

Policy and Procedures

Student Attendance

(Last Revised March 7, 2013)

While each college develops its own methods for tracking class attendance and for defining conditions for excused absences, UTHSC adheres to federal regulations that require verification of class attendance for all students receiving federal financial aid. These regulations dictate that a student **MUST** attend the classes for which he/she is awarded financial aid.

The College of Dentistry expects that students attend the various educational opportunities provided for them as a part of the curriculum of the college. The College considers attendance mandatory for certain educational experiences. Students will be informed, in writing, where college policy requires class attendance

In the College of Dentistry, attendance is required for all laboratories and clinical clerkships. Course directors have the discretion of requiring attendance for lectures. They will inform students at the beginning of the course, in writing, of any attendance requirements and consequences of lack of attendance. Students are responsible for all assigned work in all courses in which they are enrolled, regardless of any attendance requirements.

Student Policy Regarding Absences

Excused Absences

Occasionally, students may be absent from required activities for justifiable reasons. In such cases, students are entitled to an excused absence from attendance and the opportunity to complete those activities without academic penalty. Justifiable reasons include, but are not limited to, complications related to pregnancy; serious medical problems; death in the family; automobile accident; jury duty and other judicial matters; military service; recognized religious holy days; and official representation of the University, or College of Dentistry.

Students unable to attend class **must** call the Office of Academic Affairs (448-5114) **before 8:00 AM** the day of the class. A voice mail system will be available at this

number that automatically records the date and time of the message. Students should clearly state their name, class and reason they are calling. All messages will be checked at 8:30 each morning. Any student who misses a scheduled course must provide documentation, including medical, jury duty, etc. to the Office of Academic Affairs within five working days of the resumption of matriculation to obtain an excused absence. Medical documentation must be obtained from the University Health Service, or their health care provider. Please note that an excused absence from the Office of Academic Affairs does not excuse a student from assigned clinic or clinical blocks. It is the student's professional responsibility to obtain a replacement for any assigned block rotation, and notify the departmental block coordinator of the change.

Students who cannot provide proper documentation will not receive an excused absence and thus may not be afforded an opportunity to make-up missed examinations, quizzes or other assignments. For these students, course directors have the discretion of requiring alternative assignments or examinations to ensure competency. All decisions regarding the feasibility of providing required educational experiences, in an alternative manner or form, will be made by the course director, with input from the departmental chair.

Unfortunate circumstances, such as automobile problems, traffic congestion, over sleeping and other issues of a similar nature, funerals for non-family members and issues of a personal nature are not considered justifiable reasons for an excused absence from required class attendance. Students will not be given excused absences from scheduled classes for such reasons as vacations, weddings, National Board Dental Examinations, Graduate Record Examinations, etc., or trips not authorized by the Office of Academic Affairs. Students not eligible for excused absences are still bound by the attendance requirements of the course(s) from which they were absent.

Administrative Exemptions

An Administrative exemption may be given to students planning to take time from the curriculum for reasons other than those outlined such as interviews and other extenuating circumstances. Administrative exemption from required attendance will be granted by the Office of Academic Affairs upon receipt of sufficient justification. Students are required to request exemption and provide justification to the Office of Academic Affairs **in advance** of anticipated absences from the college. The Office of

Academic Affairs will then inform the course directors of anticipated absences. In cases where an anticipated absence involves a scheduled examination, the student is required to work with the course director to determine a date and time for re-scheduling. When advance notification is not possible, a request for administrative exemption and justification must be received within five working days of the resumption of matriculation. Unless there is an emergency, **administrative exemptions will not be granted after the fact**. Fourth-year students that have required interviews for residency programs or for other career opportunities will be afforded the opportunity to obtain administrative exemptions, but it requires that the Office of Academic Affairs receive **advanced notice** prior to leaving the dental school and that arrangement has been made to make up any scheduled assignments.

Students who do not have an administrative exemption from attendance may not be afforded an opportunity to take missed quizzes or other assignments. Course directors have the discretion of requiring alternative assignments or examinations to ensure competency, as dictated by individual circumstances for students with un-excused absences. All decisions regarding the feasibility of providing required educational experiences, in an alternative manner or form, will be made by the course director, with input from the departmental chair.

Examination Policy

Students are expected to be present for all scheduled examinations (as indicated on the official class schedule). Excused absences will be available only from the Associate Dean of Academic Affairs and will in general only be given in the case of serious illness that requires hospitalization, or death of an immediate family member (mother, father, sister, brother). Exceptions will be considered by the Dean of the College.

Students who are absent from an examination for reasons other than an emergency will incur a one-letter grade (7.5%) reduction in their grade for that examination and will be required to take the missed examinations as soon as possible after they return, but no later than two business days after their return to class.

Contacting Course Director upon Return to School

In the absence of extenuating circumstances, as determined by the Office of Academic Affairs, a student who has been absent, regardless of the cause of the absence, has the

responsibility and obligation to contact the course director(s) within five working days of the resumption of matriculation. Failure of the student to contact the course director(s), regardless of the validity of the absence, may result in an inability of the student to make up or otherwise account for missed lectures, laboratories, clinics, quizzes, or other activities.

Missing Clinical Block Assignments

D-3 and D-4 students are periodically scheduled for block assignments and are required to attend those sessions. In the event of an anticipated absence, it is the student's professional responsibility to obtain a replacement for any assigned block rotation, and notify the departmental block coordinator of the change. In the event of illness, the student should follow the protocol for reporting their illness by informing the Office of Academic Affairs (448-5114) which block they will be missing due to illness.

Sustained Illness

Sustained physical or mental illnesses, medical complications and pregnancy and/or delivery may present unique problems in terms of obtaining an excused absence from required attendance. In these cases, a 'Leave of Absence' may be granted by the Dean, depending upon the circumstances of each case and alternative arrangements considered by the departments working in conjunction with the Office of Academic Affairs. The administration of the College of Dentistry will make every effort to work with students in these cases. However, because of the unique nature of the curriculum, e.g., required attendance for all laboratories and clinical clerkships, exposure to dental materials, the necessity of sequential course scheduling, and patient care responsibilities, prolonged absences may preclude uninterrupted matriculation. Limited institutional resources and sound pedagogy may preclude the offering of specific courses, or portions of courses, in an alternative manner or form, for which any student is justifiably absent.

In the event that an alternative educational program is necessary and can be devised following a 'Leave of Absence,' the student will be required to provide a medical clearance from their health care provider stating that they may return to full-time study. They will be required to perform the same fundamental and essential elements of the curriculum at the same level as his or her peers. No additional consideration will be given beyond the construction of an alternative curriculum. All students will be evaluated

for promotion and graduation using the same basic criteria.

If an alternate educational program cannot be arranged following a 'Leave of Absence,' the student may be considered for readmission for the next academic year, assuming that they were in good academic standing and are otherwise qualified as a student and that sufficient space exists to accommodate them in the ensuing class.

Personal Problems

Students may experience personal problems at some point in their dental education. The College of Dentistry will make every effort to provide reasonable accommodations, however in the event that an individual student's educational needs cannot be met through reasonable accommodations, the student will be given the opportunity to withdraw from program, without prejudice. The student may be considered for readmission for the next academic year, assuming that they were in good academic standing and are otherwise qualified as a student and that sufficient space exists to accommodate them in the ensuing class.

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