

 DALHOUSIE UNIVERSITY <i>Inspiring Minds</i> Academic Calendar Regulation: Missed or Late Academic Requirements due to Student Absence	<i>Regulation Sponsor:</i> Senate	<i>Approval Date:</i> September 25, 2017 Effective Date: January 1, 2018
	<i>Responsible Unit:</i> Student Affairs	<i>Revisions:</i>

A. Background & Purpose:

The regulation introduces the option of limited student self-declarations in lieu of sick notes or medical certificates for short-term absences.

Healthcare providers are often unable to verify the severity of a physical or mental health condition to determine whether a student should miss or submit late academic requirements. The inability to provide this verification is leading both on-campus and off-campus healthcare providers to withdraw or restrict the situations in which they will issue sick notes or medical certificates.

This regulation update aligns Dalhousie’s regulations with the best practices of most U15 schools in Canada who only use sick notes or medical certificates for accommodations, concessions and long-term conditions. Self-declaration of short-term absences strengthens student accountability communication with instructors regarding missed or late academic requirements. It empowers students by instilling a sense of trust that they will act ethically and in accordance with academic responsibility and personal integrity for their absences.

The purpose of the regulation is to:

- Differentiate between short-term and long-term student absences that result in missed or late academic requirements
- Provide students, faculty, and staff with direction on what is acceptable documentation for short-term and long-term student absences.

B. Application:

This regulation applies to all credit-bearing courses and programs.

Schedule A lists the Faculties, Colleges, and Schools whose programs and courses are excluded from this regulation. The Senate Office will add and remove academic units from this list based on direction from the Senate Learning and Teaching Committee (SLTC).

C. Definitions:

“Academic requirement” refers to class attendance, coursework, tests, exams, and Faculty-specific program requirements **excluding** final coursework (as defined by each Faculty, College or School) or exams (written, verbal or simulated), fieldwork (including work-integrated learning for credit), and skill labs (as defined by each Faculty, College or School).

“Long-term absence” refers to absences of more than three (3) consecutive days due to major or chronic physical or mental health conditions, or other extenuating circumstances such as caregiving duties; immediate family illness, injury or death; involvement in an accident; legal proceedings; being a victim of a crime, domestic or intimate partner violence.

“Primary care health professional” refers to occupations such as physician, psychologist, psychiatrist, registered nurse, social worker, counsellor, therapist, or dentist.

“Short-term absence” refers to absences of three (3) consecutive days or fewer due to minor physical or mental health conditions, or other extenuating circumstances such as caregiving duties; immediate family illness, injury or death; involvement in an accident; legal proceedings or being a victim of a crime, domestic or intimate partner violence.

D. Regulation

Students experiencing short-term or long-term absences that result in missed or late academic requirements may seek alternate arrangements with their instructors.

Students must review Faculty, College, School, course or instructor-specific syllabi and guidelines, and work-integrated learning handbook policies for the remediation of missed or late academic requirements. Absences may also result in the loss of class participation grades.

Course instructors may approve exceptions to this regulation to provide additional flexibility to students and to support students in successful completion of academic requirements. Faculties, Colleges, and Schools may approve changes to absence reporting timelines and to methods for providing absence information for the academic unit.

Any student who believes they will suffer undue hardship from the application of this academic regulation may [appeal](#) for relief to the Academic Appeals Committee of the Faculty, College or School in which they are registered. Students wishing to appeal a decision must complete an [“Application for a Waiver of an Academic Regulation”](#) form.

Requests for alternate arrangements for missed University-scheduled final exams are handled under a separate University regulation, [“Requests for an Alternative Final Examination Time”](#).

Students who provide false or fraudulent medical or other evidentiary documentation for their absences are subject to University discipline under the [Code of Student Conduct](#).

Information on managing absences may be provided by Dalhousie Student Health Services and Counselling Services and appear in the calendar entry with this regulation. Current information for the calendar appears in Schedule B and may be revised at their discretion.

Short-term Absence

Students experiencing short-term absences of three (3) consecutive days or fewer resulting in missed or late academic requirements must:

- Contact their instructor by phone or email prior to the academic requirement deadline or scheduled time and;
- Complete a **Student Declaration of Absence** form or provide alternate verification of the absence to their instructor or to the instructor's designate in-person, on-line through Brightspace, or via instructor e-mail within three (3) calendar days following the last day of absence.

A student may submit a maximum of **two (2)** separate Student Declaration of Absence forms **per course during a term**. Faculty, College, School, instructor or course-specific guidelines may set a lower maximum.

Students who have recurring short-term absences and who exceed two (2) submissions per course during a term are strongly encouraged to meet with a Faculty or Declared Major Advisor, or Faculty Program Coordinator. In cases of recurring short-term absences, instructors may request documentation to demonstrate a student has met with an Advisor or Coordinator and arrived at a course of action to manage the recurring absences before considering alternate academic requirement arrangements.

Record-keeping

Student Declaration of Absence forms:

- Will only be used for administrative purposes;
- Will be kept for a minimum of one year from the date a Faculty member or instructor makes a decision based on the form, after which they will be securely destroyed;
- May be shared with other instructors, Faculty members, and Faculty administrators within a student's Faculty, College or School to the extent that such disclosure is necessary to maximize support of students in successful completion of academic requirements;
- Fall under the Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy (FOIPOP) Act.

In cases where ongoing accommodations are made for recurring short-term absences due to physical or mental health conditions, the Student Declaration of Absence forms will be considered as data relating to potential accommodation requests, accommodation appeals, accommodation plans, and other matters relating to student accommodation under "Record-keeping" within the Administrative Structure of the [Student Accommodation Policy](#).

Long-term Absence

For long-term absences greater than three (3) consecutive days, students should contact their course instructor(s) or the instructor's designate within five (5) calendar days following the last day of absence.

The Student Declaration of Absence form will not be accepted for long-term absences.

Where long-term absences are due to major or chronic physical or mental health conditions, documentation must be provided by on-campus or off-campus primary care health professionals. Documentation should indicate the dates and duration of the condition (**confidential health information of the exact condition is not required**), when possible should describe its impact on the student's ability to fulfill academic requirements, and include any other information a primary care health professional considers relevant and appropriate.

For extenuating circumstances resulting in long-term student absences, instructors may request appropriate documentation depending on the situation.

Students experiencing recurring long-term absences are strongly encouraged to meet with a Faculty or Declared Major Advisor, or Faculty Program Coordinator and refer to the University's [Student Accommodation Policy](#). In such a case, instructors may request documentation to demonstrate a student has met with an Advisor or Coordinator and arrived at a course of action to manage the recurring absences before considering alternate academic requirement arrangements.

Schedule A - List of Excluded Faculties, Colleges and Schools

The following academic units have separate regulations to cover short-term and long-term absences that still meet the overall purpose of this regulation:

- Faculty of Dentistry
- Faculty Law
- Faculty of Medicine
- College of Pharmacy

Students in these Faculties, Colleges or Schools must refer to their current academic calendars for specific regulations or policies on missed or late academic requirements.

Schedule B – Supplementary information from Student Health and Wellness to appear in the calendar entry

Dalhousie Student Health & Wellness physicians and nurses will only provide sick notes or medical certificates to students for short-term absences in the following cases:

- A student's Faculty or instructor is not using the "Student Absence Regulation",
- The missed or late academic requirement is considered final coursework, or
- The test or exam falls within the last two weeks of an academic term.

Dalhousie Student Health & Wellness professional counsellors will only provide a sick note or medical certificate for short-term absences in the above cases ***and*** if a student is a current client receiving ongoing counselling.

Students are encouraged to stay at home if they have a communicable illness (such as flu-like symptoms) that is manageable at home to prevent further spread of illness to other students, staff or instructors.

For long-term absences, Dalhousie Student Health & Wellness health providers will only provide documentation for students who have been under the care of a physician, registered nurse, social worker, psychologist, counsellor, or psychiatrist during the period of absence and/or for management of long-term or chronic physical or mental health conditions.

The full Student Absence Regulation is available.