

# ATTENDANCE

---

## UMKC School of Law Attendance Policy

### Purposes

The American Bar Association requires law schools to have “sound academic standards, including those for regular class attendance.” See American Bar Association, Standards & Rules of Procedure for Approval of Law Schools, Standard 308(a). Consistent with this directive, the UMKC School of Law faculty believes that dependability is an essential characteristic of a good lawyer. The Law School’s attendance policy seeks to promote the development of good professional habits and to ensure that students succeed in their classes, on the bar exam, and as attorneys.

### General Policy

1. A student may miss up to 15 percent of the class sessions in a course without penalty. While students are allowed to miss up to 15 percent of classes without penalty, students should treat that as a maximum amount that can be missed if absolutely necessary, not as the amount of absences that would be typical or expected. (There is a table provided, at the end of this policy, that indicates what 15% of the class sessions would be for some of the most common formats for courses.)
2. The faculty member who is teaching the course has discretion to decide whether to make it possible for students to attend the class remotely through an electronic means (such as Zoom) and to determine the extent to which remote attendance will be counted as being present or absent. Faculty are strongly encouraged to clearly state their policy for this in their syllabus for the course.
3. The faculty member who is teaching the course may choose to waive one or more absences if the student completes what the faculty member deems an equivalent substitute for class attendance. The substitute may be watching or listening to a recording of the class, meeting with the professor to go over the material that was missed, or doing other additional academic work (such as extra reading, writing, or research).
  - a. Students are not entitled to these waiver-for-extra-academic-work opportunities. The decision about whether to provide them is within the discretion of the faculty member teaching the course.
  - b. A faculty member may deem certain class periods not amenable to this extra-academic-work option given the nature of that day’s engagement.
  - c. Though not mandatory, faculty members are encouraged to allow this extra-academic-work option to a reasonable extent for absences that result from engaging in school-sponsored events or job/internship interviews.
  - d. It is a best practice for faculty members, when exercising their discretion, to employ this option only when the student demonstrates academic competence in the subject and displays good-faith attempts to meet attendance requirements.
4. For each absence that exceeds the number of absences permitted by sections 1 to 2 of this policy, and that is not waived under section 3 of this policy, there will be a one-step reduction in the student’s grade for the course (such as from a B+ to a B).
5. If a student will have more than three grade reductions in a course, the student must meet with a subcommittee of the Student Affairs committee to discuss the situation. The subcommittee shall include the Director of Student Services, the Associate Dean for Students, and at least one other member of the Student Affairs committee. The student and the subcommittee will discuss the issues that led the student to have too many absences, the effects of the grade reductions, and what steps the student should take to avoid further problems with attendance. The student and the subcommittee also will discuss whether the student should withdraw from the course because the adverse effects of the grade reductions outweigh the benefits of continuing in the course. If a majority of the subcommittee believes that the student is not making a realistic and reasonable decision about proceeding in the course, the subcommittee will have discretion to decide that the student will be administratively withdrawn from the course. If a student does not meet with the subcommittee within one week after being asked to do so, the student may be withdrawn from the course.

### Procedures

- A. Attendance will be taken at every class session of every course. The faculty member teaching the course may make a record of the attendance, or the attendance may be taken by other methods such as passing around an attendance sheet or by means that allow students to sign in electronically.
- B. It is important that students arrive on time for classes. If a student misses any substantial portion of a class session (in other words, more than just a few minutes of the class) because the student arrived late or left before the class ended, the faculty member teaching the course will be entitled to count that as an absence. If a student is repeatedly late for class, even late by just a minute or less, the faculty member may give the student a warning that any further late arrivals will be counted as absences.
- C. This policy addresses only attendance at classes. It does not affect a faculty member’s requirements or guidelines for the submission of papers or other assignments. The faculty member teaching a course has the sole discretion to decide whether to accept late submissions of work or to award penalties for failing to turn in a paper or other assignment on time.
- D. This policy does not draw a distinction between “excused” and “unexcused” absences. Students inevitably will have situations arise where they need to miss classes for perfectly understandable reasons, such as illness, a job interview, or car trouble. The need to occasionally miss class for these sorts of reasons is already accounted for under the policy, which allows students to miss up to 15 percent of the class sessions in a course without being penalized. Every absence therefore will be counted regardless of the reason for the absence. Likewise, students will sometimes need to miss classes due to having a significant role in an activity that is part of a Law School course or program, such as participating in a legal skills competition as part of one of the Law School’s teams, or attending a hearing as part of one of the Law School’s clinical courses or field placements.

All absences are counted, so whenever possible, students should attempt to schedule these sorts of matters so they do not conflict with classes. To the extent that conflicts sometimes cannot be avoided, students must plan ahead and avoid using up their allowed absences for other things, so that they will have enough absences left to cover the times when they need to miss class because of a Law School activity. Similarly, students may seek a discretionary extra-academic-work option, and in exercising their discretion about whether to allow a grade reduction for excessive absences to be waived, professors can take into account the extent to which the student's absences were due to participation in Law School activities.

E. When a class meets on a day or at a time other than when the class is regularly scheduled to meet and this make-up date is listed on the original syllabus (in other words, it is an anticipated make-up class session), attendance is mandatory and absences will be counted unless the professor determines that extraordinary circumstances justify making an exception. It is also expected that faculty sometimes will have unanticipated make-up classes for any number of reasons. If the make-up class is not listed on the original syllabus (in other words, it is an unanticipated make-up session), attendance will not be mandatory unless the class session is recorded and students have the option of either (a) attending the class or (b) listening to or viewing the recording (and doing a brief assignment or assessment concerning the content of the recorded class, if the professor chooses to require it) rather than attending the class.

F. Students seeking a discretionary use of the extra-academic-work option must make the request within 5 business days of the absence. And if possible, the better practice is to make the request before the absence.

G. Falsification of attendance records (such as if a student signs in as present for a class that the student did not attend, or if another student signs in for a student who is absent) is a violation of the UMKC School of Law Honor Code and will be reported to the Honor Court for prosecution.

H. Some courses may have particular occasions where attendance is mandatory (such as when a student is scheduled to make a presentation to the class, or when a student has a client meeting or court appearance for a clinic or externship). The instructor or supervising attorney may require a student to be present on such occasions and may impose consequences (up to and including not passing the course) if a student is absent, even if the student has not exceeded the number of absences permitted under this attendance policy.

## Relationship to University Attendance Policies

This policy supersedes University attendance policies in all respects.

Adopted by the UMKC School of Law faculty on August 30, 2018; amended September 13, 2018; October 11, 2018; and April 17, 2025.

## Application of the Attendance Policy to Some Common Types of Courses

### Fall or Spring course that meets once per week for 14 weeks

- **Absences allowed without penalty:** 2 absences allowed without penalty.
- **Additional absences that are waived:** If a student goes over the number of absences allowed without penalty, the instructor has discretion to waive one or more of the absences.
- **Additional absences that are not waived:** A student will have a one-step grade reduction for each absence that exceeds the number allowed without penalty and that is not waived by the instructor. If a student has three grade reductions in a course, they need to meet with a subcommittee of the Student Affairs Committee, which will decide if the student will be withdrawn from the course or be allowed to proceed with the grade reductions.

### Fall or Spring course that meets twice per week for 14 weeks

- **Absences allowed without penalty:** 4 absences allowed without penalty.
- **Additional absences that are waived:** If a student goes over the number of absences allowed without penalty, the instructor has discretion to waive one or more of the absences.
- **Additional absences that are not waived:** A student will have a one-step grade reduction for each absence that exceeds the number allowed without penalty and that is not waived by the instructor. If a student has three grade reductions in a course, they need to meet with a subcommittee of the Student Affairs Committee, which will decide if the student will be withdrawn from the course or be allowed to proceed with the grade reductions.

### Fall or Spring course that meets three times per week for 14 weeks

- **Absences allowed without penalty:** 6 absences allowed without penalty.
- **Additional absences that are waived:** If a student goes over the number of absences allowed without penalty, the instructor has discretion to waive one or more of the absences.
- **Additional absences that are not waived:** A student will have a one-step grade reduction for each absence that exceeds the number allowed without penalty and that is not waived by the instructor. If a student has three grade reductions in a course, they need to meet with a subcommittee of the Student Affairs Committee, which will decide if the student will be withdrawn from the course or be allowed to proceed with the grade reductions.

### Summer course that meets three times per week for 7 weeks

- **Absences allowed without penalty:** 1 absence allowed without penalty.
- **Additional absences that are waived:** If a student goes over the number of absences allowed without penalty, the instructor has discretion to waive one or more of the absences.

- **Additional absences that are not waived:** A student will have a one-step grade reduction for each absence that exceeds the number allowed without penalty and that is not waived by the instructor. If a student has three grade reductions in a course, they need to meet with a subcommittee of the Student Affairs Committee, which will decide if the student will be withdrawn from the course or be allowed to proceed with the grade reductions.

#### **Summer course that meets twice per week for 7 weeks**

- **Absences allowed without penalty:** 2 absences allowed without penalty.
- **Additional absences that are waived:** If a student goes over the number of absences allowed without penalty, the instructor has discretion to waive one or more of the absences.
- **Additional absences that are not waived:** A student will have a one-step grade reduction for each absence that exceeds the number allowed without penalty and that is not waived by the instructor. If a student has three grade reductions in a course, they need to meet with a subcommittee of the Student Affairs Committee, which will decide if the student will be withdrawn from the course or be allowed to proceed with the grade reductions.

#### **Summer course that meets three times per week for 7 weeks**

- **Absences allowed without penalty:** 3 absences allowed without penalty.
- **Additional absences that are waived:** If a student goes over the number of absences allowed without penalty, the instructor has discretion to waive one or more of the absences.
- **Additional absences that are not waived:** A student will have a one-step grade reduction for each absence that exceeds the number allowed without penalty and that is not waived by the instructor. If a student has three grade reductions in a course, they need to meet with a subcommittee of the Student Affairs Committee, which will decide if the student will be withdrawn from the course or be allowed to proceed with the grade reductions.

#### **Mini-term course that meets five times in one week**

- **Absences allowed without penalty:** 0 absences allowed without penalty.
- **Additional absences that are waived:** If a student goes over the number of absences allowed without penalty, the instructor has discretion to waive one or more of the absences.
- **Additional absences that are not waived:** A student will have a one-step grade reduction for each absence that exceeds the number allowed without penalty and that is not waived by the instructor. If a student has three grade reductions in a course, they need to meet with a subcommittee of the Student Affairs Committee, which will decide if the student will be withdrawn from the course or be allowed to proceed with the grade reductions.