

Absences: Questions and Answers

What courses are covered by this absence policy?

ENC 1101, ENC 1102, LIT 2010, LIT 2030, LIT 2040, ENC 3213

What is the absence policy?

Absences in excess of two weeks of class, excused or unexcused, will result in an F unless you successfully apply for a grade of W. Please note that for a T/TH class, this means more than four absences risks failure; for a MWF course, more than six absences risks failure. This policy might be further adjusted by your instructor for summer classes, which have a compressed schedule.

Is that two weeks of absences all at once?

It could be; it could also be any combination of absences spread out over any combination of days or weeks.

But it's only unexcused absences, right?

No. The policy provides reasonable allowance for excused absences. If you are missing more than two weeks' worth of class for legitimate reasons, you may want to consider withdrawing from the class or, if it is past the withdrawal date, applying for an Exceptional Circumstances Withdrawal (see below). In any case, chances are that if you miss that much time in all your classes, then your academic performance as a whole is in jeopardy; speak with an advisor in your college.

Then what's the difference between excused and unexcused absences?

You are allowed to make up work that you miss because of an excused absence. Making up work that you miss because of unexcused absence is at your instructor's discretion.

So I'm OK as long as I don't miss that much class, right?

Maybe. Keep in mind that your instructor may lower your grade for repeated absences. If your work is borderline, you could end up failing the class from having your grade lowered by multiple absences.

I switched into this section late in the drop/add period so I missed the first couple of classes... Do those missed classes count?

That depends on the particular situation, so you should be sure to discuss this with your instructor as soon as possible—and without disrupting the class. These absences may indeed be counted towards your total. Since the absence policy is largely about being *in* the class—in its dynamics, in its small groups, in its workshopping—every time you are not in the classroom you are functionally absent. Even if you were attending another section, you were not contributing to the class dynamic of your current section.

My schedule is so tight because of work (or other classes) that it's very hard for me to make it to class on time... being tardy doesn't count when it's not my fault, does it?

It might. Your instructor will provide you with specific guidelines on how tardiness will be handled in your particular section. If she or he does not, ask. You might want to consider moving to a different section, one that fits more comfortably within your schedule. Otherwise, you will want to alert your instructor to this problem, ask

what accommodations might be made, do your best to arrive on time, and enter the classroom quietly when you are late.

What if I am sick?

The policy was created to allow for circumstances beyond your control, including illness. If you miss more than two weeks of class due to illness, you should probably speak to your academic advisor about the possibility of a medical withdrawal.

What is a medical withdrawal?

According to the University Catalog, a medical withdrawal applies to students who wish to withdraw "from ALL classes in the current semester due to exceptional circumstances, such as illness of the student, military conscription, call to active duty, or death of an immediate family member (parent, spouse, child, sibling, or grandparent)." Students who qualify for a medical withdrawal (or "Exceptional Circumstances Withdrawal") may, according to the University Catalog, "receive a full refund, less nonrefundable fees." Contact the Dean of Student Affairs about Exceptional Circumstances Withdrawals.

What if I am on a sports team? What if I have to miss for some other University-approved reason?

As soon as you know your travel schedule, check it against your class schedule. If you are going to miss more than two weeks' worth of classes, speak with your instructor immediately. You may have to move to another section. It is your responsibility to notify your instructor of these absences ahead of time, and your responsibility to make up any work you miss.

What if I have to miss class due to religious observances?

While religious holidays are not counted against your attendance grade, they do factor in to the overall number of absences. You should alert your instructor at the very start of the semester if you will be missing class for religious observances. You will want to remind your instructor just before the absence, you will want to have formed a plan with your instructor on how you might make up any missed work, and you will want to make sure that your attendance is otherwise regular.

Does this mean attendance counts more than the work I do?

The two are closely linked. Gordon Rule courses are workshop courses. In content-based courses, such as biology, your grade is determined by your mastery of the content, through quizzes, tests, and exams. If you miss a number of these classes, you can recover by learning the material on your own. However, in a workshop-based course, what you learn (more than anything) is process. That process is practiced and modeled in the classroom, in drafting, in group work, in peer revision. If you are not present in the classroom, then you are not taking part in the process it is your responsibility to learn.

Why two weeks, though? Isn't that arbitrary?

No. It's best to think of this in terms of human law and natural law. Human laws are the ones we decide upon as a society and therefore are somewhat arbitrary. For example, it's illegal to drive on the left side of the road here but not in England. Natural laws, on the other hand, are self-enforcing: if you step off a building you will fall. Similarly, experience has shown that students who miss two weeks or more of writing classes miss so much of the learning of the class that their work is severely jeopardized. That is, if you're missing this much class the chances of producing passing work are greatly reduced. In this sense, our position on absences is more a

warning than a proscription: if you miss that much class, it's highly likely you will fail with or without the policy.

What if I am producing passing work?

There remains the issue of responsibility. Workshop-learning requires a classroom dynamic that functions well. Effective classroom functioning depends upon the presence and participation of all students. If you submit passing work without participating, you are doing so at the expense of your fellow students. This impairs the process, and the process is what you are here to be a part of, and what you are here to learn.

Are there exceptions to this policy?

Rarely. Speak with your instructor—who might, in turn, consult with the Director of Writing Programs. However, it remains your responsibility to be proactive in these matters. Exceptions are more likely to be made with students who have made all reasonable efforts to attend class, who have handed in work on time and have participated in class, and who speak with their instructor before excessive absences have accumulated.

Write additional questions and answers from class discussion here:

Q: _____

A: _____

Q: _____

A: _____

Q: _____

A: _____

By signing this statement, I attest that

- I have read the above questions and answers about absences.
- I have had the opportunity to ask my instructor questions about these materials and have had those questions answered to my satisfaction.
- I understand the importance of attendance.
- I understand that it is my responsibility to alert my instructor to, and to make up work missed because of, excused absences.
- I understand that I may fail this class based on poor attendance.

Signature: _____

Print name: _____

Date: _____