

CLASS ATTENDANCE

USC Upstate expects its students to commit to their education by attending class and participating in course activities. In assessing student attendance and participation, the University aims to ensure the highest academic standards while recognizing that events occur beyond the personal control of students or faculty. Different courses demand different approaches to assessing student attendance and participation.

Each instructor should describe their attendance and participation policy in the course's syllabus, if only to point to this general policy. Should an instructor fail to provide a written attendance policy, this general policy applies. This policy applies to all courses offered by USC Upstate, including synchronous or asynchronous online courses. Certain courses—e.g., clinical courses, "practicum" courses, laboratory courses, and other special kinds of courses in which an excused absence or make-up assignment cannot reasonably be made available to students—are exempt from this policy.

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

Excused Absences

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

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

Even when absences are excused and make-up work is provided, students should be aware that it will be very difficult to be successful in most classes if absences become excessive. In these cases, withdrawal from the course may be recommended. Change/Drop dates can be found on the registrar's page of the website.

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

1. Performance of a military duty or obligation imposed by state or federal law, as documented in writing by the appropriate state or federal authority.
2. Legal obligation to appear at or participate in a judicial or administrative proceeding, including the performance of jury duty, as documented in writing by the appropriate judicial or administrative authority.
3. Any medical condition related to pregnancy or childbirth, as documented by the student's health care provider, requiring the student's absence from class.
4. A disability, as defined by the Americans with Disabilities Act and as documented by the Student with the Student Disability Resource Center, which prevents the student from attending class.

5. Observance of a religious practice, holiday, or holy day, if the instructor of the class is provided written notification by the student of their intent to observe such religious practice, holiday, or holy day no later than the end of the second week of regularly scheduled classes in a full fall or spring semester term, and within twice the length of the drop/add period for any other term.
6. Any other absences required to be excused by applicable state or federal law.

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

1. Participation in an authorized University activity, in which the student plays a formal, required role. Such activities include, but are not limited to, musical performances, academic competitions, and varsity athletic events. University documentation of participation should be provided in advance of the absence.
2. Illness or injury that is too severe or contagious for the student to attend class, with appropriate documentation. (Non-emergency doctor's appointments are generally not included in this category. Medical appointments for non-contagious illnesses, preventive care, and regular check-ups should be scheduled so as not to conflict with class where possible.)
3. Death or severe illness of an immediate/dependent family member, with appropriate documentation.
4. University closure for weather-related or other emergencies

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

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

Advance Notification of Excused Absences

To arrange excuses for absences that can be anticipated at the start of a term—including, but not limited to, authorized university activities and religious observances—students should submit a request in writing (email is acceptable) stating the dates of the anticipated absence, explaining the reason for absence, providing supporting documentation as required above, and including any request for make-up work. Students should submit this request no later than the end of the second week of regularly scheduled classes in a full fall or spring semester term and within twice the length of the drop/add period for any other term. If requests are not submitted by this deadline, excused absences may not be accepted, at the faculty member's discretion.

To arrange excuses for absences that cannot be anticipated at the start of a term—including, but not limited to, legal proceedings or illness—students should submit in writing a request stating the date of absence, the reason for absence, and any request for make-up work as soon as reasonably possible after they become aware of the need to be absent. For instance, in the case of a contagious illness a student should notify the instructor soon after becoming aware of this illness. Instructors should not maintain records of the student medical conditions. The Dean

of Students in the Division of Student Affairs is available to certify any excuse involving confidential personal information.

Unexcused Absences: The 5% Rule

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

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

Students, faculty, and advising staff should incorporate discussion of potential scheduling conflicts during advisement to identify poor fits between specific courses and the student's schedule, including excused absences that are known in advance.

Exceptions:

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

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

Assistance and Appeals

Any student who is denied a request for an excused absence from class for any of the reasons set forth herein may appeal the decision by following the USC Upstate Academic Grievance procedures.

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