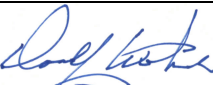




University Senate CHARGE

Date:	February 23, 2015
To:	Charles Delwiche Chair, Academic Procedures & Standards (APAS) Committee Ian Chambers Chair, Student Affairs Committee
From:	Donald Webster  Chair, University Senate
Subject:	Proposed Policy on Excused Absence
Senate Document #:	14-15-21
Deadline:	November 6, 2015

The Senate Executive Committee (SEC) requests that the Academic Procedures & Standards (APAS) and Student Affairs Committees review the proposal entitled, “Proposed Policy on Excused Absence” and consider whether a new umbrella policy on excused absences is necessary. In order to understand the perspectives of both faculty and students, the SEC has assigned elements of the charge for each committee as follows:

We ask both committees to:

1. Review the University of Maryland, College Park Policies and Procedures Concerning Academic Assignments on Dates of Religious Observances (III-5.10 [A]).
2. Review the University of Maryland Policy for a Student Medically Necessitated Absence From Class (V-1.00 [G]).
3. Review the Attendance and Assessment/Examinations section of the University of Maryland Undergraduate Catalog (<http://www.umd.edu/catalog/index.cfm/show/content.section/c/27/ss/1584/s/1540>).
4. Review the proposed umbrella Policy on Excused Absence.
5. Review the proposed Student Bereavement Policy from the Provost’s Student Advisory Council as a potential addition to the proposed umbrella policy on excused absence.
6. Consider the impact of the proposed policy on student performance and success.

We ask the Student Affairs Committee to:

1. Consider the impact of the proposed policy on undergraduate students at the University of Maryland.
2. Submit a recommendation to the Academic Procedures & Standards Committee regarding the proposed language.

We ask the Academic Procedures & Standards Committee to:

1. Consult with the proposer regarding her specific concerns.
2. Consult with the University Registrar.
3. Consult with a representative of the Office of Undergraduate Studies.
4. Consult with a representative of the Provost's Student Advisory Council.
5. Review similar policies for excused absences at peer and Big 10 institutions.
6. Consider the recommendation from the Student Affairs Committee regarding the proposed policy.
7. Consider whether the policy should include a maximum number of excused absences allowed for each course in a semester.
8. Consider the impact of the proposed policy on faculty at the University of Maryland.
9. Consult with the University's Office of General Counsel on any recommended policy revisions.
10. If appropriate, make recommendations as to whether a policy on excused absence should be developed.

We ask that the Academic Procedures & Standards Committee submit its final report and recommendations to the Senate Office no later than November 6, 2015. If you have questions or need assistance, please contact Reka Montfort in the Senate Office, extension 5-5804.

Attachments



University Senate PROPOSAL FORM

Name:	Ann C. Smith
Date:	1/13/15
Title of Proposal:	Proposed Policy on Excused Absence
Phone Number:	X59165
Email Address:	asmith@umd.edu
Campus Address:	2100 Marie Mount Hall
Unit/Department/College:	Office of Undergraduate Studies
Constituency (faculty, staff, undergraduate, graduate):	faculty
Description of issue/concern/policy in question:	<p>The policies and practices related to excused absences are described in three places:</p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;">Religious Observance Policy http://www.president.umd.edu/policies/iii510a.html</p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;">Student Medically Necessitated Absence from Class http://www.president.umd.edu/policies/docs/V-100G.pdf</p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;">Undergraduate Catalog http://www.umd.edu/catalog/index.cfm/show/content.section/c/27/ss/1584/s/1540</p>
Description of action/changes you would like to see implemented and why:	<p>Create a new Excused Absence policy that applies to all types of excused absences (see the Undergraduate Catalog) and replaces the Religious Observance Policy and the Student Medically Necessitated Absence from Class policy.</p>
Suggestions for how your proposal could be put into practice:	<p>Proposed new Excused Absence policy is attached. The language from the policy draws from the Religious Observance Policy and the Student Medically Necessitated Absence from Class policy and the UMD Undergraduate Catalog.</p>

Additional Information:

Please see attached a draft of the proposed policy on Excused Absence.

The draft is color coded. The draft draws heavily from the language of present policies. Please refer to this key:

- Policy III-5.10(A) on religious observances (Green)
- Policy V-1.00(G) on medically necessitated absence (Black)
- Undergraduate Catalog (Purple)
- Revisions (Red)

Comments in the draft draw attention to particular terms and suggestions for discussion.

Note

- **Definition of an excused absence** is from the Undergraduate catalog. The intention of “that students will not be penalized for an absence” is taken from the religious observance policy and is applied to all excused absences. The verification of absence language is taken primarily from the medically necessitated absence from class policy.
 - See Verifiable source in the document, is this the best term?
- **Time line of notification of excused absence** is defined in context of absences known at the start of the semester and those that are not known at the start of the semester
 - Is “first two weeks” the appropriate deadline (vs end of schedule adjustment?)
- **Format for notification of excused absence** is defined as written notification. In the proposed policy the procedure for submitting written notification is not defined. It is assumed that faculty would like to define how students will communicate the notification of an absence – this may be by presenting a note to the faculty member in person or perhaps sending an email. Thus the proposed policy indicates that the communication process must be defined for each course. The expectations of the written notification are defined in the policy and are drawn from the Medically Necessitated Absence Policy.
- **Special consideration must be given to the section on multiple excused absences that are isolated and unrelated.** In the proposed policy multiple excused absences that are non-consecutive and cause students to miss isolated single course meetings are considered in the same manner as a single

excused absence. In the Medically Necessitated Absence policy “Non-consecutive medically necessitated absences from more than a single lecture, recitation or lab” require each instructor to establish their own course policy. The proposed policy removes the requirement that each course establish a “written absence policy” (see Catalog and Syllabus Guidelines in the Faculty Handbook).

- **The opportunity for make up work** is defined in the proposed policy according to that outlined in the Religious Observance Policy
 - “Students shall be allowed, whenever **practicable**, to make up academic assignments that are missed due to such absence” (Religious Policy). Is “practicable” the best term to use? Is the intention clear? Does this term support the policy statement that “Students should not be **penalized** in any way for excused absences” (Religious Policy)
 - Is clarification of the phrase **reasonable time** necessary? Current practice includes delaying make up work until the end of the semester and the use of reading day for make up exams.
- **Syllabus Guidelines in the Faculty Handbook** (<http://faculty.umd.edu/teach/syllabus.html>) encourage faculty to discuss excused absences and make up policies in the syllabus.

Proposed Policy on Excused Absence

This draft is color coded to indicate that the text draws primarily from the language of existing policy:

- Policy III-5.10(A) on religious observances (Green)
- Policy V-1.00(G) on medically necessitated absence (Black)
- Undergraduate Catalog (Purple)
- Revisions (Red)

Highlighted terms are discussed in the attached comment document.

Policy

It is the policy of UMD to excuse the absences of students that result from the following causes: illness of the student, or illness of a dependent as defined by Board of Regents policy on family and medical leave; religious observance (where the nature of the observance prevents the student from being present during the class period); participation in university activities at the request of university authorities; and compelling circumstance beyond the students control. Students shall not be penalized in any way for excused absences. Students shall be allowed, whenever practicable, to make up academic assignments that are missed due to such absences. It is the student's responsibility to contact the instructor for each course in which work is missed, provide appropriate written notification and make arrangements for make-up work or examinations.

As explained below, the procedures and the documentation a student is required to provide to the class instructor for the purpose of obtaining an excused absence differ depending on the frequency of the absence, and whether the absence occurs during a Major Scheduled Grading Event

1. Procedures

A. Excused absence timeline for notification

1. If the date to be missed is known at the start of the semester the student is responsible for providing written notification to the professor within the first two weeks of the semester.
2. If the date to be missed is not known at the start of the semester the student should make a reasonable attempt to inform the instructor in advance of the absence and upon returning to class present written notification.

B. Excused absence format for notification

1. Students must present written notification using the communication process indicated by the course

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Comment [1]: See discussion in proposal

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Comment [2]: See discussion in proposal

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Comment [3]: Is the first two weeks the appropriate deadline? An alternate would be "by the end of the Schedule Adjustment period."

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Comment [4]: See discussion in proposal

instructor to be found in the course syllabus. The process for notification should be confidential

2. Written notification will be a self-signed note from the student. The note must identify the reason for the absence and the date. Each note must also contain an acknowledgment by the student that the information provided is true and correct. Providing false information to University officials is prohibited under Part 9 (h) of the Code of Student Conduct (V-1.00(B) UNIVERSITY OF MARYLAND CODE OF STUDENT CONDUCT) and may result in disciplinary action. Such documentation shall be honored as sufficient documentation unless the absence results in a prolonged absence from classes and/or coincides with a Major Scheduled Grading Event. No written excuses or documentation from the Health Center shall be provided for absences from single lecture, recitation, or lab.
- ~~3. Written notification for Non-consecutive absences from more than a single lecture, recitation or lab will be:~~
4. A prolonged absence from classes is defined as multiple consecutive absences from a course during a semester due to the same reason.
5. "Major Scheduled Grading Events" shall be identified by the instructor in the course syllabus at the beginning of each semester.
6. Students who experience a prolonged absence(s) as defined above or an absence during a Major Scheduled Grading Event are required to supplement the written notification with supporting documentation from a verifiable source. The source (Health Center, Physician, Court Summons, Death Notice, etc) shall verify dates of absence and indicate the time frame that the student was unable to meet academic responsibilities. No diagnostic information shall be provided.

2. Examinations and Assignments

The make-up examination or substitute assignment must be at a time and place mutually agreeable to the instructor and student, cover only the material for which the student was originally responsible, and be at a comparable level of difficulty with the original examination. In the event that a group of students requires the same make-up examination or substitute assignment, one time and place may be scheduled. The make-up assessment or substitute assignment must not interfere with the student's regularly scheduled classes or in-class final examination.

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Comment [5]: . See the Syllabus guidelines from Faculty Affairs
<http://faculty.umd.edu/teach/syllabus.html>

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Comment [6]: Is this the appropriate term?

3. Class work

Students are responsible for information and material missed on the day(s) of absence. Students absent for an excused absence may request any materials given out during the absence. Students shall be given a reasonable time to make up class assignments.

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Comment [7]: See discussion in proposal

4. Resolution of Problems

A student who wishes to contest a decision not to grant an excused absence should first try to resolve the issue with the class instructor. If the issue is not resolved with the instructor, the student should seek the advice of the instructor's Department Chair; the Dean's Office of the Department's College; the Health Center Director; or the Department of Disability Support Services (DSS) Director, if the student is registered with the DSS, in order to identify the proper procedure for resolution.

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If the student believes his or her final grade was affected by the filing of a complaint, recourse is available under UMCP Policy III-1.20(A), Procedures For Review of Alleged Arbitrary and Capricious Grading.

5. Religious Observance and the Academic Schedule

The President may specify certain dates within the academic calendar which, for reasons of religious observance by a large number of student and faculty, may not be used to administer examinations or tests, and may not be set as due dates for assignments. To avoid the likelihood of religious observances scheduling conflicts, it is recommended that professors avoid scheduling exams or field trips on major religious holidays. During orientation period, advisors and students should work together to avoid religious observances scheduling conflicts. When planning their classes, students should consider the likelihood that they might be absent multiple times from a given course. Students should choose lab and discussion sections accordingly.

UMD Policy

Student Bereavement Procedure

Purpose:

To preserve mental health and academic standing of students by allowing them sufficient time and accommodations to grieve the loss of loved ones.

Excused Academic Days:

All students who opt to use the Bereavement Procedure should be given **five (5)** academic days off to mourn the loss of an individual with a significant relationship. Unexcused absences already prescribed in the course syllabus should not be used in congruence with the Bereavement Procedure. Significant relationship can include, but is not limited to, individuals with the following legal titles:

- Uncle(s) or Aunt(s)
- Cousin(s)
- Niece(s) or Nephew(s)
- Legal In-Law(s)
- Grandparent(s)
- Step-Relation Individual(s)
- Child(ren) or Individual(s) in which the Mourner has Legal Guardianship Over
- Parent(s) or Legal Guardian(s)
- Sibling(s)
- Spouse or Legal Civil Union Partner

Traveling Day(s) System:

- Students should be allotted two days, in addition to the five mourning days, to travel to and from their respective locations. These locations include the home of the deceased, the home of the student grieving or the location of the funeral/services.

- Travel days will be calendar days, not academic days. Students opting to use the Bereavement Procedure can appeal to the professor and/or Provost's Office if more travel days are needed. These requests will be handled on a case-by-case basis.

Missed Academic Work:

Students who are mourning will be given a reasonable amount of days to make up any academic work that will not be completed as they mourn and/or travel.

- The allowance of days given for missed academic work should be equal to the number of days excused from class.

- The assignments missed should not be subject to deduction in scoring, as long as they are completed in the reasonable extended period of allotted time. The student is responsible for working with the professor to make up these assignments.
- If compelling verifiable circumstances are beyond the control of the student, and the nature of the assignment makes it impossible for missed work to be completed, faculty members should attempt to make a reasonable adjustment of the assignment.

Proof of Death:

Any students who wish to use the Bereavement Procedure should have proof of the death of the individual(s) who is/are being mourned. Proof of the individual(s) death(s) should be submitted to a faculty/staff member designated by the University Provost by the end of the allotted days. Documentation of the death or funeral service attended should suffice as evidence of the death.

- This could include, but is not limited to: an obituary, copy of death certificate, program from the funeral service, or a signed letter of funeral service from the funeral home.