# Attendance Guidance

*Attendance is a topic that has many of our offices reevaluating our processes and policies. This document is an example that one of our institutions used to educate the faculty on areas they have control and areas that must be considered acceptable absences. It is important to note that any information included is just for guidance. We propose this document be adjusted for your institution and once adjusted, used as an introduction to the interactive process between DSP and faculty.*

**NOTE**: The purpose of the summary that follows is to offer guidance for setting attendance expectations, outlining examples of excused absences, understanding leave policies, and how best to use campus resources such as Student Life and Disability Services. This summary is based on a document prepared by the Care and Concern Team, reviewed by legal counsel, Academic Affairs, and other campus partners.

Students are expected to follow the attendance requirements outlined in each course syllabus, which meet the learning outcomes determined and established by the instructor. Students are expected to communicate with their instructor regarding their attendance and are responsible for making up work that they have missed. Some absences, such as religious observances, jury duty, etc. (per below) are excused and the student shall not be penalized for the absence. In these cases, the student has the right to receive academic accommodations or adjustments; the university has the responsibility to provide the same. For example, students with excused absences should not lose participation points and should be given opportunities to make up academic work, if they can still meet the learning goals of the class and it does not place an undue burden on the university.

Other unforeseen circumstances, including bereavement, common illness/injury, travel, etc., may cause students to be absent from classes. These absences should fall under the expectations set up in the course syllabus as part of the course attendance policy. Students should notify faculty as soon as possible to make them aware of the situation, the length of the requested absence, and to discuss next steps, including a plan to make-up the work missed.

Faculty should never request medical documentation as proof of reason for absence or to excuse an absence. Health records and other documents that include health information and other protected personal information (PPI) should be reviewed and stored only by appropriate offices and personnel, including Student Life, Counseling and Health Services, and Disability Services.

If faculty are unsure whether an absence should be “excused,” or if a student is unable to meet the learning outcomes of the class because of the excused absences, faculty are encouraged to consult with their department chair, and/or the school/college dean to determine appropriate action. Student Life is available to make an individualized assessment and recommendation when needed. If an extended absence from class makes it unreasonable for a student to complete the learning objectives, faculty can recommend withdrawal or an incomplete. Examples of excused absences include:

* **Religious Observances:** Students unable to attend classes or to participate in any exam, study, or work requirement on a particular day because of their religious beliefs shall be excused and provided with an opportunity to make up required work that they have missed. Students must notify their faculty member in advance of missing class to observe a religious day and make appropriate arrangements with the faculty to complete any work resulting from their absence.
* **Jury Duty:** Students are expected to fulfill their obligations to serve on a jury. Students are responsible for providing documentation from the court to the faculty for an ongoing jury duty responsibility.
* **Pregnancy:** The university must excuse absences due to pregnancy or any related conditions for as long as the student’s doctor says it is necessary for the student to be absent. Student Life and/or the Title IX coordinator are able to provide additional support to students or guidance to faculty. Pregnancy is covered by Title IX accommodations. If a student is requesting accommodations for extended absences due to medical recommendations (for example, a doctor’s note excusing them from class for several weeks for “bed rest”) the student should submit this documentation to Disability Services or Student Life and one of those offices will notify faculty and facilitate accommodations or options.
* **Serious Illness or Injury:** Students should be excused and given the opportunity to make-up work missed due to an illness or injury that requires immediate treatment, quarantine, or hospitalization. Absences due to common illness or medical appointment are not included in this category of excused absences. A parent, guardian, or

medical provider can contact (*Contact information*) to share information if a student may not be able to communicate with their faculty due to a sudden, unexpected medical crisis. Student Life will communicate with faculty regarding such absences to discuss reasonable options for the student to meet the learning requirements of the class.

* **Public Health Concern:** If a student has symptoms of a communicable disease; a known exposure to such a disease; or has been diagnosed with a disease that is a threat to public health, Health Services will communicate with faculty to notify them of a related absence. In these situations, students may be able to attend class remotely. Flexibility and support to enable the student to make-up the work that was missed is appreciated.
* **Military Activation:** Enrolled students who are members of the National Guard, Reserves or Active Duty who are unable to attend class due to military activation shall have their absences excused. The student must provide a copy of their activation to the University’s Veterans’ Affairs Office. Students may also consider taking a Military Leave.
* **University sponsored programs or Administrative processes:** There may be times when Student Life informs faculty that a student is participating in a university program or an administrative process and is unable to attend class. This may occur when a student is involved in a conduct or Title IX case is or placed on a temporary leave.

# **University Leave Policies**

* **Class Absence for Military or National Guard Service:** Students called to duty may be granted a military leave from the University. See Military Leave Policy in the Academic Policies of the SSU Catalogue that includes criteria for a short-term military leave and long term military leave. Official documentation must be provided to Veterans Affairs Office.
* **Leave of Absence (LOA):** Students can request a leave of absence from the university or a withdrawal from a course by meeting with Academic Advising Office. Students will be alerted to the consequences and implications of the leave based on their status, time in the semester and financial commitments.
* **Involuntary Leave Policy:** Student Life can activate an involuntary or administrative leave if there are serious safety concerns or if a student is presenting as impaired or unable to function within the academic policies and expectations. The involuntary leave may be time limited, until it is determined that the student can return and safely function at the institution. Sometimes an involuntary leave will be extended and become a leave of absence for a semester or academic year. If a student is placed on leave, Student Life will notify faculty.
* **Campus Resources.** When students are facing challenges that are impacting their attendance and possibly their ability to complete a semester, additional resources are available to provide support, document and manage concerns, or provide guidance on next steps. In addition, we recommend connecting students with the academic support services as listed in the academic catalogue to assist them with their academic success.

# **Suggested syllabus statement**

*“If a student is dealing with a serious personal or medical situation that is preventing them from attending or participating in their education, they are welcome to discuss their situation with the Dean of Students who can review medical documentation and provide recommendations to the faculty, as well as connect students with additional resources. This is not intended for one-time absences that can be addressed within the class attendance policy, but instead for serious situations when students require additional assistance or are following medical recommendations. Please be aware that faculty members may not receive medical documentation from students.*