



UNIVERSITY  
OF WYOMING

Office of  
Academic Affairs

## **Guidelines on Managing Student Absences**

*Effective March 1, 2020*

*(Revised: July 27, 2023)*

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### **Introduction**

This document provides guidelines to UW instructors for effectively managing student absences in the context of [Student Absence Policy](#). This Standard Administrative Policy and Procedure (SAPP) recognizes that students are “responsible for regular and punctual attendance” in classes. It also recognizes that there are a variety of reasons a student may be excused from class, with an authorized excuse from the Dean of Students. These include special curricular requirements, intercollegiate athletics and other official university activities, observance of religious holidays, active military service, illness or injury, caregiving, jury duty or subpoenas, pregnancy or parenting under Title IX, or when the university is closed by the President of UW. Once an authorized absence is issued by the Dean of Students, the student is expected to contact the instructor as soon as practicable, preferably within 24 hours. The instructor is then expected to give the student a reasonable amount of time following the absence to make up the material or activities, without penalty. In addition, inclement weather can cause transportation issues, cancellations of multiple classes and even disruptions to the final examination schedule. Guidelines for managing these situations are also covered here. We recommend that instructors include specific attendance and absence policies in their syllabi that adhere to these guidelines and reference the Student Absence Policy SAPP>

## Accommodating Authorized and Other Absences for Individual Students

Following is a list of options that UW instructors may find useful in deciding how to help students make up material or activities in a timely way.

1. For authorized absences, the instructor or a colleague may proctor exams, tests, or quizzes for affected students before or after the official test time. Instructors should consider making alterations to the assignment, to prevent academic dishonesty while maintaining fair and comparable levels of challenge to students.
2. Instructors or other academic employees from UW or from other institutions may proctor exams, tests, or quizzes given to affected students while the students are traveling with an authorized absence. These away-from-home accommodations would involve releasing the assignment in question to the off-site proctors, often in electronic formats.
3. In cases involving student athletes, [the Faculty Athletic Representative](#) can coordinate with instructors at UW or on other campuses to help students complete assignments while traveling on an authorized absence. In the case of other types of authorized absence-related travel for competitions or performances, faculty members overseeing such programs are encouraged to provide guidance to affected students' other instructors on appropriate accommodations.
4. When students miss class sessions because of illness, it is usually best for the health of professors, other students, and the community at large for the afflicted students to remain at home. In general, such students should not be expected to provide an official excuse, and instructors should not try to judge the medical merits of students' explanations. Instructors should work in good faith with the students to find other ways to complete the required activity.
5. Instructors with laboratory components to their course may find it infeasible for students to make up all materials and work in the laboratory. In these cases, the instructor should work with students to ensure that they master the appropriate learning outcomes.

6. Instructors should not count other tests or assignments more heavily in lieu of providing the make-up work to affected students without consulting the student in question. Such an approach treats students inequitably, whether or not the approach ends up favoring either the absentees or the other students.
7. When the President closes the university due to hazardous weather conditions or natural disasters, instructors have discretion in determining whether an additional session of the class should be held or if any additional assignments should be required to make up for classes that were not held while the university was closed. The closure constitutes an authorized absence, so students should be allowed to make up work.
8. Instructors should also be mindful that hazardous weather conditions can also cause students to miss class in the interest of safe travel. Students are responsible for minimizing absences of this nature, but instructors are strongly encouraged to provide reasonable opportunities for students who are unable to attend class in such conditions to complete missed assignments or examinations in a timely way.

### **Inclement Weather or Disaster-Related Closures or Delays During Final Exam Week**

In the event of delays or closures during final exam week, faculty whose final exams are affected by the delay or closure may elect one of three options. Faculty should consider choosing one of the options prior to final exam week and clearly communicate to their students which option they have chosen.

1. Faculty may assign the current grades that students have going into final exam week as final grades,
2. Faculty may make provisions for students whose exams are canceled to contact them for the scheduling of a make-up exam or alternative arrangements,
3. Faculty may, as a last resort, choose to assign incomplete grades.

The recommendations listed above are not meant to serve as an exhaustive list. In general, when deciding how to help students make up missed work, instructors should take care to (1) reduce the opportunity for academic dishonesty, (2) not provide undue advantage to students who miss class

sessions, and (3) provide clear instructions to the student or any alternate proctors with respect to how the work should be completed.

Should questions arise about how to treat student absences fairly in a fashion that remains consistent with the goals of the course, instructors should feel free to consult with their department head, the Office of the [Dean of Students](#), or, in the case of a student athlete, the [Faculty Athletic Representative](#).