a grade of “I” (Incomplete) may be submitted by the instructor. Refer to Incomplete policy for details.

- **Withdrawal:** Students may drop courses without notation on the permanent record through the first 20% of the class (i.e. 3 weeks of a 15-week term). If a student drops a course after that initial grace period, a “W” will be permanently affixed to the student’s record. After 60% of the class is completed (i.e. 9 weeks of a 15-week term), the student’s academic advisor must sign any drop request, and a “W” with a grade assigned by the instructor will be entered on the student’s permanent record. Under normal circumstances, a student may not drop a course after 75% of the class is completed. (Check General Catalog for exact dates.)

**Excused Absence:** An absence may be excused for the reasons and in accordance with the procedures outlined below.

**Excused Absences**

**Reasons** Acceptable reasons for absences and other missed course requirements include the following.

**University Supported Participation**
1. Participation in a university-sponsored or sanctioned activity.
2. Mandatory participation as a student-athlete in NCAA-sanctioned competition.

**Injury, Illness, Medical Condition/Status**
1. Injury, illness, or medical condition/status that is too severe or contagious for the student to participate in class.
At the discretion of the faculty member, as outlined in the course syllabus, injury or illness confirmation may be obtained through a note from a health care professional affirming the date and time of visit. The Student Health & Wellness Center or an off-campus medical professional can provide a medical confirmation note only if medical professionals are involved in the medical care of the student. Medical documentation can be collected after the missed participation has occurred.

- An absence for a non-acute (e.g., elective) medical service does not constitute an excused absence.

2. Major injury, illness, or medical condition/status in a student’s immediate family (as defined in Policy 346.1 of the USU Policies Manual).

3. A death in a student’s immediate family (as defined in Policy 346.1 of the USU Policies Manual).

Other Allowable Reasons

1. Required participation in military duties, including mandatory medical appointments for veterans and military personnel.

2. Mandatory admissions interviews for professional or graduate school, or internships, that cannot be rescheduled.

3. Religious holy day.

4. Participation in legal proceedings or administrative procedures that require a student’s presence.

5. Accommodation or other support requests, as negotiated with student service offices, such as the Disability Resource Center or Office of Student Conduct.

6. Supportive measures requested through the Office of Equity related to sexual misconduct and/or discrimination (see USU Policy 339).

7. In accordance with Title IX of the Educational Amendments of 1972, pregnancy and related conditions are a justification for an excused absence for so long a period of time as is deemed medically necessary by the student’s physician.

Procedures

Students may be excused from attending class on the day of a graded activity or when attendance contributes to a student’s grade, for the reasons stated above or for other reasons deemed appropriate by the student’s instructor. For reason #1 (Participation in a university sponsored or sanctioned activity) or #2 (Mandatory participation as a student-athlete in NCAA-sanctioned competition), a dean or vice president (or the designee) must provide a letter for the student to provide to instructors that verifies the student’s absence as excused.

Student Procedures

To be excused, students must notify their instructor in writing (acknowledged email message is acceptable) prior to the date of absence if such notification is feasible. Excused absence notifications should be provided to instructors as soon as possible. In some cases, such as athletics or other university-sponsored and sanctioned events with known schedules, instructors should be informed during the first week of classes. Instructors have the right to deny any request that exceeds 20% of class sessions.
In cases where advance notification is not feasible (e.g. accident, illness, or emergency), the student must provide notification as soon as possible by the end of the second working day after the absence. This notification should include an explanation of why notice could not be sent prior to the class. Accommodations sought for absences due to the observance of a religious holiday can be sought either prior to or after the absence, but not later than two working days after the absence. On request of the instructor, the student must provide additional documentation substantiating the reason for the absence, which is satisfactory to the instructor, within one week of the last date of the absence.

**Instructor Procedures**

If the absence is excused, the instructor must either provide the student an opportunity to make up any quiz, exam, or other work that contributes to the final grade or provide a satisfactory alternative by a date agreed on by the student and instructor. Students with an excused absence shall be “held harmless” and benefit from all classroom policies. In some cases, such as classes that include time-dependent group, field, lab, or studio work, instructors are not required to recreate a precisely equivalent experience, but should identify a suitable alternative that respects both their own and the student’s time and meets educational goals. Any make-up work must be completed within 14 calendar days of the last day of the initial absence. Instructors are under no obligation to provide an opportunity for the student to make up work missed because of an unexcused absence.

**Appeal Procedures**

Students may appeal an instructor’s decision that an absence is unexcused if they believe either that they have presented the instructor with adequate substantiating evidence for an excused absence (as outlined in this policy) or that the instructor’s decision was arbitrary, capricious, or prejudicial. Any appeal must be initiated within three class days of the instructor’s decision. In the appeal process, the burden of proof shall be on the student. Any student appeal must be submitted to the following persons or units in the sequence listed below:

1. The head of the academic department in which the course is offered;
2. The Office of the Dean or designee of the college in which the course is offered;
3. The Office of the Provost. (in the case of an appeal by an undergraduate student), or the Vice Provost of the School of Graduate Studies (in the case of an appeal by a graduate student).

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2. Proposed changes without markup

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**Excused Absences**
Attendance & Excused Absences

Introduction
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There are multiple mechanisms that should be considered if absence from a class is necessary, including Incomplete (I) Grade and Withdrawal.

Excused Absence: An absence may be excused for the reasons and in accordance with the procedures outlined below.
Reasons Acceptable reasons for absences and other missed course requirements include the following.

University Supported Participation
1. Participation in a university-sponsored or sanctioned activity.
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   • At the discretion of the faculty member, as outlined in the course syllabus, injury or illness confirmation may be obtained through a note from a health care professional affirming the date and time of visit. The Student Health & Wellness Center or an off-campus medical professional can provide a medical confirmation note only if medical professionals are involved in the medical care of the student. Medical documentation can be collected after the missed participation has occurred.
   • An absence for a non-acute (e.g., elective) medical service does not constitute an excused absence.
2. Major injury, illness, or medical condition/status in a student’s immediate family (as defined in Policy 346.1 of the USU Policies Manual).
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3. Religious holy day.
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student appeal must be submitted to the following persons or units in the sequence listed below:

1. The head of the academic department in which the course is offered, or the dean of the college if the instructor is the department head;
2. The Office of the Dean of the college in which the course is offered;
3. The Office of the Provost.