

Salisbury University Student Emergency Absence Policy

Proposed and Passed September 18, 2018

To Take Effect January 1, 2019

I. Purpose

Students are expected to attend all class meetings and complete all work of courses for which they are registered; however, Salisbury University recognizes that students may experience serious medical issues, the death of a loved one, or other significant and unexpected life events during the course of an academic term. This policy aims to minimize the impact of serious life events upon students' academic progress. The policy seeks to balance support for students in achieving their educational goals with the academic integrity of the curriculum and the principles of faculty academic freedom.

Any time a student must miss a class or an assignment, the student should discuss the situation as soon as possible with the instructor since students and professors should deal directly with each other regarding completion of work related to emergency. It is not the intention of this policy to discourage that discussion. In addition, students must contact the Division of Student Affairs and follow this policy if they wish to receive formal university assistance and support. Students should submit an emergency absence form to the Division of Student Affairs in-person or by email (sucares@salisbury.edu), preferably prior to expected absence(s) but no later than three (3) business days (i.e., Mondays through Fridays) after the student returns to campus.

II. Policy Statement

A. Students shall receive excused absences based on the following justifiable circumstances:

- i. Bereavement, including travel related to bereavement;
- ii. Serious, contagious, infectious or extended illness of the student or the student's loved one or dependent;
- iii. Serious medical or mental health conditions; and
- iv. Other circumstances as approved at the discretion of the faculty member (e.g., natural disasters that prevent safe travel).

B. Pursuant to this policy, students may miss no more than a total equivalent of one week of classes during a standard fourteen (14) week semester. For example, if a class meets one day per week, a student may miss one class; if a class meets two days per week, a student may miss two days; if a class meets three days per week, a student may miss three days, etc. During shorter terms (e.g., three (3) to seven

(7) weeks), the number of classes that may be excused shall be one (1). Faculty may grant students additional absences pursuant to their syllabus and as described in Section II.D., below. In courses where a certain number of absences without penalty are allowed, or a certain number of assessments are excluded, emergency absences will be included in that number, not added to it.

- C. When a student returns from the emergency absence, faculty will work with the student to make up any missed assignments, find alternate assignments, or excuse some assignments, in whatever manner the faculty member believes is fair and appropriate. At the discretion of the instructor, missed experiences could be replaced by an alternative, or if necessary, be made up in subsequent semesters using the Incomplete grade; however, if no substitution is made, the missing component of the course shall not be factored into the student's final grade for the course. In the event that an experience cannot be replaced, the final grade will be computed in a manner determined by the instructor to be fair and reasonable. For example, for any missed assessment (i.e., homework, papers, quizzes, exams, labs, etc.), the faculty member may choose to give the student a make-up, to use other assessments to replace those grades (e.g., to use a portion of the final exam to replace a missed exam or to use a paper assignment to replace a missed lab), or to excuse the student from that assessment.
- D. Students needing to miss more than a week's worth of classes (or one class during shorter terms) are expected to speak with each professor of a class where absences are expected to occur or have occurred, to discuss the feasibility of successful completion of the course and/or withdrawal from a class or classes.
- E. It may be impractical to complete a course if essential requirements are missed or to pass a course because of absences on key dates. It is the student's responsibility to discuss with professors any potential effect on the student's standing in each course and, if it would be helpful, with the Division of Student Affairs designated staff member or any other relevant campus office (see Sections III and IV).
- F. Faculty are not obligated to accommodate a student who has, even for legitimate reasons, missed so much of the critical components of a course that arrangements for makeup work would not be reasonable. In cases where it is unlikely or impossible for the student to be successful in one or more classes because of emergency absences, the student should contact the Division of Student Affairs as described in Section III below, to facilitate a regular or medical withdrawal subject to University policies and procedures on withdrawals (e.g., financial aid, refund policies). Students must consult financial aid and Office of the Registrar websites for withdrawal and refund policies and procedures.

III. Procedures

- A. *Student Communication with Professors.* The student shall email professors in classes for which they are using emergency excused absence(s). A copy of the

email may be sent to sucares@salisbury.edu (see Student Affairs website for suggested template).

- B. *Communication with the Division of Student Affairs if Unable to Communicate with Professors.* The student must contact the Division of Student Affairs as soon as reasonably possible if unable to reach professors, preferably prior to expected emergency absence(s), but no later than three (3) business days after the student returns to campus. If a student is unable to communicate with Student Affairs, the student's authorized representative, such as a legal parent, guardian, friend, or other relative, must report the date(s) of the student's expected absence. This report to the Division of Student Affairs can be done in-person, by telephone, or by email.
- C. *Student Affairs' Communication with Professors on behalf of Students.* If a student or authorized representative is unable to reach professors because of emergency circumstances, the Division of Student Affairs designated staff member will contact professors in writing (e.g., an absence notification letter for cases when student is not on campus) regarding, if known, (i) the number of days the student is expected to be absent and (ii) the date of the student's anticipated return to class. The appropriate academic personnel may receive a copy of communications.
- D. *Student Responsibility for Coursework.* Students are responsible for completing course requirements. When a student is absent because of emergencies noted above, the student shall discuss with faculty at the earliest opportunity (i) a need for additional time, if necessary and/or (ii) plans for completing missed work, quizzes, exams, labs or other assignments missed.
- E. *University Response.* A Student Affairs designee will assist and support the student as needed through available resources such as case management services, disability accommodations, grief and other counseling, Title IX referral, academic support and proper referrals for additional support. If a student needs to withdraw from a class or classes and does so within established policies and procedures for withdrawing, a Student Affairs designee will assist as necessary with withdrawal and reentry into the university community or will connect the student to the proper offices if appropriate.
- F. *Documentation.* The student or authorized representative as stated in III.B. above must submit documentation to Student Affairs sucares@salisbury.edu to verify the reason for the emergency absence, preferably prior to expected absence(s) but, ideally, no later than three (3) business days after the student returns to class. Such documentation may include, for example, copy of an obituary, copy of a death certificate, a letter from a licensed physician, mental health professional, medical professional, or other reasonable documentation as determined by the Division of Student Affairs.

IV. Resources

Campus resources include, for example,

- i. Student Affairs Case Manager;
- ii. Counseling Center;
- iii. Student Health Services;
- iv. Academic/Faculty Advisor;
- v. Center for Student Achievement; and
- vi. College, School, program, or department student services staff.

V. Appeals

The first step of any resolution regarding emergency excused absence from class should be communication between the student and the faculty member. If a mutually satisfactory resolution cannot be reached, the student must follow the grade appeals process as outlined in the Student Academic Grievance Policy which can be found in the *Student Code of Conduct, Policies and Procedures Handbook*.

VI. Complaints

- A. A student who believes this policy has been implemented unfairly, inconsistently, or in an arbitrary or capricious manner must follow the process for contesting a grade as outlined in the Student Academic Grievance Policy which can be found in the *Student Code of Conduct, Policies and Procedures Handbook*. Students with allegations of prohibited discrimination within the purview of the Office of Institutional Equity must contact the Office of Institutional Equity.
- B. A faculty member who believes this policy has been implemented unfairly, inconsistently, or in an arbitrary, capricious or discriminatory manner shall contact their department chair or program director who will attempt to resolve the matter. If a resolution is not reached, the faculty member can appeal to the Faculty Welfare Committee or the Academic Freedom and Tenure Committee, as appropriate for the particular issues.

VII. Recordkeeping

The Division of Student Affairs shall maintain student documentation in accordance with University policies and procedures and in consultation with other University offices as appropriate (e.g., General Counsel, Registrar).

VIII. Review

The Division of Student Affairs will submit an annual report of outcomes and recommendations related to this policy to the Faculty Senate for review.

IX. Responsible Office

The Division of Student Affairs and the Division of Academic Affairs are responsible for administering this policy in consultation with the Faculty Senate through the appropriate committee(s).

X. Effective Date

The policy shall be effective January 1, 2019.