



**Standard Operating Procedure (SOP)  
University Excused Absence (UEA)  
Updated: April 6, 2023**

**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 the policy governing 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.

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 university excused absence (UEA) situations where the correct timeline policy has been followed (see below), 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.

**MEDICAL ABSENCES:**

Short-term illnesses and other medical conditions are not eligible for a university excused absence. Based on syllabus language and departmental policy, instructors should use their discretion to honor written medical excuses from a licensed health 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

problem. Student Health Services does not issue official UEAs 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, they may work with the Office of the Dean of Students to discuss an incomplete grade or other options.

For chronic medical conditions or short-term injuries which do not require hospitalization, but may impact student course performance, students may work with the Department for Disability Support Services (DSS) to help coordinate appropriate accommodations in the class with the participation of the course instructor. In each case, DSS must have documentation in order to verify the circumstance, take action and advocate on behalf of the student. Each request is determined on an individual basis collaboratively between the student, the instructor and with a review of the documentation provided.

### **University-Excused Absences:**

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

#### **Type 1 Absence – Pre-planned Activities**

- A. Student participation in authorized activities as an official representative of the university (i.e. athletic events including both varsity and ECU-sanctioned club activities, delegate for regional or national meetings or conferences, participation in university-sponsored performances).
- B. Participation in non-emergency required military training.
- C. Student participation in religious holidays.
- D. A subpoena or summons to appear in court as a witness or victim of a crime.

#### **Type 2 Absence – Emergency or Unexpected Circumstances:**

- A. Emergency military-related duties
- B. Hospitalization
- C. The death of an immediate family member (such as but not limited to, parent, sibling, spouse, or child)

For Type 1 absences, the student must notify the affected instructor(s) of the upcoming UEA as soon as they are made aware that a course session will be missed, but no later than two (2) weeks before the date(s) of the UEA. In cases where a 2-week notice cannot possibly be given (e.g., the first day of class for a UEA within a 2-week time window), the student shall inform the instructor of the UEA as soon as they enroll in the class or during the first class session.

Notification at this stage may be informal but may include verbal or written (i.e., email) communication between student and instructor informing the latter of the UEA and course dates to be missed. If applicable, the instructor may request an informal written confirmation of the upcoming UEA from the faculty leader/officer in charge/coach who will be responsible for the group during the course session absence. The notification lead time is important so that any appropriate adjustments for missed coursework can be made by the instructor if necessary. Instructors may choose to not offer alternative arrangements for any missed work if the student did not provide proper lead time notification for a Type 1 UEA. In non-emergency (Type 1) UEA situations where the UEA was not appropriately communicated

by the faculty in charge which results in students not being able to inform affected instructors may choose to not honor the UEA. The instructor may use their judgment to accept a UEA request if the student made a good-faith effort to inform them of the UEA but was not within the required timeframe.

For Type 2 absences, the student shall inform the instructor(s) of the affected course(s) that they will miss a session(s) as soon as they are made aware that they will be missed. Because of the unexpected nature of the absence, no lead time notification is necessary, and instructors are expected to make any necessary arrangements for the coursework that the student may have missed.

For all UEAs, it is the student's responsibility to obtain official verification of a UEA. The student initiates the UEA by following the procedure outlined on the Office of the Dean of Students webpage. Faculty mentors should inform their students of these procedures to initiate the UEA process with enough lead time so that affected instructors can be aware of the UEA.

Provided that the proper lead time notification was given by the students for Type 1 UEAs, instructors are expected to honor all (both Type 1 and Type 2) 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 the UEAs 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 that legitimate circumstances may result in a student being absent from class. Students are bound by the [Student Code of Conduct](#) when making a request for a UEA and 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 while others, such as labs and experiential classes, have very strict attendance policies.

If a student provides the appropriate notification to an instructor, then excused absences are not counted against mandatory attendance requirements. At the same time, the UEA does not relieve a student from their responsibility for completing any coursework assigned during their absence. The instructor may take appropriate action if the student fails to satisfactorily complete any alternative assignment or examination.

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 excessive. Students seeking a UEA that exceed the limit provided by this SOP will be referred to their faculty instructors to obtain approval for any additional absences.

UEAs are divided into two (2) categories: Type 1 (Pre-Planned Activities) and Type 2 (Emergency or Unexpected Circumstances). Consistent with the Class Attendance and Participation Regulation of the [ECU Faculty Manual](#), the Dean of Students may authorize university-excused absences for the following situations:

Based on the Class Attendance and Participation Regulation, the following procedure should be followed to request UEA:

<b><u>TYPE 1 ABSENCES (PRE-PLANNED):</u></b>	<b><u>TYPE 2 ABSENCES (EMERGENCY OR UNEXPECTED CIRCUMSTANCES):</u></b>
University-Sponsored Activities*	Military Service Obligations (Emergency)*
Military Services Obligations (Non-Emergency)*	Hospitalization*
Religious Accommodations*	Death of an Immediate Family Member*
Court Subpoena*	Extreme Personal Emergency (Life Altering/Life Threatening)*

\*Specific criteria and guideline are defined for each absence below

**TYPE 1 ABSENCES (PRE-PLANNED ACTIVITIES):**

**A. UNIVERSITY-SPONSORED ACTIVITIES:**

Student participation in authorized activities as an official representative of the university may qualify for a UEA. Activities may include ECU-sanctioned club activities; serving as a delegate for regional or national conferences; marching band; or other university-sponsored events endorsed by an academic instructor or a faculty advisor.

- Instructors may choose **not** to accept a UEA if the student fails to provide advance notification.
- Students must complete a two (2) step process to request a UEA:
  - **STEP 1:** Students must complete the Verification form for University-Sponsored Activity <https://go.ecu.edu/USAform>.
    - Activities related to club sporting events, Greek life, and student organizations will automatically get routed to the Associate Vice Chancellor of Student Involvement and Leadership for approval.
    - For Academic or other university-sponsored activities, students must select the faculty or staff member authorized to approve their participation in the activity.
  - **STEP 2:** Once the Verification Form for a University-Sponsored Activity is approved, the student will receive an e-mail that includes a link to request the UEA. **Do not submit the UEA request until after receiving the approval e-mail.**
- UEAs for varsity athletic events must be requested through the Athletic Student Development Office.
- Class absences are **not** excused for practice or rehearsals. Only absences for the day(s) of the event/performance(s) and for travel time to and from the event(s)/performance(s) may be excused.
- Conferences or meetings for student organizations **do not** qualify for a UEA.

## B. MILITARY SERVICE OBLIGATIONS (NON-EMERGENCY):

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 a two (2) step process 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 approved, the student will receive an e-mail that includes a link to request the UEA. **Do not submit the UEA request until after receiving the approval e-mail.**
  - Note: Documentation for military service obligations are submitted to Cary Ann Reeves; therefore, it is not necessary to upload another copy with the UEA request.
- 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 UEAs 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. This is to ensure continued enrollment is feasible while there still may be an opportunity to withdraw from the course within the schedule change period, if necessary.

## C. 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](#). The calendar is not all-inclusive and is not intended to exclude any religion or days of religious observance.

- Students may request a university excused absence by completing the Request Form, available [here](#).
- To validate the request for a UEA, the student must provide documentation showing the observance occurs on the date requested.
- Instructors may choose **not** to accept a UEA if the student fails to provide advance notification.
- 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.

#### **D. 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 the Request Form, available [here](#).
- To validate the request for a UEA, the student must provide a copy of the court 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.
- Instructors may choose **not** to accept a UEA if the student fails to provide advance notification.
- UEA for court appearance is limited to eight (8) consecutive business days during the fall and spring terms or a 15-week block and four (4) consecutive business days during the summer term or an 8-week block.

#### **TYPE 2 ABSENCES (EMERGENCY OR UNEXPECTED CIRCUMSTANCES):**

##### **A. MILITARY SERVICE OBLIGATIONS (EMERGENCY):**

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 a two (2) step process 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 approved, the student will receive an e-mail that includes a link to request the UEA. **Do not submit the UEA request until after receiving the approval e-mail.**
  - Note: Documentation for military service obligations are submitted to Cary Ann Reeves; therefore, it is not necessary to upload another copy with the UEA request.
- 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 UEAs 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. This is to ensure continued enrollment is feasible while there still may be an opportunity to withdraw from the course within the schedule change period, if necessary.

##### **B. HOSPITALIZATION:**

For UEA purposes, 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 the Request Form, available [here](#)
- To validate the request for a UEA, the student must provide supporting documentation that may include a discharge summary from the hospital.
- Medical-related absences, with the exception of a student being hospitalized **are not covered** by the UEA policy. Students should consult with their instructor(s) for medical-related absences outside of hospitalization such as, but not limited to illness, injury, recovery time.
- Any student who requests academic accommodations due to a qualified and documented disability, is encouraged to register with the [Department for Disability Support Services \(DSS\)](#).
- A UEA for hospitalization is limited to eight (8) consecutive business days during the fall and spring terms or a 15-week block and four (4) consecutive business days of absence during the summer term or an 8-week block.

### C. 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 the Request Form, available [here](#).
- To validate the request for a UEA, the student must provide supporting documentation that may include a copy of the obituary (or weblink), 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 and covers both bereavement and travel time.

### D. 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 interpersonal violence, or other life-altering/life threatening situations may request a UEA.

- Students may request a university excused absence by completing the Request Form, available [here](#).
- To validate the request for UEA, the student must provide supporting documentation that include a police report or an insurance claim.
- UEA for extreme personal emergencies is limited to eight (8) consecutive business days during the fall and spring terms or a 15-week block and four (4) consecutive business days during the summer term or an 8-week block.

## Other Resources Related to Absences

### MEDICAL ABSENCES:

Short-term illnesses and other medical conditions (such as, but not limited to, injury, recovery time, medical appointments) **are not eligible for a UEA**. Based on syllabus language and departmental policy, instructors should use their discretion to honor written medical excuses from a licensed health 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 problem. In the event that a student is seriously ill or injured at the time of final examinations, the student may work with the Office of the Dean of Students to discuss an incomplete grade or additional options.

## **DISABILITY OR RELATED REQUESTS**

For chronic medical conditions or injuries which do not require hospitalization, but which may impact student course performance, students may work with the [Department for Disability Support Services \(DSS\)](#) to help coordinate appropriate accommodations in the class(es) with the participation of the course instructor(s). In each case, DSS must have documentation in order to verify the circumstance and then be able to advocate on behalf of the student. Each request is determined on an individual basis collaboratively between the student, the instructor and with a review of the documentation provided.

*For general 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).*

*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 has the right to appeal. The appeal shall be in writing to the instructor's department chairperson or school director. In the event the resolution is not satisfactory to the student, the final decision rests with the [academic dean](#).*