

## Proposed Change to Attendance and Class Absence Policy

**RATIONALE:** The policy on class attendance has not undergone comprehensive review in some time. Four years ago, the Academic Affairs Committee did approve the addition of language regarding absences for jury duty. Three years ago, in response to changes in the Code of Virginia and requirements conveyed to UMW by SCHEV for institutions to develop “military friendly” academic policies, the Committee approved new language regarding military absences. The question before the Committee now is whether there are needs for additional modifications to the stated policy on class attendance. Of particular concern is the statement that “faculty are entirely at their discretion about whether or not to allow a student to make up missed assignments.” Does this statement potentially conflict with the needs of: (1) students who are employed while also enrolled (and may have work conflicts); (2) commuting students (who may face weather-related challenges for getting to class on certain days); (3) students who are representing the university in officially-sanctioned activities such as traveling to a professional conference to present their research, serving as a national officer in a recognized student organization, or engaged in competition as a member of the debate team or one of UMW many intercollegiate athletic teams; or (4) students who have a short-term or temporary disability.

### PROPOSED MODIFIED CATALOG LANGUAGE:

~~Strikethrough~~ indicates deletions; new language is in red.

## Attendance and Class Absences

A primary responsibility of students is class attendance. Learning is an experience which requires active participation, and the University expects participation of students in all their scheduled classes be they lectures, online collaborations, laboratories, seminars, studios, field trips or other types of activities. It is understood that occasional absences are unavoidable, but the student is responsible for his or her decision to miss a particular class meeting. In deciding to miss a class, a student must be aware that he or she is accountable, nonetheless, for any test or quiz and all assignments, material covered, and announcements made in that class.

~~Because of the wide variety of courses and teaching methods employed, requirements for attendance in class and laboratory/studio sessions is not prescribed on a university-wide basis. Faculty are entirely at their discretion about whether or not to allow a student to make up missed assignments. Furthermore, c~~Class participation ~~itself~~ is an appropriate criterion for grading and a student’s failure to participate can be expected to affect his or her grade in the course. **The expectations for class participation, the manner in which it is to be evaluated, and the impact of student absences on a class participation score should be clearly stated on the course syllabus.**

~~While faculty have discretion about whether or not to allow a student to make up missed assignments, the following guidelines should be taken into consideration regarding student absences in a course. Failure to drop or withdraw from a course that the student is not attending may result in a final grade of F.~~

**Disability-Related Absences.** A student who has a disability-related need for flexibility with regard to attendance expectations may register with the Office of Disability Resources (ODR). This accommodation would be listed as “Disability-Related Absences” on their accommodation letter, and it is the student’s responsibility to provide their accommodation letter to each faculty member for whom they wish to receive accommodations. Accommodations are not retroactive. Please see [Disability-Related Absences Guidelines](#) and contact the Office of Disability Resources for questions.

**Religious observances.** Requests by students whose religious observance precludes class participation on specific days to reschedule graded work will be honored. Graded work includes final examinations, scheduled tests, graded written assignments, graded laboratory projects, and graded oral assignments. Alternative dates will be set by consulting with the instructor or instructors and, if necessary, through consultation with the Office of Academic Services. It is the student’s responsibility to make alternative arrangements as early as possible.

**Jury duty.** UMW students may be summoned to serve as trial jurors. Jury duty is a legal obligation and those who fail to respond to a summons are subject to criminal prosecution. The University supports jury service as an important civic duty and community responsibility. Students who will need to miss class in order to fulfill their jury service obligation should promptly notify all instructors, provide a copy of the summons as documentation of the absence (if requested by the instructor), and make arrangements to complete any missed work. Absences from class because of jury duty service will not be penalized. Students should contact the Office of Academic Services if they have any questions or if they need assistance in making arrangements for missed class time due to jury duty service.

**Military Service.** UMW recognizes and appreciates the important contributions made in service to our country by Active Duty, Reserve, and National Guard members. Requests to reschedule graded work due to short term military absence will be honored. Short term military absence will be recognized either as a result of regularly scheduled drill/training, unexpected training/drill or short term activation/deployment (e.g., National Guard activation in response to a natural disaster or civil unrest). Details on the procedure for Military Service absence can be found in the *Directory of Academic Procedures*. (Note: military obligation requiring withdrawal from the University for the remainder of a term is covered elsewhere.)

**Scheduled Absences.** Certain absences are often considered legitimate. In such cases, students must make arrangements, when possible, to prevent such absences from affecting their performance in a course. Examples of such conflicts include participation in intercollegiate athletic competitions and academically-related performance activities. Students must provide written notification to the faculty by no later than the end of the first week of the course of potential scheduled absences. Once notification is made, the faculty member will determine whether acceptable alternatives exist for completing any missed assignments due to the scheduled absences. If it is determined that missed academic activities cannot be rescheduled in a reasonable fashion, or that the absences would prevent adequate mastery of required course material, the student is advised to either drop the course or alter the planned scheduled absences.

**Unscheduled Absences.** Events or activities initially scheduled for one time, then changed (with limited notice) or unforeseeable unscheduled absences (compelling, verifiable circumstances beyond the student's control) may sometimes interfere with the student's ability to attend class or submit required work on schedule. In these cases, faculty are encouraged to work with students to reschedule missed assignments or to develop alternative procedures for completing course requirements. Students must notify instructors of each unexpected absence within one week of becoming aware of the projected absence. If required by the faculty member, students must submit written verification of any unscheduled absence.

Students who face an emergency and/or who expect to be absent for more than a full week of classes may should contact the Office of Academic Services to report the absence and request assistance (if necessary) in working with faculty members to reschedule work or to develop acceptable alternatives for completing course requirements. If contacted by a student, the Office of Academic Services will contact the course instructors as a courtesy. While there are no excused absences at the University of Mary Washington, the Office of Academic Services will provide assistance to students and faculty members in developing mutually acceptable alternative methods for completing or demonstrating mastery of missed learning activities. ~~There are no excused absences at the University of Mary Washington.~~ Decisions about make up work are entirely at the discretion of made by each instructor and may require documentation when deemed necessary by the instructor.