

# **POLICY ON ACADEMIC CONSIDERATION FOR STUDENT ABSENCES -- UNDERGRADUATE STUDENTS IN FIRST ENTRY PROGRAMS**

## **1. Purpose of the Policy:**

The purpose of this Policy is to provide guidance to undergraduate students, instructors, and administrators in situations where students are unable to complete academic responsibilities as the result of extenuating circumstances, including short-term illness or injury.

## **2. Application of the Policy:**

This Policy and the associated Procedures apply only to students who have been admitted to first entry programs on Western University. Students who are in second entry programs, including Education, Law, Medicine, and the Ivey School of Business, or graduate programs, should consult their Faculty of registration for information about Academic Consideration and how it is handled in their Faculty.

## **3. Statement of Principles:**

The University recognizes that a student's ability to meet their academic responsibilities may, on occasion, be impaired by extenuating circumstances, including short term illness or injury.

Reasonable academic consideration is a cooperative process between the University, the student and academic staff. All participants in the process must in good faith and fulfil their respective obligations set out in this Policy and the associated Procedures if it is to succeed.

The University is committed to providing reasonable academic consideration to a student in extenuating circumstances, while taking into account:

- a need to ensure fairness and consistency for all students seeking academic consideration;
- a desire to empower students to take responsibility for their decisions about absences and missed work due to extenuating circumstances;
- an anticipation that students, faculty, staff, and administrators will approach requests for academic consideration as being undertaken in good faith, recognizing that evidence to the contrary (including false statements or altered forms or documents) may be liable to investigation as either a Scholastic Offense (Clause 4) or a violation of the Student Code of Conduct (Section E, clauses 4a and 4b).
- a desire to provide a mechanism for facilitating student well-being and academic fairness while at the same time acknowledging the integrity of relationships and interactions that students have with individuals and services on campus. These may include faculty members, academic counsellors and advisors, SAS, Student Success Centre, Student Health Services and community healthcare professionals.
- a recognition that there is no expectation that a student must be in optimum physical or mental condition to carry out their academic responsibilities.

All requests for consideration and related communications will be maintained in confidence in accordance with the University's Official Student Record Information Privacy Policy and the University's obligations under the *Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act*, the *Personal Health Information Privacy Act* and any other applicable laws. Personal information of students will be shared only to the extent necessary to consider requests for consideration, to arrange for reasonable academic relief or to process any appeals, all in accordance with this Policy and associated Procedures and all applicable law.

Academic Consideration provides students with consistent, fair, and pedagogically appropriate consideration, without compromising the academic integrity of the course or program, when they have been unable to complete some component of a course due to extenuating circumstances.

Students who have long-term or chronic medical conditions (physical or mental) which may impede their ability to complete academic responsibilities are directed to seek Academic Accommodation through Student Accessibility Services ([Academic Accommodation for Students with Disability](#)).

#### 4. Policy review

This Policy is a pilot version and will be reviewed after 3 years by SCAPA. It may be reviewed prior to the three-year term where it is determined that an earlier review is necessary because of:

- (a) a change in University practices or procedures; or
- (b) any other reason that would call into question the applicability of the Policy in its current form.

### PROCEDURES FOR STUDENT ABSENCES – UNDERGRADUATE STUDENTS IN FIRST ENTRY PROGRAMS

#### 1. Purpose of Academic Consideration Procedures

The purpose of the Academic Consideration Procedures is to set out the process by which students may request reasonable academic consideration for extenuating circumstances resulting in missed academic requirements and to establish the responsibilities of all participants in the consideration process.

All interested persons – students, academic staff and the University – have vital roles to play in the process.

#### 2. Requesting Academic Consideration

Students who experience an extenuating circumstance (illness, injury, or other extenuating circumstance) sufficiently significant to temporarily render them unable to meet academic requirements may submit a request for academic consideration through the following routes:

- (i) Submitting a Self-Reported Absence form provided that the conditions for submission are met;
- (ii) For medical absences, submitting a Student Medical Certificate (SMC) signed by a licensed medical or mental health practitioner in order to be eligible for Academic Consideration; or
- (iii) For non-medical absences, submitting appropriate documentation (e.g., obituary, police report, accident report, court order, etc.) to Academic Counselling in their Faculty of registration in order to be eligible for academic consideration. Students are encouraged to contact their Academic Counselling unit to clarify what documentation is appropriate.

Students seeking academic consideration:

- are advised to consider carefully the implications of postponing tests or midterm exams or delaying handing in work;
- are encouraged to make appropriate decisions based on their specific circumstances, recognizing that minor ailments (upset stomach) or upsets (argument with a friend) are not normally an appropriate basis for a self-reported absence;
- **must communicate with their instructors no later than 24 hours** after the end of the period covered by either the self-reported absence or SMC, or immediately upon their return following a documented absence.

Academic consideration is not normally intended for the following circumstances:

- **Students who require academic accommodation based on an ongoing physical or mental illness (recurring or chronic) or an existing disability.** Students with an ongoing physical illness or mental disorder (recurring or chronic) or an existing disability are responsible, in consultation with their doctors or other health professionals, to determine if they are capable of pursuing their studies and, if so, with what accommodations. Students are expected to seek and arrange reasonable accommodations with Student Accessibility Services (SAS) as soon as possible in accordance with the Policy on [Academic Accommodation for Students with Disability](#). Students with pre-existing accessibility plans arranged through SAS may not need to provide additional documentation when seeking academic consideration where such request for consideration relates to their disability and where their accessibility plans allow for coursework deferral or deadline extensions.
- **Students who experience high levels of stress related to academic performance** (including completing assignments, taking part in presentations, or writing tests or examinations). Students with academic or exam stress should access supports through [Student Health and Wellness](#) and [Learning Skills Services](#) in order to deal with this stress in a proactive and constructive manner.

### 3. Requests for Academic Consideration Using the Self-Reported Absence Form

Students who experience an unexpected illness or injury or an extenuating circumstance (48 hours or less) that is sufficiently severe to temporarily render them unable to meet academic requirements (e.g., attending lectures or labs, writing tests or midterm exams, completing and submitting assignments, participating in presentations) should self-declare using the online Self-Reported Absence portal. This option should be used in situations where the student expects to resume academic responsibilities within 48 hours or less.

The following conditions are in place for self-reporting of medical or extenuating circumstances:

- a. students will be allowed **a maximum of two self-reported absences** between September and April and one self-reported absence between May and August;
- b. any absences in excess of the number designated in clause a above, regardless of duration, will require students to present a Student Medical Certificate (SMC), signed by a licensed medical or mental health practitioner, detailing the duration and severity of illness, or appropriate documentation supporting extenuating circumstances to the Academic Counselling unit in their Faculty of registration no later than two business days after the date specified for resuming responsibilities. Please see section 4 below for more details.
- c. The duration of the excused absence will be for a maximum of 48 hours. Students will select the allowable 48 hour period via an online portal. Students can request that the period covered include Yesterday and Today, or Today and Tomorrow. Absences are deemed to start at midnight (12:00 am) on the first requested day and end on 11:59 pm the following day.
- d. The duration of the excused absence will terminate prior to the end of the 48 hour period should the student undertake significant academic responsibilities (write a test, submit a paper) during that time;
- e. The duration of an excused absence will terminate at 8:30 am on the day following the last day of classes each semester regardless of how many days of absence have elapsed;
- f. Self-reported absences will not be allowed for scheduled final examinations; for midterm examinations scheduled during the December examination period; or for final lab examinations scheduled during the final week of term;
- g. Self-reporting may not be used for assessments (e.g. midterm exams, tests, reports, presentations, or essays) worth more than 30% of any given course.
- h. Students must be in touch with their instructors **no later than 24 hours after the end of the period covered by the Self-Reported Absence form**, to clarify how they will be expected to

fulfill the academic expectations they may have missed during the absence unless other instructions are indicated on the course syllabus.

#### 4. Request for Academic Consideration for a Medical Absence

Students seeking academic consideration for a medical absence not covered by existing Student Accessibility Services (SAS) accommodation, will be required to provide documentation in person in the form of a completed, signed Student Medical Certificate (SMC) where the conditions for a Self-Reported Absence have not been met, including where the student has exceeded the maximum number of permissible Self-Reported Absences.

The following conditions are in place for students seeking academic consideration for a medical absence:

- a. Students must submit their documentation along with a request for academic consideration specifying the nature of the relief being requested. This documentation, in the form of a Student Medical Certificate (SMC), shall be submitted to the Academic Counselling or Undergraduate Office of the student's Faculty of registration indicating the period of illness, severity, and when the student should be able to resume academic responsibilities. **Forms must be submitted no later than two business days after the date specified for resuming responsibilities.**
- b. Students who require academic consideration must, where possible, seek medical attention in advance of due dates, examinations, etc.
- c. If the Academic Counselling/Dean's Office determines that academic consideration is warranted, the period of academic consideration will normally be that specified on the medical documentation. Once the request for academic consideration and supporting documents have been received and approved, the student's instructors will be notified of this by the Academic Counselling or Undergraduate Office in the student's home faculty. Absences are deemed to start at midnight (12:00 am) on the first approved day and end on 11:59 pm the final day of approval.
- d. Academic consideration shall be granted only where the documentation indicates that the onset, duration and severity of the illness are such that the student could not reasonably be expected to complete their academic responsibilities, and only when the licensed practitioner providing the documentation is able to make a reasonable assessment of the student's physical or mental state during the period for which relief is sought. The expectation is that the practitioner's assessment of the student's condition will be made in person.
- e. The duration of the excused absence will terminate prior to the end of the period indicated on the SMC should the student undertake significant academic responsibilities (write a test, submit a paper) during that time.
- f. Students must communicate with their instructors **no later than 24 hours** after the end of the period covered by the SMC, to clarify how they will be expected to fulfill the academic expectations they may have missed during the absence unless other instructions are indicated on the course syllabus.
- g. In cases where a student may be experiencing long-term or recurring absences, students should consult their Academic Counsellors for advice about which of the options available to them (academic consideration, pursuing Academic Accommodation, withdrawal from the course) are most appropriate.

#### 5. Request for Academic Consideration for a Non-Medical Absence

Students seeking academic consideration for a non-medical absence will be required to provide appropriate documentation where the conditions for a Self-Reported Absence have not been met, including where the student has exceeded the maximum number of permissible Self-Reported Absences.

The following conditions are in place for students seeking academic consideration for a non-medical absence:

- a. Students must submit the appropriate documentation<sup>1</sup> along with a request for academic consideration specifying the reason for the absence and the nature of the relief being requested. This documentation shall be submitted to the Academic Counselling or Undergraduate Office in the student's Faculty of registration. Documentation must be submitted no later than two business days after the student resumes academic responsibilities.
- b. Academic consideration shall be granted only where the documentation indicates that the student could not reasonably be expected to complete their academic responsibilities as a result of an extenuating circumstance.
- c. Students must communicate with their instructors **no later than 24 hours** after the end of the period covered by the documentation, to clarify how they will be expected to fulfill the academic expectations they may have missed during the absence unless other instructions are indicated on the course outline.
- d. In cases where a student might be absent for periods greater than 3 weeks, students should consult their Academic Counsellors for advice about which of the options available to them (academic consideration, pursuing Academic Accommodation, withdrawal from the course) are most appropriate.

## 6. Appeal

A student who has been denied academic consideration by an Academic Counselling Unit may appeal the decision to the Dean of their Faculty of registration (or the Dean's designate).

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<sup>1</sup> Students are strongly urged to consult with the Academic Counselling or Undergraduate Office in their Faculty to determine what documentation would be appropriate.