

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

Students should strive to have as few absences from classes as possible. A student will be allowed to miss up to 15 percent of the class sessions in a course. Each absence above the 15 percent level will result in a one-step reduction in the student’s grade for the course (such as from a B+ to a B). If a student has absences that exceed 22 percent of the class sessions in a course, the student will be administratively withdrawn from the course.

The faculty member who is teaching the course may choose to waive one or more of the one-step grade reductions. The faculty member may require the student to do extra academic work (such as extra reading, writing, or research) as a condition for waiving a grade reduction.

Faculty members cannot waive or prevent the administrative withdrawal of a student from a course.

The Law School strongly advises students to miss as few classes as possible. 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.

Examples

The following examples illustrate how the policy applies to courses with some of the most common scheduling formats. [1] (p.)

For a Fall or Spring course that meets once per week for 14 weeks:

2 absences allowed without penalty

3rd absence results in a one-step grade reduction

4th absence results in withdrawal from the course

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

4 absences allowed without penalty

5th and 6th absences each result in one-step grade reductions

7th absence results in withdrawal from the course

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

6 absences allowed without penalty

7th and 8th and 9th absences each result in one-step grade reductions

10th absence results in withdrawal from the course

Summer course that meets once per week for 7 weeks:

1 absence allowed without penalty

2nd absence results in withdrawal from the course

Summer course that meets twice per week for 7 weeks:

2 absences allowed without penalty

3rd absence results in a one-step grade reduction

4th absence results in withdrawal from the course

2 Attendance

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

3 absences allowed without penalty

4th absence results in a one-step grade reduction

5th absence results in withdrawal from the course

Mini-term course that meets five times in one week:

1st absence results in a one-step grade reduction

2nd absence results in withdrawal from the course

Stricter Requirements

Faculty members may choose to impose attendance requirements for their courses that are stricter than those of the general policy. In other words, a faculty member may allow fewer (but not more) absences than the general policy would allow. If a faculty member intends to impose a stricter attendance policy for a course, the faculty member must notify students of the policy, in writing (whether on paper or by electronic means), before or during the first week of the semester. The announcement must specify how many absences will be allowed and what the consequences will be for each absence exceeding the allowed number.

Procedures

1. 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.
2. 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 two, the faculty member may give the student a warning that any further late arrivals will be counted as absences.
3. If a student is failing a course at the time of being administratively withdrawn for excessive absences, the student will get a "WF" designation (for withdraw failing) on the student's transcript for the course. Otherwise, a student who is administratively withdrawn for excessive absences will get a "W" designation (for withdraw) on the student's transcript for the course.
4. 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.
5. 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. 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.
6. When a class meets on a day or at a time other than when the class is regularly scheduled to meet (such as for a make-up class session), attendance is mandatory and absences will be counted unless the professor determines that extraordinary circumstances justify making an exception.
7. 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) constitutes a violation of the UMKC School of Law Honor Code and will be reported to the Honor Court for prosecution.

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, and October 11, 2018.

[1] (p.) Where a course has class sessions that are different lengths of time, the calculation of the 15 percent and 22 percent limits will be based on class minutes. For example, if a class met on Mondays for 50 minutes and on Wednesdays for 100 minutes, for 14 weeks, that would be a total of 2,100 minutes of class time. An absence for a Monday session of the class would count as missing 50 minutes of the class, and an absence for a Wednesday session of the class would count as missing 100 minutes of the class. So a student who missed three Mondays and two Wednesdays would have a total of 350 minutes of absences and would be over the 15 percent limit. A student who missed six Mondays and no Wednesdays would have a total of 300 minutes of absences and would be slightly under the 15 percent limit.