

Advice to Instructors when a student is absent from Exams or Term Work

Midterm Exams and Term Work

When a student is absent from an examination, or fails to hand in assignments or other term work on time, that student may apply for an excused absence. Students should contact the instructor as soon as they are able having regard to the circumstances. If a student fails to notify an instructor within a reasonable time of their request for an excused absence, the Instructor may deny the request unless the student provides a legitimate reason for the delay. According to the University of Alberta Calendar, the following are examples of conditions that would justify consideration for an excused absence:

- Illness
- Domestic Affliction
- Religious Conviction

These are just examples, and there are many circumstances where a student has been legitimately prevented from attending an exam or completing term work. Instructors should use discretion and compassion in deciding whether circumstances justify granting an excused absence.

Excused absences are not automatic and, in the case of term work or midterm exams, are at the discretion of the Instructor. Instructors may request supporting documentation from students to support the request. There are many forms that this documentation can take depending on the reason for absence (e.g. police report, death notice, court documents). However, if the reason for absence is medical, newly approved policy says that Instructors cannot require students to visit a doctor or other health care provider and cannot require students to provide a medical note. However, students may have seen their doctor for medical reasons and they may have a medical note to support their request. In the absence of a medical note, or where the absence is due to a reason other than illness, Instructors can ask students to visit their Faculty Office and obtain either a Statutory Declaration or a Faculty Form to outline the reasons for the absence. Instructors should use common sense in deciding whether to require students to provide this level of documentation. Instructors should contact their Faculty Offices if they have any concerns.

Instructors who do have concerns about a request for an excused absence should request supporting documentation, and deny the request if they believe the reason is not legitimate, or the reason for the absence is not acceptable. The following are examples from the Calendar of unacceptable reasons:

- Vacations
- Weddings
- Travel Arrangements

In the absence of a specific Faculty policy, when the Instructor has decided that an approved absence should be granted, he or she has the discretion to decide how the missing exam or term work should be made up. The instructor has a number of choices:

- An equivalent examination or assignment could be required.

- The weight of the missing work could be transferred on to the final examination.
- A modified final examination could be required that would include material covered on the missing examination.

Instructors should include a clear statement on their course outline as to which of these methods will be used. Instructors also need to ensure that they are following Faculty or Department policy on the procedures to be used in the event of an excused absence. Where missing term work or exams include any clinical, practicum, physical activity or other practical component, the Department and/or Faculty offering the course must be consulted for policies and guidelines on how to make up the missing work.

If instructors have questions or concerns about the process or whether or not a student has a legitimate reason for absence, they are urged to discuss the matter with their Departmental or Faculty Office.

Final Exams

When a student is absent from a final examination for a legitimate reason, that student may apply to their Faculty Office for a deferred examination. Graduate Students would apply to the Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research. Instructors cannot give or withhold permission for a deferred final exam. However, instructors may be asked for information concerning the student's request. Instructors often have valuable information about the student and their performance to date which can assist Faculty Offices in making informed decisions about the granting of a deferred final examination.

If a student has missed a final examination and has applied for a deferred exam, Instructors should calculate a final grade for the student using zero as the value for the final exam. This will be the grade that the student will get if they are not granted the deferred exam or if they do not write the deferred exam.

If the student is granted the deferred exam, the Faculty Office would normally advise the Department offering the course, and the Department would normally then advise the Instructor. The Instructor has the right to set the time for the deferred exam. A deferred exam may be scheduled in one of many ways. Please see Calendar section 23.5.6 and follow Department or Faculty specific policies and guidelines.

The student is obligated to keep themselves informed of the progress of their request for a deferred exam and the time set for the writing of the exam.