

ABSENCE DECLARATION AND STUDENT ABSENCES

Effective Fall 2023 Last updated: July 19, 2023

Principles

- It is important for students to take ownership of their academic progress. Developing time management skills in meeting learning goals and preparing for assessments are important responsibilities in student life.
- Faculty should be planning their courses with universal design for learning in mind to support flexible pathways for students whenever possible. This might include, for example, the option to drop the lowest mark of multiple quizzes.
- The University recognizes that sometimes there are circumstances that may impact a student's ability to meet their academic obligations. Policies and processes surrounding absences, deadlines and submission of work should balance the needs of students and the teaching team (instructors, teaching assistants, lab managers, etc.), so as not to create undue stress and hardship.
- No single document can anticipate the circumstances that might be faced by a student, nor provide concrete guidance for how to navigate academic consideration in every circumstance. Individual departments may choose to specify additional practices around absences and missed deadlines, where necessary.
- The Absence Declaration is not intended as a substitute for seeking academic support and/or support for health issues. The University has a variety of [supports for students](#).

Absence Declaration in ACORN

Students who will miss an academic obligation during the term (class, assignment deadline, quiz, test, or midterm) may declare the absence in ACORN using the Absence Declaration (AD) without any other supporting documentation and should expect to receive reasonable academic consideration from instructors. The Absence Declaration will not be used for final examinations. Students may use the Absence Declaration tool to declare absence **once per term for a maximum of seven consecutive days**. They may indicate their absence for one or for several courses. The date of declaration is required to fall within the seven-day declaration period and the AD cannot be submitted proactively or retroactively.

The Absence Declaration can be used in circumstances such as, but not limited to:

- Illness or Injury
- Important and unavoidable personal or family commitments or emergencies
- Bereavement



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- Athletic or artistic obligations (varsity/provincial/national) or other significant University sponsored activity (such as a field trip)

The Absence Declaration is not intended to be used for:

- Social activities
- Recreational travel
- Technological issues
- Avoidance of assessments or deadlines

The AD can be edited on the day submitted but cannot be cancelled. If a student submits an error on the AD, the Registrar's Office can make changes to it, but only if warranted. Additional absence declaration submissions are not allowed.

Students will have the option to email a copy of the AD to email addresses they specify in the tool. Instructors should include in their course syllabus the email address to which students should send a copy of their submitted AD (if they wish this to be the practice). No additional documentation should be asked for from the student if they submit an absence declaration.

Absences Outside of the Absence Declaration

Students who have already made use of their Absence Declaration can be asked for supporting documentation for subsequent absences, when they are seeking academic consideration. While instructors are not required to request supporting documentation for subsequent absences, it is within their purview to do so, and their approach should be listed clearly in the syllabus. This documentation can include:

- The University approved Verification of Illness (VOI) form
- A death certificate, funeral announcement, or other supporting document for bereavement
- A note from a university staff member (advisor, coach, residence staff, etc.) who can substantiate the student's claims, sent directly to the instructor by email

Any documentation collected by an instructor or department should be kept in a secure location and confidentially disposed of after one year following the end of the course. Instructors should be aware that many healthcare providers charge students for completing Verification of Illness forms and will provide forms well after the resolution of illness. Additionally, many valid illnesses do not necessarily require a visit to healthcare services. Therefore, instructors should use careful consideration when requesting this type of documentation and do so only when deemed necessary.

The following documentation should not be requested or accepted by instructors:

- Detailed medical information beyond the Verification of Illness (VOI) form
- Letters from friends, parents, or other family members



The instructor may decide what type of academic consideration is warranted based on the reason and documentation (if requested) supplied by the student. Falsification of information through the Absence Declaration or through a documented absence is considered a violation of the Academic Integrity policy.

Instructors noticing patterns of absence or missed work from students should refer the students to appropriate campus resources for academic advising and/or health support.

Chronic Health, Disability and Religion Related Absences

While students experiencing chronic health or disability issues may use the Absence Declaration or may provide a Verification of Illness if they wish, they are instead encouraged to work with AccessAbility Services to ensure they receive appropriate accommodations.

Students seeking consideration for religious observances should be given academic consideration under the Policy on [Scheduling of Classes and Examinations and Other Accommodations for Religious Observances](#).

Late Submission of Term Work Beyond the End of the Term

Term work may only be accepted until the last day of the term. Extensions up to seven days beyond the end of term may be granted at the discretion of the instructor and at the approval of the chair of the department. Extensions beyond seven days after the end of term require a student to [petition](#) with documentation.

Final Examinations

Students are discouraged from missing final examinations, unless they are prevented from doing so by illness, injury or significant extenuating circumstances. Students who miss a final examination may request a deferred examination by submitting a petition through the Office of the Registrar.