**UCC Response to Faculty Concerns from the April 9, 2018 Faculty Senate meeting regarding the changes to Policy 333 Class Attendance Policy**

Updates:

* Student Government passed the latest revision on April 15, 2018
* Staff Senate passed the latest revision on April 4, 2018

Q – What was the reason for rewriting this policy?

A – About three years ago, two Faculty Senate standing committees started discussing the need to change this policy. One committee was University Athletics, who were concerned about mistreatment of student athletes. The other committee was the Academic Affairs committee, who recognized the need for change due to the NDSU Student Health Service’s change regarding excuse letters - <https://www.ndsu.edu/fileadmin/studenthealthservice/Forms/Faculty_Excuse_Letters.pdf>.

Over the course of these discussions there also arose an opportunity to ensure that the policy was compliant with Title IX, including the federal mandate to excuse pregnant students who need medically necessary absences. The policy has been revised and thus far has failed to pass Faculty Senate approval three times, but still needs to be changed from the [current version](https://www.ndsu.edu/fileadmin/policy/333.pdf) – see these Faculty Senate minutes:

* February 27, 2017 - <https://www.ndsu.edu/fileadmin/facultysenate/minutes/Minutes_2016-2017b.pdf>
* November 13, 2017 - <https://www.ndsu.edu/fileadmin/facultysenate/201718/minutes/11_13_17_FS_Minutes.pdf>
* April 9, 2018 - <https://www.ndsu.edu/fileadmin/facultysenate/201718/minutes/04_09_18_FS_Minutes.pdf>

The UCC has twice formed sub-committees of faculty and support staff to work on the revisions. The last sub-committee also included representatives of student government. Each time, the sub-committees have worked to address questions and concerns expressed at Faculty Senate and Student Government. The revisions were then discussed and approved at UCC prior to submission to the Senate Coordinating Committee.

It is essential the federal mandate components of the policy be approved to ensure compliance. Examples of non-compliance situations include not permitting medically necessary absences for pregnant students or supporting absences for requests to observe religious holidays. See [U.S. Department of Education’s Office of Civil Rights information regarding Title IX pregnancy and parental protection for students](https://www2.ed.gov/about/offices/list/ocr/docs/dcl-know-rights-201306-title-ix.html).

Concern - Concerns from faculty saying that this policy protects student but not faculty.

Response – The policy attempts to clarify which absences must be approved by Faculty. It is recognized that Faculty may not always know how best to manage absences and/or may be concerned about the time and effort needed to manage make-up work. The current policy provides no protection to students who are absent from class due to legitimate reasons; the revised policy is intended to equalize responsibility on both sides. The guidance document is intended to help faculty manage absences, and if that doesn’t address the particular issue a faculty member may be facing, then a call to the Provost’s Office should help resolve the situation.

Q - What’s the limit on the number of excused absences?

A – For absences covered by this policy there would be no limit. If there is a student who is missing a significant number of class periods, it would be good practice to either express concerns directly to the student and/or advisor. The guidelines provide ways to accommodate students who are absent due to university-sponsored events, some of which require substantial travel.

Q - What other cases could an incomplete be used for missing classes?

A – No one document could encompass every scenario that Faculty may encounter. The guidance document attempts to offer some helpful information, and includes a prompt to call the Provost’s Office if you don’t know what to do. There is help available to figure out the solution. For questions specifically about incomplete grades, Registration and Records is also a resource.

Suggestion - It was suggested to balance student needs with instructor time and space to accommodate these requests.

Response – This is a bit vague. We absolutely recognize that large enrollment courses will have more management challenges. Again, if Faculty need help with figuring out how to manage absences, please consult the guidelines or call the Provost’s Office for assistance. There will also be more Faculty resources available and professional development opportunities in the coming year.

Concern - It’s possible that dept. policy might be in conflict with this policy.

Response – NDSU Policy overrides any department policy. The department policy would need to change.

Q - It was asked if these guidelines can be changed at any time by the Provost’s office.

A – Yes, as the guidelines are not meant to be rules, but rather help for Faculty to determine how to handle excused student absences. It is intended to develop an FAQ section over time, and the next version may include some of the questions asked here. The document is meant to be helpful and adaptive.

Q - Do ‘academic meetings’ include meeting with a professor or an advisor?

A – No. Meetings with advisors or instructors would not fall under this policy. Instructors could determine if absences for those reasons are acceptable based on their own course policy.