

# UNIVERSITY OF ABERDEEN

## POLICY AND PROCEDURES ON STUDENT ABSENCE

This Policy and Procedures on Student Absence was approved by the University Education Committee (UEC) on 25 August 2021. It applies to all undergraduate and postgraduate taught students.

The University places a high value on the health and wellbeing of its students. The University is keen to ensure that appropriate arrangements are in place to maximise the welfare of students but also to limit the consequences for students when genuine absences do occur.

### 1. POLICY ON STUDENT ATTENDANCE

- 1.1 The University expects that students will normally attend all classes, whether these are on-campus or online. Some teaching sessions (e.g., tutorials, seminars, and laboratories) are compulsory. Course handbooks will make clear attendance requirements.
- 1.2 Students are required to undertake all assessments (including examinations) and to submit all pieces of in-course assessment by the required deadline.
- 1.3 The University Senate may terminate the studies of any student who persistently fails to attend, or perform the required work of, the course for which they are registered without medical or other good cause for doing so. The University's [student monitoring webpages](#) provide more information on how attendance and the submission of coursework is monitored.
- 1.4 Students must report absence (defined as an inability to attend or perform required work<sup>1</sup>), through the absence reporting in [Student Hub](#) (section 2.1.1 below provides further information). This is of particular importance in the following instances:
  - (i) They are absent for any period of more than seven consecutive days<sup>2</sup>;
  - (ii) They are absent for a period of less than seven consecutive days but during this time they:
    - a. fail to undertake assessment (e.g., an examination or 'open book' examination);
    - b. do not submit a piece of in-course assessment by the required deadline;
    - c. are unable to attend a compulsory teaching session (e.g., tutorial, laboratory, or seminar).
- 1.5 Students should be aware that although an absence may be considered justifiable, a student must be able to meet the learning outcomes of a course before a pass can be awarded. Students who fail to meet the learning outcomes of a course, even where evidence supporting the absence exists, will not be eligible to receive a class certificate. Details of the learning outcomes for each course can be found in the relevant course handbook.

### 2. PROCEDURE FOR REPORTING AN ABSENCE

#### 2.1 When should an absence be reported?

- 2.1.1 Absence should be reported as far as possible in advance where the absence is planned (e.g., funeral or representing the University in an official event). Where advance notification is not possible (e.g., in event of illness), it is **expected that students will inform the University on the first day of any period of absence.**
- 2.1.2 Where it is impossible for a student to report on the first day of absence, students should report at the first

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<sup>1</sup> Students undertaking periods of self-isolation, as a consequence of Covid-19, who remain able to engage in their studies must report this via the [University's Covid-19 Reporting Form](#).

<sup>2</sup> Seven consecutive days includes weekends (for example Thursday, Friday, Saturday, Sunday, Monday, Tuesday, and Wednesday).

possible opportunity (normally no later than 3 days after the first day of any period of absence) and provide explanation of the reasons which prevented them notifying their absence earlier. Late notification of absence without good cause will only be permissible in exceptional circumstances.

## 2.2 HOW SHOULD AN ABSENCE BE REPORTED?

2.2.1 A student should report an absence through the absence reporting tool in [Student Hub](#) or, where a student is unable to access the Student Hub, the absence should be reported directly to the School (or each of the Schools, when the absence impacts more than one course) concerned.

## 2.3 WHEN IS SUPPORTING EVIDENCE REQUIRED?

2.3.1 All absences must be reported, however, not all periods of absence will require supporting evidence. The requirements vary depending on the period of absence, the nature of the absence, the nature of the events missed and the programme year of the student. Students should, however, note that notification of an absence will not necessarily justify an absence and a clear explanation of the reasons for the absence should be given.

2.3.2 Supporting evidence is required in the following scenarios<sup>3</sup>:

- (a) Where a student in programme years 1 and 2 has been absent for more than seven consecutive days<sup>4</sup>;
- (b) Where a student in programme years 3, 4 or 5:
  - (i) has been absent for more than seven consecutive days;
  - (ii) has been absent for less than seven consecutive days and has been unable:
    - a. to undertake assessment;
    - b. to submit a piece of in-course assessment by the required deadline;
    - c. to attend a compulsory teaching session.

## 2.4 WHAT IS CONSIDERED SUPPORTING EVIDENCE?

2.4.1 In the case of illness, students should submit a medical certificate<sup>5</sup>. This can take the form of written evidence from a medical practitioner (which may include pro-forma or a letter) which must be signed by a medical practitioner or clearly show the medical practitioner's details, to enable verification.

2.4.2 Where it is impossible for a doctor to verify subsequently that students had been ill on the date of absence it is inappropriate to request a back-dated medical certificate. It is therefore important that students arrange a consultation with their medical practitioner (in person or by telephone and/or a nurse consultation) as soon as possible following the onset of illness and when the signs of illness are still evident.

2.4.3 Where absence has occurred for good cause of a non-medical nature<sup>6</sup>, students should supply appropriate corroborating evidence in place of a medical certificate from a service that was providing them support with their issues. For the purposes of this policy, appropriate sources of support from which alternative evidence (including a letter or email outlining the nature of the support being given) include the Student Advice & Support team or University Counselling Service, an external counsellor. Additional evidence that may be provided can also include a police report, notification of a death or other evidence acknowledged by the University to be of a significant nature.

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<sup>3</sup> Students undertaking periods of self-isolation, as a consequence of Covid-19, who remain able to engage in their studies must report this via the [University's Covid-19 Reporting Form](#) but are not required to submit supporting evidence.

<sup>4</sup> Seven consecutive days includes weekends (for example Thursday, Friday, Saturday, Sunday, Monday, Tuesday, and Wednesday).

<sup>5</sup> Students should note that, in accordance with guidance from the Scottish Executive Health Department, medical practitioners may charge a fee for the provision of medical certificates. Students should note that the University will not reimburse any costs incurred.

<sup>6</sup> Students should not request a medical certificate from their medical practitioner to cover absences of a non-medical nature.

2.4.4 The Student Advice & Support Team can provide students with support in reporting their absences, where appropriate, and, with permission, can liaise with School(s) on a students' behalf<sup>7</sup>. Where a student believes their medical condition or personal circumstance to be of a particularly sensitive nature, or where the Team is already aware of a student's specific circumstances, they should contact the Student Advice & Support Team directly.

2.4.5 Where appropriate, documentation submitted as supporting evidence, should normally be translated into English.

## **2.5 WHAT HAPPENS TO REPORTS OF ABSENCE?**

2.5.1 Reports of absence may be used:

- By Course Coordinators and/or Heads of School to suggest any remedial work the student should do on return to study. It is the responsibility of the student to ask the appropriate member of staff about any required remedial work. Students should note that depending on the period of absence and work missed that it may not be possible for a student to make up the missed work and as such a student may not be eligible to receive their class certificate on account of their absence (see 1.5).
- By the Examiners in deciding whether to award an 'MC' (medical absence), 'GC' (good cause) or 'SC' (Self-certificate) for the course.

## **2.6 WHAT SUPPORT IS AVAILABLE?**

2.6.1 The University understands that students may need support and guidance as they deal with issues leading to periods of absence. The University has a range of support services available to support students as detailed below:

- The Multi-faith [Chaplaincy \(chaplaincy@abdn.ac.uk\)](mailto:chaplaincy@abdn.ac.uk) is a place of welcome for all and serves as a spiritual and social centre for students and staff.
- The Counselling Service ([counselling@abdn.ac.uk](mailto:counselling@abdn.ac.uk)) is open to all students of the University.
- Registry Officers can provide a source of support to students who have concerns about their programme of study.
- The Student Advice & Support team ([student.support@abdn.ac.uk](mailto:student.support@abdn.ac.uk)) offers impartial and confidential advice and support on a range of issues, including finance, disability information and more.
- The Students' Association (AUSA) ([ausaadvise@abdn.ac.uk](mailto:ausaadvise@abdn.ac.uk)) represents and serves student's interests and works to make their time in Aberdeen as happy and enjoyable as possible.

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<sup>7</sup> In certain circumstances, it may also be appropriate for a personal tutor (or equivalent) to liaise with a School on a students' behalf. Such circumstances can include instances where a student has been in regular contact with a personal tutor (or equivalent) over a period of time such that the students' personal circumstances are well-known to the personal tutor.