

Westfield State University Policy

Policy Title: Excused Absences and Documentation Requirements **Policy Number:** AP006 **Effective Date:** 2022-08-15

1. Purpose and Overview

Westfield State University is committed to fostering a learning environment where students can thrive academically. The University recognizes that students may occasionally need to miss academic obligations due to legitimate and unavoidable circumstances. This policy outlines the conditions under which an absence may be excused, the documentation required to support such a request, and the procedures for arranging makeup work. The primary objective is to ensure fair and consistent application of attendance policies across all academic programs while upholding the academic integrity of the University.

This policy is designed to provide a clear framework for students, faculty, and staff to navigate the process of requesting and granting excused absences. It balances the need for flexibility and compassion with the importance of maintaining academic standards and ensuring that students meet their educational responsibilities. By defining the types of situations that qualify for an excused absence and the corresponding documentation, the University aims to minimize ambiguity and ensure that all students are treated equitably.

2. Scope

This policy applies to all undergraduate and graduate students enrolled in courses at Westfield State University. It also applies to all faculty and instructional staff responsible for teaching and evaluating student performance. This policy covers all required academic activities, including but not limited to lectures, laboratory sessions, examinations, and other mandatory class meetings. Individual departments or programs may have additional specific attendance requirements, which must be

consistent with this University-wide policy and clearly communicated to students in course syllabi.

3. Policy Statement

3.1. Valid Reasons for Excused Absences

Westfield State University will grant excused absences for the following documented reasons:

- **Medical Conditions:** Significant illness, injury, or a medical condition that prevents a student from attending class or completing academic work. This includes both physical and mental health conditions. For short-term illnesses (fewer than three consecutive class days), a student's self-certification via the official university portal may be sufficient. However, instructors reserve the right to request medical documentation if there is a pattern of frequent absences. For absences of three or more consecutive class days, or for any absence during a major examination period, medical documentation is required.
- **Family Emergencies:** Serious illness or death in the immediate family (e.g., parent, sibling, spouse, child, grandparent). The University may require documentation, such as a funeral program, obituary, or a letter from a healthcare provider confirming the family member's illness.
- **Religious Observances:** Absences for the observance of religious holy days are excused. Students must notify their instructors in writing of any planned absences for religious observances at the beginning of the semester, and no later than two weeks prior to the date of the observance.
- **Jury Duty or Legal Obligations:** Absences for required court appearances, including jury duty, are excused. Students must provide a copy of the official summons or subpoena.
- **University-Sponsored Activities:** Participation in official, University-sanctioned events, such as athletic competitions, academic conferences, or artistic performances. The sponsoring department or organization must provide students with an official letter of participation, including the dates and times of the event, at least one week prior to the absence.

- **Military Service:** Absences for short-term military obligations are excused. Students must provide a copy of their military orders.

3.2. Documentation Requirements

To obtain an excused absence, students must provide appropriate documentation to the Office of the Dean of Students. All documentation is confidential and will be handled in accordance with the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA).

- **Medical Documentation:** For absences of three or more consecutive class days, a note from a licensed healthcare provider is required. The note must be on official letterhead, signed by a licensed healthcare provider, and include the dates the student was under their care and unable to attend class. The specific diagnosis should not be included to protect student privacy.
- **Other Documentation:** For non-medical absences, students must provide official documentation relevant to the reason for the absence (e.g., court summons, military orders, funeral program).

3.3. Makeup Work Policies

Students with an excused absence are entitled to reasonable accommodations for missed work. It is the student's responsibility to contact their instructors as soon as possible to make arrangements for completing missed assignments, examinations, or other academic activities. Faculty are expected to provide an opportunity for students to make up missed work in a timely manner. The format of the makeup work will be at the discretion of the instructor but must be equivalent in scope and difficulty to the original assignment. Makeup examinations may be in a different format (e.g., essay instead of multiple choice) but must cover the same material. Students must be given a reasonable amount of time to complete makeup work, typically the number of days of the excused absence.

4. Procedures

4.1. Student Responsibilities

1. **Notify Instructors:** Students should notify their instructors of any anticipated or emergency-related absences as soon as possible. For planned absences,

notification should be provided at the beginning of the semester.

2. **Submit Documentation:** Students must submit all required documentation to the Office of the Dean of Students within five (5) business days of their return to campus. Failure to do so may result in the absence being unexcused.
3. **Arrange Makeup Work:** Students are responsible for proactively communicating with their instructors to schedule makeup work.

4.2. Faculty Responsibilities

1. **Acknowledge Notifications:** Faculty should acknowledge student notifications of absence in a timely manner.
2. **Provide Accommodations:** Faculty must provide reasonable accommodations for students with excused absences to complete missed work. This includes providing materials distributed during the missed class and offering a makeup assessment if applicable. If a student has an extended absence, the instructor should work with the student and the Dean of Students to develop a plan for course completion.
3. **Maintain Confidentiality:** Faculty must maintain the confidentiality of student information related to excused absences.

5. Related Policies

This policy should be read in conjunction with the following University policies:

- **AP001: Academic Integrity Policy**
- **AP012: Student Code of Conduct**
- **SA003: Disability and Access Services**

6. Contact Information

For questions or to submit documentation, please contact:

Office of the Dean of Students Westfield State University 123 University Drive
Westfield, ST 12345 (123) 456-7890 deanofstudents@westfield.edu

7. Revision History

Version	Date	Author	Summary of Changes
1.0	2022-08-15	Office of the Provost	Initial version of the policy.
1.1	2023-09-01	Office of the Provost	Updated contact information and minor clarifications.