

Class Schedule and Absences

Schedule: The policy on scheduling was established by the University Faculty and the Faculty Council of Representatives in 1950 and last amended in 1981:

All lectures, laboratories, recitations, or similar exercises start at specified times and continue for durations of 50 minutes, 75 minutes, one hour and 55 minutes, two hours and 25 minutes, or 3 hours. The university times are printed in "Courses of Study."

On Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday, and Thursday the hours of 4:25 p.m. to 7:30 p.m., on Fridays the hours after 4:25 p.m., on Saturday the hours after 12:05 p.m., and all day Sunday shall be free from all formal undergraduate classes or laboratory exercises.

Evening classes shall be used only on Monday and Wednesday and only when regularly scheduled and included in written college announcements; evening lectures, recitations or similar exercises shall start at 7:30 p.m. and 8:35 p.m., and evening laboratories or similar exercises at 7:30 p.m.

No exceptions to the above class schedules—including the provision for free time on Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday, and Thursday between 4:25 p.m. and 7:30 p.m., on Friday after 4:25 p.m., on Saturday after 12:05 p.m., and on Sunday—shall be allowed except by permission of the dean of the college or the director of the school offering the course; such exceptions as are approved shall be regularly scheduled and included in written university announcements.

Absences. The obligations of academic employees, such as the teaching of classes, meeting with advisees, directing graduate students, and research or extension services to which the university has made a commitment, should not go unmet.

Accordingly, the occurrence of inadvertent or unforeseeable absences, such as those due to sudden illness, transportation breakdown, or other emergency, should be communicated as soon as possible to the employee's department chairperson or director, who will arrange for a substitute or inform students and others dependent on the employee's presence. During planned absences, provision acceptable to the chairperson should be made for fulfillment of the employee's academic obligations, and such provision communicated to students and others affected.

When an academic employee who has missed holding a class assigns a makeup session at a time when the class is not regularly scheduled, some of the students may have other obligations that prevent attendance at that time. If, in attempting to avoid such conflicts, the instructor arranges to have the class taken by a substitute, that person then faces the problem of maintaining the continuity, coherence, and level of presentation provided by the regular instructor. For these and other reasons, the missing of classes should be held to a minimum, and assignments of makeup classes and coaching of a substitute should be done with care. Having such plans approved by the department chairperson is advised.

Students have an obligation to be present throughout each term at all meetings of courses for which they are registered. In some courses, such as physical education and courses in which participation in classroom discussion is considered vital, there may be penalties for absences per se or defined limits to absences, the exceeding of which leads to the student failing the course or receiving a grade of Incomplete. These rules are set by the department or instructor.

In most courses, however, attendance is not taken, and the student's responsibility is for the work covered in the class rather than for being physically present when the class is held. A student is then not penalized directly for missing a lecture, for instance, but is held responsible (in subsequent tests) for knowledge of material presented in the lecture. There are various means by which students can acquire such knowledge and thus avoid an indirect penalty.

It is harder to make up missed work if the class that was missed was a test or a laboratory session or field trip. Such makeups involve the direct cooperation of the instructor. If the instructor feels the absence was unjustified, he or she is not required to provide the student with the opportunity to make up the missed work.

There is no such thing as a "university excuse" for absence from class that frees a student from responsibility for the missed work. Only the instructor of a course can provide such an exemption to a student. **And even the faculty member is not permitted (by legislation of the University Faculty) to cancel classes just before or after academic recesses without special approval of the dean of the school or college concerned. Each faculty member and instructor has the special responsibility of maintaining the regular quality and content of instruction in classes just before and after university vacations, regardless of the number of students present in the classroom.**

There are some circumstances, however, in which faculty members are not supposed to penalize students directly for missing classes and are urged to try to make opportunities for the students to make up work that was missed. These circumstances include, but are not limited to, the following:

Illness, or family or personal emergency. The University expects that students will be honest with their professors about routine illnesses, injuries, and mental health problems that may lead to missed classes, labs, studios, exams, or deadlines. Academic advising staff and associate deans are available to provide assistance to students or faculty members who have concerns about attendance issues. See also the CU Health Excuse Policy at <http://www.gannett.cornell.edu/services/health-excuses.cfm>

Employment interviews: Students often have limited control over the timing and location of interviews with prospective employers. The University expects that students will be honest with their professors about interviews that require an absence, and also that students will plan ahead as much as possible to facilitate arrangements for making up work missed due to absence.

(See also **Disability Accommodation Procedure for Students** in this section.)

Religious observances. The university is committed to supporting students who wish to practice their religious beliefs. Students are urged to discuss religious absences with their instructors well in advance of the religious holiday so that arrangements for making up work can be resolved before the absence. Faculty are urged to announce at the beginning of the semester all activities which, if missed, would require make up work.

The New York State Legislature (since July 1, 1992) requires all institutions (public and private) of higher education not to discriminate against students for their religious beliefs. Accordingly, the pertinent parts of Sections 3 and 4 of the law state:

"3. It shall be the responsibility of the faculty and of the administrative officials of each institution of higher education to make available to each student who is absent from school, because of his or her religious beliefs, an equivalent opportunity to make up any examination, study or work requirements which he or she may have missed because of such absence on any particular day or days. . .

"4. If ... classes, examinations, study or work requirements are held on Friday after four o'clock post meridian or on Saturday, similar or makeup classes, examinations, study or work requirements... shall be made available on other days, where it is possible and practicable to do so."

Both Cornell as an institution, and its faculty members, have an obligation to comply with the laws of New York State. The language of the law is vague, and particular situations may need interpretation. The Office of the Dean of Faculty may be contacted either for questions or further clarification.

Weather. During winter weather, "snow days" occasionally cause delay or cancellation of activities at the university. Times for making up missed activities in a coordinated way are publicly announced on such occasions. The local radio stations, *The Cornell Daily Sun*, the *Cornell Chronicle*, and other media convey the news.

Athletics and Extracurricular Activities. Students whose participation in varsity athletics or other recognized extracurricular activities requires occasional absences from the campus may present an appropriate slip or letter with the signature of a responsible official, attesting that the proposed absence is in connection with a recognized activity. In the case of athletics, the Faculty Advisory Committee on Athletics and Physical Education must approve the schedule of events and associated athletic leaves of absence each year, thus assuring that the athletic absences are kept within approved limits and guidelines.

Final examination conflict. See Examination and Academic Activities in this section.