

1 **Attendance Policy Approved by the Faculty Senate on March 4, 2020 for AY 2021-2022**  
2 **Undergraduate Bulletin**

3 **Policy Statement**

4 The University of South Carolina expects its students to commit to their educations by attending  
5 class and participating in course activities. In assessing student attendance and participation, the  
6 University aims to ensure the highest academic standards while recognizing that events occur  
7 beyond the personal control of students or faculty. Different courses demand different  
8 approaches to assessing student attendance and participation. Therefore, subject to certain  
9 limitations described below, instructors of record are responsible for determining the attendance  
10 and participation policies appropriate to their individual courses.

11 Each instructor should describe their attendance and participation policy in the courses syllabus,  
12 if only to point to this general policy. Should an instructor fail to provide a written attendance  
13 policy, this general policy applies.

14 If an instructor intends to assign a grade penalty for absence or a grade for participation the  
15 instructor must: inform students in writing how attendance and participation will be measured,  
16 particularly as such measurement goes beyond recording students' mere presence in the  
17 classroom for all or part of a class session; maintain current, verifiable records; take care to apply  
18 attendance and participation policies consistently and fairly for all students; and recognize that  
19 failure to comply could constitute grounds for a grade appeal.

20 While instructors are not required to keep a record of attendance, they are encouraged to do so  
21 whenever practical. Federal law requires institutions to document the last day of participation for  
22 enrolled students who fail to complete a course.

23 Instructors must allow make-up work for excused absences as described below.

24 Students are responsible for satisfying the requirements for attendance and participation for any  
25 class in which they are enrolled, including requirements for notification and documentation of  
26 excused absences. Whenever possible, and as specified below, documentation is required in  
27 advance of any excused absence.

28 This policy applies to all courses offered by the University of South Carolina, including  
29 synchronous or asynchronous online courses.

30 **Excused Absences**

31 Instructors requiring attendance as a component of a student's grade must distinguish between  
32 excused and unexcused absences in the written policy for the course.

33 Excused absences may not be penalized in a student's grade, and the student must be permitted  
34 to make up coursework missed due to an excused absence or to complete an equivalent  
35 assignment agreed upon with the instructor. Online courses, whether synchronous or  
36 asynchronous, are not exempt from this rule. In all cases of excused absence, the instructor of  
37 record must engage in an interactive process with the student to determine reasonable make-up  
38 work.

39 Instructors may refuse to grant a request for an excused absence or for make-up work that  
40 would result in a fundamental alteration of the essential academic requirements of the course. In

41 such instances, students should be apprised of the University's policy regarding course  
42 withdrawals, including undergraduate hardship withdrawals.

43 The University of South Carolina is required by law to excuse absences from class for the  
44 following reasons:

- 45 1. Performance of a military duty or obligation imposed by state or federal law, as  
46 documented in writing by the appropriate state or federal authority.
- 47 2. Legal obligation to appear at or participate in a judicial or administrative proceeding,  
48 including the performance of jury duty, as documented in writing by the appropriate  
49 judicial or administrative authority.
- 50 3. Any medical condition related to pregnancy or childbirth, as documented by the  
51 student's health care provider, requiring the student's absence from class.
- 52 4. A disability, as defined by the Americans with Disabilities Act and as documented by  
53 the Student with the Student Disability Resource Center, which prevents the student  
54 from attending class.
- 55 5. Observance of a religious practice, holiday or holy day, if the instructor of the class is  
56 provided written notification by the student of their intent to observe such religious  
57 practice, holiday or holy day no later than the end of the second week of regularly  
58 scheduled classes in a full fall or spring semester term, and within twice the length of  
59 the drop/add period for any other term. Change / Drop dates can be found at:  
60 <https://my.sc.edu/codes/partofterms/index>.
- 61 6. Any other absences required to be excused by applicable state or federal law.

62 The University of South Carolina requires that absences from class for the following reasons  
63 must also be excused:

- 64 1. Participation in an authorized University activity, in which the student plays a formal,  
65 required role. Such activities include, but are not limited to, musical performances,  
66 academic competitions, and varsity athletic events. University documentation of  
67 participation should be provided in advance of the absence.
- 68 2. Illness or injury that is too severe or contagious for the student to attend class, with  
69 appropriate documentation.
- 70 3. Death or severe illness of an immediate/dependent family member, with appropriate  
71 documentation.
- 72 4. University closure for weather-related or other emergencies.

73 Instructors, at their discretion, may also excuse absences from class for the following reasons:

- 74 1. Non-closure weather-related emergencies that affect a student's capacity to reach  
75 campus or that require a student's presence off-campus.
- 76 2. Mandatory interviews related to employment, professional school, or graduate school  
77 that cannot be rescheduled.
- 78 3. Any other situation deemed excusable by the instructor. Instructors are encouraged  
79 to show understanding toward students' needs while remaining mindful of the  
80 University's high academic standards and the need to be scrupulously even-handed.

### 81 **Requesting Excuses**

82 To arrange excuses for absences that can be anticipated at the start of a term--including, but not  
83 limited to, authorized university activities and religious observances--students should submit a  
84 request in writing (email is acceptable) stating the dates of the anticipated absence, explaining the

85 reason for absence, providing supporting documentation as required above, and including any  
 86 request for make-up work. Students should submit this request no later than the end of the  
 87 second week of regularly scheduled classes in a full fall or spring semester term and within twice  
 88 the length of the drop/add period for any other term. Change / Drop dates can be found at:  
 89 <https://my.sc.edu/codes/partofterms/index>.

90 To arrange excuses for absences that cannot be anticipated at the start of a term--including, but  
 91 not limited to, legal proceedings or illness--students should submit in writing a request stating  
 92 the date of absence, the reason for absence, and any request for make-up work as soon as  
 93 reasonably possible after they become aware of the need to be absent. For instance, in the case  
 94 of a contagious illness a student should notify the instructor soon after becoming aware of this  
 95 illness. Instructors should not maintain records of student medical conditions. On the Columbia  
 96 campus, the Undergraduate Student Ombuds is available to certify any excuses involving  
 97 confidential personal information.

### 98 **Unexcused Absences: The “5% Rule”**

99 The University recognizes that students may occasionally miss classes for legitimate reasons not  
 100 rising to the level of a formal excuse. For this reason, course attendance policies may penalize  
 101 unexcused absences in a student’s grade only after a student’s unexcused absences exceed a set  
 102 percentage of the total classes that the student missed without excuse. Once unexcused absences  
 103 exceed this set percentage, every unexcused absence may accrue a penalty to a student’s grade.

104 For traditional lecture-based, face-to-face classes, the minimum percentage of unexcused  
 105 absences allowed must be at least 5 percent of total class meeting time. For example, students in  
 106 a traditional, face-to-face 3-credit course, which meets in class for a total of 2100 minutes, may  
 107 not be penalized for absences that total less than 105 minutes of class time (a minimum of one  
 108 allowable unexcused absence for a class meeting two times per week for 75 minutes; two for a  
 109 class meeting three times per week for 50 minutes); students may be penalized for each  
 110 unexcused absence beyond 105 minutes.

111 Exceptions:

- 112 1. Clinical courses, “practicum” courses, laboratory courses, and certain other special  
 113 kinds of courses may have allowable percentages shorter than 5 percent of class time.
- 114 2. Online courses (asynchronous or synchronous) may also set their own policies for  
 115 participation in online activities and/or meetings, to which the 5-percent minimum  
 116 does not apply.

117 Any instructor assessing a grade penalty for absence must specify in the course syllabus the  
 118 percentage of allowable unexcused absences (with a minimum of 5% for traditional face-to-face  
 119 classes) and the penalty to a student’s grade for each unexcused absence in excess of that  
 120 percentage. Online courses should specify any penalties for not participating in activities in the  
 121 allotted time without a valid excuse.

122 Instructors have full discretion to set their own policy regarding the late acceptance of course  
 123 work missed due to an unexcused absence; this policy should be specified in the course syllabus.

### 124 **Assistance and Appeals**

125 On the Columbia Campus, the Undergraduate Student Ombuds is available to assist instructors  
 126 and verify, in certain cases, students’ stated reasons for requesting excused absences. Palmetto  
 127 College campuses should work with their Faculty Organizations to define similar agencies.

128 Any student who is denied a request for an excused absence from class for any of the reasons set  
129 forth herein may appeal the decision per the STAF 6.30 Academic Grievance Policy. As  
130 described in STAF 6.27, the Undergraduate Student Ombuds is also available to help students  
131 resolve grievances and maintain policy compliance.

132 Students are expected to be fully honest with instructors, university staff and administrators  
133 when they make requests to excuse absences and when they work with instructors to arrange  
134 terms for the completion of coursework missed due to excused absences. Any dishonesty in  
135 requesting excused absences or accommodations for the timely completion of missed work is  
136 regarded as a violation of academic integrity and is subject to disciplinary action through the  
137 Office of Academic Integrity.

