

Section:	II.3.21	
Title:	Absence and Attendance	
Effective Date:	February 8, 2021	
Approved By:	Provost	
Responsible Unit:	Academic Affairs (609) 771-3080; academic@tcnj.edu	
Related Documents:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Student Absence Notification (For Students/Guardians Reporting Absences) • Incomplete and In-Progress Grades • Final Exam Evaluation Reading Days 	
History:		
<u>Version</u>	<u>Date</u>	<u>Notes</u>
4.0	February 8, 2021	Revised
3.0	February, 2014	Revised: Absence Policy and Attendance Policy Combined
2.0	1993	New policy; initial release of Absence Policy
1.0	1986	New policy; initial release of Attendance Policy

I. INTRODUCTION

This policy defines absence and attendance policy.

II. DEFINITIONS

Advance Notification: A student may need to schedule a **planned** absence from class to attend a religious observation, a College-sanctioned field trip, or an athletic competition sanctioned by NCAA. The student should discuss the **planned** absence with the instructor with at least two weeks notification. Advance notice is not expected in cases of sudden illness or other unforeseen conflicts.

III. POLICY

A. Class Attendance Policy

1. Students are expected to participate in each of their courses through regular attendance at lecture, laboratory, clinical experiences, and other similar experiences. Students are expected to meet the requirements of coursework as assigned, including completing assignments as scheduled. Outside conflicts need to be avoided; for example, students must not schedule work hours or other obligations during synchronous class sessions or during the

final assessment period. Students should not schedule leisure activities/vacations during the scheduled academic session course dates and the final assessment period. It is expected that every student will be present, on time, and prepared to participate when scheduled class sessions begin. For courses in which some of the meetings are asynchronous, e.g., remote or blended learning, students are expected to participate in a similar manner.

2. At the first class meeting of a semester, instructors are expected to distribute in writing, either in person or electronically, the attendance policies which apply to their courses. While attendance itself is not used as a criterion for academic evaluations, grading is frequently based on participation in class discussion, laboratory work, performance, studio practice, field experience, or other activities which may take place during class sessions. In addition, attendance is required for in-class assessments (except in cases when the Accessibility Resource Center proctors exams). If these areas for evaluation make class attendance essential, the student may be penalized for failure to perform satisfactorily in the required activities. Grading based on participation in class activities must be explained in the course syllabus.
3. In all circumstances, it remains the student's responsibility to promptly initiate discussion about absence and arrangements for making up any missed work with each instructor. Students are encouraged to work directly with their instructor for any needed flexibility, and with the Dean of Students office providing supplemental support as needed. Absences from class are handled between students and instructors.

B. Class Absence Policy

Absences from class are handled between students and instructors. Instructors should be mindful that not all illnesses necessitate a doctor's visit. The instructor may request documentation to substantiate the reason for the absence and consider said documentation at their discretion, while maintaining a student's right to privacy. Some examples of materials that an instructor may request include:

- A note from a health care professional indicating that the student had been seen on a particular day and at a particular time
- A note from a health care professional that the student is under continuous care and may miss consecutive classes
- Proof of attendance at a college-sanctioned event

Students may request letters of support from the offices of the Dean of Students, Title IX and Sexual Misconduct, or the Accessibility Resource Center. Students are expected to provide requested documentation in a timely manner.

1. For Short-Term Absence

- a. Regular Academic Semester: Short-term absence is defined as two or fewer consecutive weeks.
- b. Special Session Terms (e.g., winter term, Maymester, summer session, etc.): Short-term absence is defined as the number of consecutive class sessions that would be equivalent to fewer than two weeks in a Regular Academic Semester. This number depends on a number of factors such as the course content and schedule, the number of the hours in a session, the applicable academic term (winter, summer, etc.), and the delivery mode (on campus, remote, blended, etc.). The student should consult with the instructor to clarify this for the specific course.
- c. At the discretion of the instructor, alternate assignments for absences may or may not be possible. If student absence is caused by: illness, injury, bereavement, or similarly compelling personal reasons, instructors should provide fair and reasonable make-up opportunities when possible.
- d. Short term absence from classes may be reported by the student, or his/her responsible designee (including College officials), to the Dean of Students, as support is needed.

2. For Extended Absence

- a. Regular Academic Semester: Extended absence is defined as greater than two consecutive weeks.
- b. Special Session Terms (e.g., winter term, Maymester, summer session, etc.): Extended absence is defined as the number of consecutive class sessions that would be equivalent to greater than two weeks in a Regular Academic Semester, or is defined as the number of consecutive class sessions missed that will severely impede the student's successful completion of the course. This number depends on a number of factors such as the course content and schedule, the number of the hours in a session, the applicable academic term (winter, summer, etc.), and the delivery mode (on campus, remote, blended, etc.). The student should consult with the instructor to clarify this for the specific course.
- c. Extended absence from classes is to be reported by the student, or his/her responsible designee (including College officials), to the Dean of Students. The Dean of Students Office supports a student with an extended absence; however, longer term accommodations need to be reviewed, approved, and implemented by the Accessibility Resource Center. As a courtesy to the student, a College official (e.g., the Dean of Students office or the Accessibility

Resource Center) will then notify 1) the student's instructors, 2) the student's academic advisor(s), and 3) the Dean's office of the student's school. Such notification will not be provided in cases where the absence is reported to the Dean of Students after the student has returned to class. If the student desires, the reason for the absence may be included in the notification. By forwarding such information, the College official is not serving to authenticate any reason for absence, nor is it serving to excuse any absence.

- d. A student who has had an extended absence must be in contact with instructors as soon as possible, but no later than returning to campus. Instructors may request appropriate documentation while maintaining a student's right to privacy.
 - e. Students seeking an accommodation may work with the Accessibility Resource Center to identify warranted accommodations (e.g., extra time on assessments, general flexibility around attendance or due dates), to provide documentation, and to provide the letter of warranted accommodations to their instructor.
 - f. At the discretion of the instructor, make-up opportunities may not be feasible. The student must consult with the course instructor and his/her academic advisor to discuss other options such as withdrawal from the course, a leave of absence, or an incomplete grade within the parameters of existing College policies on these topics. Incomplete grades are not automatically applied for extended absences, but rather need to be discussed with the instructor. In Progress grades are not appropriate for making up work from an extended absence.
 - g. Instructors may consult with the Office of the Dean of Students, the Accessibility Resource Center, and/or with a Dean's office for guidance in how to make reasonable adjustments (e.g., a single makeup exam, asynchronous work) for a student, if such adjustments are possible. The instructor may suggest that the student inquire about accommodations with the Accessibility Resource Center, if necessary. If student absence is caused by: illness, injury, bereavement, or similarly compelling personal reasons, instructors should provide fair and reasonable make-up opportunities when possible. However, it is recognized that in some courses and situations it may not be possible for a student to resume taking a course.
3. For Absence Due to Religious Observance
- a. Students are expected to notify their instructors of anticipated absence for religious observance in advance of the date on which any absence will occur. As with other substantiated reasons for absence, and in consideration of the needs of our diverse campus community, it is recommended that the instructor provide a fair and reasonable opportunity for work to be made up by the student, whenever possible.

The Office of Academic Affairs will provide instructors of the dates of religious holidays on which large numbers of students are likely to be absent and are, therefore, unsuitable for the scheduling of examinations. Instructors should be mindful that the Office of Academic Affairs does not notify instructors of all religious holidays, but still should provide make-up opportunities for such absences.

4. For Special Circumstances

- a. Should requests for academic flexibility be made by the Dean of Students Office (including the Offices of Title IX & Sexual Misconduct - from the perspective of a Reporter victim or a Respondent, Student Conduct and Off-Campus Resources, and/or TCNJ CAREs) on behalf of a student, instructors will work with the student and the Dean of Students Office Staff as necessary/appropriate to determine the type of flexibility/accommodation the student may benefit from.
- b. There may be times when two (or more) students involved in an incident are in the same class. A College administrator (for example, a representative from the offices of the Dean of Students, Title IX and Sexual Misconduct, or the Accessibility Resource Center) may advocate for the opportunity to switch a student to a different/available course section, limit the placement of the students in the same working groups, rearrange assigned seating, explore alternative assignments/ways to complete the course materials, etc. Requests are made on a case by case basis, but the outreach to instructors usually comes after the appropriate College office has encouraged the student to reach out to their instructors directly to discuss flexibility they believe they would benefit from.

5. For Absence Due to Official College Events

- a. Students who are absent due to participation in a field trip, conference, or other official College event should communicate with their instructors about the absence in advance. Instructors may require documentation to verify the reason for an absence.
- b. Club and intramural activities are not considered to be official TCNJ activities with respect to absences. These activities are considered to be leisure pursuits.

6. For Absence Due to Participation in NCAA-Sanctioned Intercollegiate Sports

- a. TCNJ encourages student athletic participation as well as academic achievement. Therefore, competition that is scheduled by local TCNJ officials should be scheduled at a time that is likely to cause minimal academic disruption. Contests that are scheduled by outside bodies such as NJAC or the NCAA are

sometimes scheduled at inconvenient times and may be more disruptive. All athletic contests should be treated like an absence for an official college event. The student should communicate with the instructor well in advance of the event and make arrangements to make up missed work. In the event that a scheduled contest conflicts with an exam (including a scheduled midterm or final), the student should be allowed a reasonable opportunity to make up the exam.

- b. It is a violation of NCAA rules to miss class for an athletic practice. Therefore, such absences are not excused (unless the practice takes place during travel to take part in an athletic contest). Coaches are expected to schedule practices at times that are not likely to conflict with classes. Coaches are also expected to excuse without penalty any student who misses practice because of a scheduled class meeting. If there are consistent conflicts between class and practice times and the coach, in consultation with the athletic director, cannot change practice times or excuse the student from practice, the student must either withdraw from the class or leave the team. Any conflict between the coach and the student over course and practice times should be resolved by appeal to the athletic director. The Vice President for Student Affairs serves as the final appeal for such conflicts.
- c. In the event that any NCAA policy regarding absences changes, this policy will change accordingly to remain compliant with NCAA regulations.

7. For Planned Absence Due to Career Advancement Interviews

- a. Students who are absent due to participation in a job / internship interview or a graduate or professional school interview should communicate with their instructors about the absence in advance. Instructors may require documentation to verify the reason for an absence.
- b. Students with interview-based planned absences are responsible for making arrangements to reduce any disruption to group projects by communicating with team members. Assigned work may need to be completed in advance of the interview experience.
- c. Students should strive to limit the number of key learning experiences missed due to interviewing. Communication with instructors is important; however, make-up opportunities are at the discretion of the instructor.