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Attendance Policy (Fall 2020 Only)

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Approver(s):

Academic Council



Authorizes Release:

Provost and Vice President for Academic Affairs

Responsible Area:

Academic Affairs

Review Cycle:

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Last Review:

August 2020

Monitoring attendance, whether students are in-class or online, is critical for the early identification of at-risk students, helps our students with satisfactory academic progression, and can impact federal student aid dollars.

However, it must be recognized that our transition to offering courses In Person/Virtual (IPV), Virtual (V-synchronous online), and Online (OL-asynchronous online) modalities, complicates our current attendance policy. It is recommended that the current St. Mary's attendance policy be suspended for the fall semester and be replaced by this proposed attendance policy. The attendance policy should be revisited before October 15 to make decisions on the appropriate attendance policy for the spring 2021 semester.

Given the variety of teaching modalities that will be used this fall, it is necessary to define attendance and absences. Agreement on these terms is essential for consistent application of the proposed attendance policy.

Definitions:

. Attendance 

Attendance in a live classroom remains unchanged

Attendance in synchronous online classes—the faculty member determines the method(s) for ensuring active presence of synchronous online students but due to the diverse quality in bandwidth, uneven access to appropriate technology, and the unique home situations among students, attendance *should not* require the use of the Zoom video feature for the entire class to show that a student is present.

Examples of ensuring presence —use of Reactions during class; asking questions randomly to in-class students and online students; use of chat function to ask questions; use of Polls in Zoom, etc.

Attendance in asynchronous online classes –can be defined by the faculty member but must require students to complete asynchronous work according to the course assignment schedule. All assignments must be able to be monitored and recorded by the course instructor. Failure to complete assignments according to the course schedule constitutes non-attendance.

Examples of ensuring attendance – weekly asynchronous assignments equivalent to in-class experience, e.g., watch a taped lecture followed by a brief essay or quiz; weekly posts to discussion boards in response to other students’ posts or in response to a prompt; student participation in an interactive tutorial or computer-assisted instruction; weekly quizzes, etc.

. Absences

If a student must be absent from a class for one of the reasons listed below, the student is required to communicate with the faculty member to provide information on the reason for the absence. Documentation is not required for University-related activities, legitimate health concerns and illness. Documentation for University-related activities will be verified by the academic dean’s office. Documentation for legitimate health concerns and illness will be verified by the Dean of Students. Students must be given the opportunity to make up any missed assignments or the equivalent. Untruthful student claims about absences are considered a violation of the Code of Student Conduct: <https://www.stmarytx.edu/policies/student-development/code-of-student-conduct/>.



University-related activities: Students who are absent from class while participating in a University-sponsored event or who are absent from the campus because they officially represent the University in such sponsored activities as intercollegiate athletics, debate tournaments, and tours will be excused from classes.

Legitimate health concerns: No student will be required to attend in-person classes if doing so endangers their health or the health of someone in their household. Students must be granted the freedom to learn in a manner that protects their safety and that of their family.

Illness: For the duration of the pandemic, students who are ill should not attend class and should self-report if symptoms are consistent with COVID-19. In cases of severe illness, students may also be excused from synchronous online classes and asynchronous online classes. For all situations, we recommend the following procedures:

Students with COVID-19 symptoms must adhere to University health and wellness procedures for self-evaluation, reporting, follow-up, and quarantine as necessary.

<https://gateway.stmarytx.edu/group/mycampus/illness-reporting>

Students who experience a family illness-related emergency that interferes with academic performance are encouraged to contact the Office of the Dean of Students (deanofstudents@stmarytx.edu).

Technology issues: Given the technology gap facing some students, instructors must make allowances (e.g., flexible time limits and due dates) for inevitable technology difficulties that may impact students' ability to do their online coursework. A student who is unable to complete a synchronous or asynchronous assignment in a timely manner as a result of technology-related issues should be considered excused for submitting the assignment late and the assignment should not be penalized.

Home environments and obligations: Faculty should understand that students may be living in a home environment that can interfere with participating in synchronous online classes as they would in on-campus classes. Instructors should make allowances and not penalize students for non-participation in synchronous online classes that is the result of a difficult home environment.

Failure to attend classes for reasons other than those listed above are considered unexcused absences unless the faculty member, in consultation with the student, approves an absence as excused.



The attendance policy must be clearly stated in the course syllabus and include details on how attendance will be monitored for all modalities.

Faculty members will track student attendance on a regular basis in all classes using the recommended definitions that have been provided.

Faculty members will report through Rattler Navigate and to the appropriate academic Dean's Office if a student has missed more than the equivalent of two weeks of classes.

Attendance cannot contribute to a student's final grade unless it is offered as extra credit above and beyond the other component parts of a student's final grade.

Faculty members cannot withdraw a student from a class for excessive absences or excessive late assignments. Requests can be made to the appropriate academic Dean's Office to withdraw a student from a class. If the Dean determines that a student should remain in the class, the final grade for the class will be based upon a student's performance on the requirements specified in the course syllabus.

It is the responsibility of the student to communicate with the instructor about any absence in order to receive opportunities to complete course work that was missed as a result of an absence.

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