

Applying Excused Absence Policy to Late Work

Officially excused absences apply to:

- Students or immediate family members with a medical or family emergency.*
- Serious or sustained illness that is sufficient to prevent a student from attending class and/or completing work on time.
- Late Registration.
- Student-athletes engaged in official AAU athletics games/game-related travel

Note: practices are never an excuse for absence from class.

It is important to understand that by adhering to the AAU's excused absence policy, instructors are not bending the rules. These are the rules. The intent of the policy is to hold all students accountable for producing work that meets the quality standards for that class, while not unfairly penalizing students who, through no fault of their own, must miss occasional classes.

- Do not penalize students with excused absences simply for being absent.
- Do require students to make up the work.
- Do evaluate the work according to the same standards you always use.

Note: Whether or not you accept late work under other circumstances is left to your individual discretion and to the policies of your academic department. See below.

Students Should Communicate with the Instructor

Students with excused absences should be proactive in arranging with their instructors to make up work. Obviously, if a student is undergoing a medical emergency and cannot communicate with you in advance, you will need to make allowances for this.

Agree Upon a Deadline for Submitting Late Work

Instructors should set a firm deadline for submission of missing work; one week is suggested. At grading periods, the grade should reflect whether or not the student has made up the work from an excused absence. Students' grades will suffer if they do not meet agreed upon deadlines for submitting late work.

Making Up Discussion, Group Work and/or Critiques

Obviously, participation in discussions, group work or critiques cannot be made up once the deadline has passed. However, you can arrange for students with excused absences to make up participation points in some other way (e.g., writing a half-page written critique or a short essay on the topic of the missed discussion).

Alternatively, for students with excused absences, you can reduce the total number of points possible (e.g., instead of 150 possible points in 15 sessions, there might be 130 possible points in 13 sessions); that way, you are not penalizing the student for excused absences. (If you are using Easy Grade Pro, simply do not enter anything for a week in which a student was officially excused. Notice that leaving a box blank calculates the grade as if that assignment never existed. A zero is calculated as the lowest possible F.)

A few more options:

- Have students attend another section of the course that you teach, if possible.
- Have students attend a workshop appropriate to the course you are teaching.
- Create make-up work assignments that can apply to any week of the semester. For example:
 - ⇒ Check in with 2-3 classmates and write a one-page summary of what was covered in class that day.

⇒ Write a one-page reaction paper in response to the missed day's discussion topic.

⇒ Critique someone else's work, focusing on the principle of that week's missed critique.

If making up a minor in-class assignment is more trouble than it is worth, you may ignore the missed work and calculate the grade based on work that the student has turned in. You can also consider tossing out the two lowest class work grades at the end of the semester.

Addressing Unexcused Late Work

You may also encounter students who submit work late without an official, excused explanation. Be aware that case-by-case approaches often feel kindest, but can force you to spend a tremendous amount of time making judgment calls about which excuses are valid. Whatever your approach, never assign a progress or midterm grade based on work that the student has promised to turn in: Go on what you've got in hand. Reducing grades on late work, if you do accept it, effectively motivates students to turn work in on time.

Here are a few ideas to contribute to your thinking about your policy on unexcused late assignments

- Make clear distinctions between obstacles (things that come up during the process and get in the way and that you can help with) and excuses (which students present after the deadline).

- Establish a clear, efficient method of communication (such as email) so that students can inform you about obstacles. Regular communication encourages students to be proactive about problem solving and allows teachers to support students without a dramatic increase in time spent.

- Mirror the reality of working with clients by not accepting any late work. This establishes good habits. Clients are not swayed by life situations resulting in late or missing work. They want the job completed well and on time.

- Allow students to resubmit any assignment that was turned in on time but still needs more work. This gives students who encountered technical difficulties a chance to improve and rewards students for meeting deadlines.

- Create a discussion topic for late online discussions submissions, but remember that students who post after a discussion closes aren't really engaging in a dialogue with the class. It's unlikely other students will read or respond to late posts. Consider alternative assignments (essays, research projects, etc.) in lieu of late discussion participation posts if you want to allow make up work for missed discussions.



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