

**Date:** January 8, 2015

**To:** Faculty with students in:  
Trinity College of Arts and Sciences  
Pratt School of Engineering

**From:** Lee D. Baker, Dean of Academic Affairs, Trinity College of Arts and Sciences  
Associate Vice Provost for Undergraduate Education  
Linda Franzoni, Associate Dean, Pratt School of Engineering

**Re:** Class Absences and Missed Work

Academic course work is the foundation of undergraduate life, and faculty members are responsible for setting class grading and attendance policies. Those expectations should be clearly stated on your course syllabi. The information provided below details the policies and procedures for dealing with missed work associated with class absence.

Missed course work is officially accommodated in the following three circumstances:

1. Illness or other extraordinary personal circumstance
2. Religious observance
3. Varsity athletic participation

The nature of the accommodation (e.g., arrangements made to submit work early, alternative assignments, make-up exams, etc.) is to be determined by you, the instructor of the course. It is important to note that students accommodated under one of these three circumstances are not exempt from doing the graded work and are still subject to the attendance policy set by their instructors.

### **1. Illness or other extraordinary personal circumstance:**

**Short-term illness:** Students are to notify their instructors and their academic deans by means of a Short-Term Illness Notification Form (STINF) when they are temporarily incapacitated and hence are unable to attend class or complete an assignment on time (<http://trinity.duke.edu/undergraduate/academic-policies/illness>). Following submission of a STINF, the student is expected to discuss with you within 48 hours the nature of any accommodations you may make. If a student fails to contact you within 48 hours, you are under no obligation to accommodate the student's absence.

Students should submit the STINF to you as soon as possible, but depending upon the circumstances, may not always be able to do so prior to the date of a missed class or assignment. The STINF requires the student to state that he/she is adhering to the Duke Community Standard, Duke's honor code, and you are expected to accept the student's pledge that he/she is incapacitated. You should contact a student's academic dean with concerns you may have about irresponsible behavior by the student. If a student's attendance is poor or he/she is not doing assigned work as expected, the student's academic dean should be notified. If you have reason to believe that a student has violated the Community Standard, the alleged violation should be reported to the

Associate Dean of Students and the Director of the Office of Student Conduct.<sup>1</sup> For their part, the academic deans now routinely monitor on a weekly basis the number of STINFs students submit and call into their office those whose pattern of STINF submissions raises questions. Interested faculty may wish to consult the “Faculty Survey of Short-Term Illness Notification Form (STINF) Use and Best Practices for Managing Late Work, Missed Classes, and Exams” conducted in Spring 2012.<sup>2</sup>

It is important to note that the STINF is disabled during the final exam period and is not to be used for final exams.<sup>3</sup>

***Extraordinary long-term medical or personal circumstances:*** The academic deans will work with faculty and students when students encounter extraordinary circumstances that require joint planning by the student, instructor, dean, and, if needed, health care professionals. Examples of such circumstances include long-term illness or injury, serious illness of a parent or a death in the immediate family, mental health issues, etc. In such cases, you can expect the student’s academic dean to send you an e-mail notice authorizing the student’s absence and requesting accommodation.

## **2. Religious observance:**

Students absent from class due to observance of a religious holiday are expected to submit a Religious Observance Notification Form to instructors of the courses affected *no later than one week prior to the date of the holiday*. Because religious holidays are scheduled in advance, you have the right to insist that course work to be missed should be completed prior to an anticipated absence in accordance with your established course attendance policy.

## **3. Varsity athletic participation:**

Varsity athletes are recognized as officially representing the University when they participate in intercollegiate competitions away from campus. The travel schedules of our teams are governed by University policies that apply across all varsity sports and all schools. To facilitate communication between you and the student athletes in your courses, varsity athletes are expected to notify you of their status at the beginning of the semester. They can do this by presenting you with a letter of introduction signed by Lee Baker, Dean of Academic Affairs, and Brad Berndt, Associate Athletics Director (**see attached**). In addition, they are expected to submit a Notification of Varsity Athletic Participation Form to you *no later than one week prior to their participation in each varsity athletic competition out of town*. Because out-of-town varsity athletic events are scheduled in advance, you have the right to insist that missed course work be completed prior to an anticipated absence in accordance with your established course attendance policy. We hope that these efforts to facilitate communication will be beneficial to both instructors and student-athletes.

***Missed work associated with any absence not covered by one of the three circumstances described above is not subject to this policy. Students not accommodated under this policy are encouraged to discuss any absence, planned or unexpected, with their instructor to determine whether accommodation is possible on your authority. You are not obligated to accommodate such absences but are expected to make clear in your attendance policy the implications of any such absence. We welcome your comments and suggestions.***

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<sup>1</sup> Please see <http://www.studentaffairs.duke.edu/conduct>.

<sup>2</sup> Please see <http://trinity.duke.edu/sites/trinity.duke.edu/files/degree-requirements/spring-2012-stinf-survey-and-faculty-best-practices.original.pdf>.

<sup>3</sup> If a student misses a final exam in your course, please follow the policy governing absence from a final exam (<http://trinity.duke.edu/undergraduate/academic-policies/absence-final-exams>). If a student approaches you about missing a final exam, please refer the student to his/her academic dean (<http://trinity.duke.edu/academic-affairs>).