



**Standard Operating Procedure (SOP)  
University Excused Absence (UEA)  
Updated: July 21, 2021**

**Introduction:**

The purpose of the University Excused Absence (UEA) Standard Operating Procedure (SOP) is to familiarize students and faculty with the process of requesting and receiving a University Excused Absence and ensure a consistent and fair learning experience for students with UEAs. The UEA SOP explains what constitutes a UEA and governs the UEA process.

**Class Attendance and Participation Regulation - [ECU Faculty Manual](#):**

ECU's Faculty Manual sets the expectations for student participation and class attendance. In Part VI, Section (I), Subsection (X), it states:

A student's participation in the work of a course is a precondition for receiving credit for the course. Students are expected to attend punctually all lecture and laboratory sessions and field experiences and to participate in course assignments and activities as described in the course syllabus. Absences are counted from the first class meeting after the student registers. Students registering late are expected to make up all missed assignments in a manner determined by the instructor.

Each instructor shall determine the class attendance policy for each of his or her courses as long as the instructor's policy does not conflict with university policy. The instructor's attendance policy, along with other course requirements, will be provided to the class on a syllabus distributed at the first class meeting. Class attendance may be a criterion in determining a student's final grade in the course if the instructor provides a written statement to this effect in the course syllabus. In determining the number of unexcused absences which will be accepted, the instructor should carefully consider the nature of the course, the maturity level of the students enrolled, and the consequent degree of flexibility included in the instructor's policy. Students should consult with their instructors about all class absences. It is the responsibility of the student to notify the instructor immediately about class absences, to provide appropriate documentation for an absence, and discuss any missed class time, tests, or assignments. Except in the case of university-excused absences, it is the decision of the instructor to excuse an absence or to allow for any additional time to make up missed tests or assignments. Excused absences should not lower a student's course grade, provided that the student, in a manner determined by the instructor, is able to make up the work that has been missed and is maintaining satisfactory progress in the course.

Student Health Services does not issue official written excuses for illness or injury, but will, upon request at the time of the visit, provide a note confirming that the student has received medical care. In the event that the student is seriously ill or injured at the time of final examinations the Student Health Service or the Center for Counseling and Student Development, on request of the student, may recommend a medical incomplete. Instructors should normally honor written medical excuses from a licensed medical or psychological practitioner that states the student was too ill or injured to attend class and provides the specific date(s) for which the student was unable to attend class due to the medical or psychological problem.

The Dean of Students may authorize university-excused absences in the following situations:

1. Student participation in authorized activities as an official representative of the university (i.e. athletic events, delegate to regional or national meetings or conferences, participation in university-sponsored performances).
2. Participation in other activities deemed by the Dean of Students to warrant an excused absence, such as required military training.
3. An extreme personal emergency or serious medical condition<sup>1</sup>
4. The death of an immediate family member (such as parent, sibling, spouse or child)

Instructors are expected to honor valid university-excused absences, and to provide reasonable and equitable means for students to make up work missed as a result of those absences. Students who anticipate missing 10% or more of class meeting time as a result of university-excused absences are required to receive approval from the instructor at the beginning of the semester. Student experiences that cannot be made up should be discussed at the onset of the course to ensure that continued enrollment is feasible while there is still the opportunity to drop the course within the schedule change period.

No instructor should urge a student to take part in an extracurricular activity at the expense of the student's class work or expect the student to appear at any practice or rehearsal if he or she has a scheduled class at that time. No class absences will be excused for practices or rehearsals. Only absences for performances and necessary travel to and from performances are excused.

A student who believes that he or she has been treated unfairly concerning absences or has been misinformed by the instructor regarding that instructor's absence policy shall have the right to appeal. The appeal shall be in writing to the instructor's department chairperson or school director, and in the event the resolution is not satisfactory, the final decision rests with the [academic dean](#). (FS Resolution #12-62, April 2012; FS Resolution #17-79, December 2017)

### **University Excused Absence (UEA) Standard Operating Procedures (SOP)**

The university recognizes legitimate circumstances occasionally result in a student being absent from class. When a student has advanced knowledge of an upcoming or foreseeable absence, the student should inform the instructor(s) and review the instructor's attendance policy.

Students are encouraged to communicate with their instructors early about potential absences. Students are bound by the [Student Code of Conduct](#) when making a request for a UEA. A notice of the absence should be given to the instructor as soon as possible (preferably at the start of the semester if the absence is known in advance). Whether or not the university is able to accommodate students for missing classes largely depends on the nature of the course. Some courses have more flexible attendance requirements; others, such as labs and experiential classes, have very strict attendance policies.

Excused absences are not counted against mandatory attendance requirements, but at the same time, they do not relieve students from their responsibility for completing any course work assigned during their absence. The instructor may respond appropriately if the student fails to satisfactorily complete any alternative assignment or examination. A student will not be penalized for missing the class (if covered by the University Excused Absence policy), but they are responsible for and expected to obtain any materials discussed during any missed classes.

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<sup>1</sup> Generally, requests for accommodations for a medical condition will be referred to the Department of Disability Support Services.

Students who miss in-class work (i.e., tests, quizzes, or laboratory/studio assignments) are expected to make-up and complete all assigned work. A faculty member may recommend that the student withdraw from a course(s) or award an incomplete grade if a student's excused absences are considered excessive. Students seeking a UEA that exceed the limit provided by this SOP will be referred to their faculty instructors to obtain approval for the additional absences.

**Consistent with the Class Attendance and Participation Regulation of the [ECU Faculty Manual](#), students shall receive a University Excused Absence for a reasonable number of anticipated absences, as well as for emergencies, as specified below:**

### **1. COURT SUBPOENA:**

Students that are required to appear in court as a witness or who must attend court as a victim of a crime may be excused from classes and be provided with a UEA.

- Students may request a university excused absence by completing a Request Form for University Excused Absence, available [here](#).
- To validate the request for a university excuse, the student must provide a copy of the subpoena as supporting documentation.
- Students subpoenaed to court for any reason other than as a witness or as the victim of a crime **will not be excused** from classes and must work directly with their instructors.
- UEA for court appearance is limited to eight (8) consecutive business days during the fall and spring terms or a 16-week block and four (4) consecutive business days during the summer term or an 8-week block.

### **2. DEATH OF AN IMMEDIATE FAMILY MEMBER:**

Following the death of an immediate family member (defined as: the student's spouse or life partner; child; parent; legal guardian; sibling; grandparent; grandchild, step-, half- and in-laws of the same relationship):

- Students may request a university excused absence by completing a Request Form for University Excused Absence, available [here](#).
- To validate the request for university excuse, the student must provide supporting documentation that may include a copy of: the obituary, the funeral announcement, a death certificate or a funeral program.
- UEA for the death of an immediate family member is limited to five (5) consecutive business days to cover both bereavement and travel time.

### **3. EXTREME PERSONAL EMERGENCY:**

Students that experience an extreme personal emergency, such as a fire at their home, a natural disaster, being the victim of a crime or domestic violence, or other life-altering/life threatening situation may request a UEA. Students must provide supporting documentation as requested by ECU in order to obtain approval for the absence.

- Students may request a university excused absence by completing a Request Form for University Excused Absence, available [here](#).
- To validate the request for university excuse, the student must provide supporting documentation that includes: a police report, an insurance claim, or a hospital summary.
- UEA for extreme personal emergencies is limited to eight (8) consecutive business days during the fall and spring terms or a 16-week block and four (4) consecutive business days during the summer term or an 8-week block.

#### 4. HOSPITALIZATION:

For UEA purposes, a hospitalization is defined as admission into a hospital as a patient for an overnight stay or receiving emergency treatment at an emergency department in a hospital, even if the student is not admitted.

- Students may request a university excused absence by completing a Request Form for University Excused Absence, available [here](#)
- To validate the request for university excuse, the student must provide supporting documentation that may include the discharge summary from the hospital.
- Students who need additional time to recover should consult with their instructors since recovery time is **not covered** by the policy.
- Any students who request academic accommodations, including modification of attendance policies due to a qualified and documented disability, are encouraged to register with the [Department for Disability Support Services \(DSS\)](#) and to connect directly with DSS for additional support.
- UEA for hospitalization is limited to eight (8) consecutive business days during the fall and spring terms or a 16-week block and four (4) consecutive business days of absence during the summer term or an 8-week block.

#### 5. MILITARY SERVICE OBLIGATIONS:

The university recognizes that students who are members of the United States Armed Forces including the National Guard, Reserve or Active Duty members are required by their military contract to attend mandatory training. Military students who are required to attend activities that cause them to be absent from class may qualify for a UEA with proper documentation.

- Military students must complete two (2) steps to Request a UEA:
  - **STEP 1** (Submit Military Orders): Students must e-mail documentation of the mandatory military training in the form of orders or equivalent documents to Cary Ann Reeves at [reevesc@ecu.edu](mailto:reevesc@ecu.edu).
  - **STEP 2** (Request University Excused Absence): Once the orders have been received and processed, the student will be sent an e-mail from “Sharepoint” with the subject “new military orders received/submit your request for university excused absence”. The e-mail will include a link to request the University Excused Absence. Please do not submit the Request for a University Excused Absence until both the e-mail has been received and the orders are processed.

\*Note: Documentation for military service obligations is submitted to Cary Ann Reeves; therefore, it is not necessary to upload another copy with the request for university excused absence.

- Pursuant to [North Carolina General Statute \(NCGS\) § 116-11\(3b\)](#), a UEA for military service obligations shall be given for the period the student is on active duty. Instructors are expected to honor valid UEAs and to provide reasonable and equitable means for students to make up work missed as a result of those absences.
- Students who anticipate missing 10% or more of class meeting time as a result of university excused absences are required to receive approval from the instructor at the beginning of the semester. Student experiences that cannot be made up should be discussed at the onset of the course to ensure that continued enrollment is feasible while there is still the opportunity to withdraw the course within the schedule change period.
- Students who have been called to active military duty or reassigned to a new active-duty station, and who are unable to complete the semester, may qualify for tuition and fee refund. Standard Operating Procedures related to refund and withdrawals are located [here](#).

## 6. RELIGIOUS ACCOMMODATIONS:

Consistent with North Carolina law, ECU may provide accommodations for student religious observances, as follows:

The extent of ECU's obligation is determined in conjunction with statutory requirements, including consideration of business necessity, financial costs, expenses, and resulting personnel and/or academic considerations.

To assist in planning for any future conflicts, an interfaith calendar of primary sacred times for world religions is [available here](#). Given the diversity of students who attend the ECU, the calendar is not all-inclusive and is not intended to exclude any religion or days of religious observance.

- Students shall provide written notice to the faculty member for the affected class of their request for an excused absence for a religious observance in a reasonable time prior to the date of the observance. If a faculty member determines a required minimum period of prior notice as reasonable with regard to a class for the purpose of complying with this requirement, the faculty member should communicate that to the students in the class.
- Students shall be given the opportunity to make up tests and other work missed due to such an excused absence for a religious observance. Regardless of any accommodation that may be granted, ECU students are responsible for satisfying all academic objectives, requirements, and prerequisites as determined by their instructor and the University.
- Students may request a university excused absence by completing a Request Form for University Excused Absence, available [here](#).
- To validate the request for university excuse, the student must provide documentation showing the observance occurs on the date requested.
- Travel time prior to and following any religious observances **is not covered**.
- A UEA for religious observances required by the faith of the student is available for two (2) business days each academic year.

## 7. UNIVERSITY-SPONSORED ACTIVITIES:

Student participation in school authorized activities as an official representative of ECU may qualify for a UEA. Such activities may include: athletic events; serving as a delegate for regional or national conferences; marching band; or other university-sponsored events (endorsed by an academic instructor or faculty advisor).

- Class absences **will not be excused** for practices or rehearsals. Only absences for the day(s) of the performance(s) and necessary time to travel to and from the performance(s) are excused.
- **STEP 1** (Complete University-Sponsored Activity Form): Students must complete the verification form for University-Sponsored Activity which must then be approved by the academic instructor or faculty advisor. Ensure all required information is provided and the approval signatures are obtained. **Incomplete request forms, including those missing the required signatures, will be denied.** The University-Sponsored Activity form can be found [here](#).
- **STEP 2** (Request University Excused Absence): Once the University-Sponsored Activity form is approved, students may request a university excused absence [here](#).
- The University-Sponsored Activity form must be uploaded as supporting documentation for the university excused absence.
- UEA for an athletic event must be requested through the Athletic Student Development Office.

## Other Resources Related to Absences

### SHORT-TERM ILLNESS AND OTHER MEDICAL CONDITIONS/EVENTS

Short-term illnesses and other medical conditions **are not eligible for a university excused absence**. Students with an upset stomach, flu, colds, or other viruses may be encouraged by the health care community to stay home as viruses are prone to spread quickly in public places.

- Instructors may honor written medical excuses from a licensed medical or psychological practitioner that states the student was too ill or injured to attend class and provides the specific date(s) for which the student was unable to attend class due to the medical or psychological problem. Students should work with their instructors directly and review the syllabus for their courses to determine the attendance policy and individual instructor's expectations.
- **Note:** Students who have been asked quarantine or isolate due to COVID-19 should submit the "[COVID-19 Self-Reporting Form](#)" via PiratePort to enable follow up from Student Health Services if they meet any of the following in the last 14 days:
  - Have been diagnosed by a medical provider with COVID-19
  - Are under instructions to self-isolate for suspected COVID-19 infection
  - Have been advised to self-quarantine due to an exposure to COVID-19

The [COVID-19 Self Reporting process](#) is intended to:

- Help students report illness/monitoring/exposure and to notify instructors
- Generate an email confirmation of the report of illness/monitoring/exposure
- Reduce exposure to well students, faculty, and staff
- Help assess the scope of COVID-19 infection among current ECU students
- Help the university track ill students and provide follow up care if needed

### DISABILITY OR RELATED REQUESTS

ECU understands that there may be disability-related reasons for missing classes. Any student who requests academic accommodations (including modification of attendance policies due to a qualified, documented disability) is encouraged to contact the [Department for Disability Support Services \(DSS\)](#) and to connect directly with DSS for additional support.

Please keep in mind the following when submitting your request:

- In each case, DSS must have documentation in order to verify the circumstance, take action, and advocate on behalf of a student. DSS may take steps to call medical providers or others to validate any documentation submitted. Submission of falsified documentation by a student may result in charges under the [Student Code of Conduct](#).
- Please note that while DSS can help verify the documented circumstance, such verification does not guarantee an excused absence, rescheduled coursework, and/or making up an exam. Each request is determined on an individual basis collaboratively between the student, the instructor, and a review of the provided documentation. **It is important to discuss contingency plans before absences occur to ensure the repercussion of absences are clear.** Any modified attendance accommodations are not intended to allow for unlimited absences and do not excuse the student of their responsibility for assignments, class participation, and exams. DSS highly recommends that students communicate directly with their faculty individually about their absences.

## **PREGNANCY AND PARENTING**

Students should be afforded reasonable academic accommodations due to pregnancy and related medical conditions to the extent that such accommodations would not result in a fundamental alteration of the academic program or impose an undue burden on ECU. An “undue burden” occurs when granting a requested accommodation would require significant expense to or difficulty for ECU or would result in the inability of the student to perform an essential function of his or her course/program of study. The determination of undue burden is dependent on the facts of each individual situation.

Accommodations for pregnancy and parenting may include provisions for extensions on assignments, postponement of quizzes and exams, and excused absences for other medical appointments or related medical conditions for as long as the student’s medical provider deems medically necessary. Accommodations may also include the opportunity to make up any work missed due to pregnancy or related medical conditions, including class participation and attendance credits, if the grading system in a course is based in part on class participation or attendance.

Faculty are encouraged to allow students to take short-term absences for responsibilities pertaining to parenting, including caring for their child during the child’s injury or illness, attending medical, mental health, or dental appointments for their child, and meeting with their child’s teacher or school administrator. Such requests must be addressed without regard to the student’s sex or gender.

Any requests for academic accommodations due to pregnancy should be directed to the [Department of Disability Support Services](#) via their online request form.

*If you have any questions regarding University Excused Absences, please contact the Office of the Dean of Students by telephone at (252) 328-9297 or by email at [dos@ecu.edu](mailto:dos@ecu.edu).*