



University of
St Andrews

Student absence

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Purpose	This policy relates to student absence and includes the definition of absence, working periods, self-certificates of absence, timing, procedures for responding to self-certificate of absence, incomplete module assessment and documentary evidence required.

Version number	Purpose / changes	Document status	Author of changes, role and school / unit	Date
1.4	Minor typographical update to reflect current practice	Updated	Administrator	September 2025

UNIVERSITY OF ST ANDREWS

POLICY ON STUDENT ABSENCE

1. Definition of Absence

Students are absent if:

- a. they fail to attend an examination, or
- b. they fail to attend any element which is identified as compulsory in the Module booklet, or
- c. they fail to submit a compulsory assessment on time, including where a student has negotiated an extension prior to the deadline, or
- d. they are unable attend classes for one week or a total of 10 non-consecutive teaching days.

These conditions may apply differently depending on a student's mode and/or location of study. Conditions a) and d) are unlikely to apply to students studying primarily online. Handbooks must specify which elements of a module are compulsory.

2. Working Periods

A working period consists of all teaching and revision/examination/independent learning week periods in one academic year. For undergraduate students this will often be both semesters. Working periods would not normally include weekends or University holidays, however for students engaged in project work, placements or field work, a working period is any period which is not a declared holiday.

3. Self-Certificates of Absence

Self-certificates of absence are online forms that must be completed in full by the student. Students must complete a self-certificate of absence for any absence (see above).

Completion of a self-certificate of absence does NOT exempt a student from fulfilling compulsory elements of a module.

After completion of a self-certificate of absence it is the responsibility of the student to contact the appropriate staff member (usually the Module Co-ordinator) as soon as possible to ascertain:-

- if any remedial work is required;
- if any documentary evidence is required (see below);
- if the student needs to be referred to the Associate Dean (Students) to discuss Leave of Absence because of the length or repetitive nature of the absences.

4. Timing

All absences should be reported as soon as is practical, by completing a self-certificate of absence. The normal submission deadline for completing a self-certificate of absence is within three days of the first day of absence.

If the absence is unavoidable and planned ahead of time, (for example: hospital appointments, representing the University in official competitions, funerals, job interviews), then the self-certificate of absence should be submitted prior to the event. It is expected that students would receive advance permission from the Module Co-ordinator for planned absences.

If submission of a self-certificate of absence is temporarily impossible then the student should make every effort to contact the Module Co-ordinator or the School Teaching Office and then complete a self-certificate of absence as soon as is practical thereafter. Self-certificates of absence submitted later than the normal deadline (within three days of the first day of absence), for no good reason, will not normally be accepted.

5. University procedures for responding to self-certificates of Absence

The submitted self-certificate of absence will be used by:-

- Module Co-ordinators, who have access to the student self-certificates of absence through e-Vision and access to registers of class attendance at the compulsory elements of a module. Module Co-ordinators record absences

from compulsory elements, then note absences for which self-certificates of absence have not been submitted and issue an appropriate academic alert. A module co-ordinator can decide to refuse a self-certificate of absence, even if the certificate is submitted in time. In this case, the absence would be regarded as unauthorized which may have consequences for a student's studies. Schools can consult with Student Services for further information to aid the decision-making process.

- The Associate Dean (Students), and the Registry Officer for Student Support, who process student Leave of Absence cases where students have not met the minimum attendance requirements (University Senate Regulation) and advise students who have substantial absences of less than 21 days. In addition, the University is legally bound to inform the Home Office of absences by international students, and this may result in a visa being rescinded if an international student fails to meet the requirements.
- Student Services monitor self-certificates of absence and may reach out to a student to offer support. Any student reporting a previously undisclosed disability or long-term medical condition may be contacted by Student Services.

6. Incomplete Module Assessment

On completion of the module the Module Board shall consider cases where the assessment of the module is incomplete due to student absences in the following way:-

- The Module Co-ordinator must declare in the Module Booklet or the School student handbook the minimum proportion (or elements) of assessment that must be completed for credit to be awarded for the module. This requirement must be defined by the School and can constitute 100% but must be no less than 75% of the total assessment.
- Where the evidence supplied indicates a valid reason for incomplete assessment and the minimum requirement (as defined by the School, but no less than 75%) has been achieved then the Module Board can elect to award the grade calculated using the marks completed that are provided.
- Where less than the minimum requirement has been achieved and the documented evidence supplied indicates valid reason then the Module Board should advise a deferred assessment (0D) to the Registry and the School should provide alternative modes of assessment or extensions for continuous assessment elements and/or deferred examinations.
- 'Valid reason' could be established by a sub-committee of at least three members (mixed gender) of academic staff prior to the Module Board. This sub-committee can request documentary evidence. This task can be performed by the existing S-code committee, if preferred.
- Where the student has not submitted a Self-Certificate of Absence or not presented satisfactory documentary evidence when requested or not given valid reason AND completed less than the minimum requirement then 0 X should be reported.
- Where the student has not submitted Self-Certificates of Absence for missing elements and the minimum requirement has been completed then the student can be awarded credit for the module, but the grade must be calculated on the basis of being awarded zero for the missing elements of assessment.

7. Documentary Evidence

Verifiable documentary evidence may be required if the absence results in the inability to successfully complete the compulsory elements of the module and/or a deferred assessment is required. The School will indicate to the student (giving one week's notice) when further evidence is required in addition to existing self-certification.

Schools should note that if a student has a disability and is registered with the Disability Support Team, they have already submitted the necessary documentation or medical evidence. If Schools are in doubt about this, they should contact the Disability Team directly.

Suitable types of evidence include:-

- a medical note from a doctor who is not related to the student. Students will be responsible for meeting any costs incurred in obtaining documentation. Student Services can be contacted and can advise on the documentation that needs to be provided.
- a notification from Student Services;
- letter of confirmation of required attendance at University competitions;
- medical evidence from a hospital doctor;
- evidence from a member of staff who was alerted to the circumstances at the time.

Version number	Purpose / changes	Document status	Author of changes, role and school / unit	Date
01	<p>Additional text to highlight that self-certificates of absence can be refused.</p> <p>Registry Officer can use self-certificates of absence when processing Leave of Absence requests.</p> <p>Updated information about students' responsibility for charges relating to medical notes.</p> <p>Removed information about contacting Examinations Office when absent from exams.</p> <p>Amended 4th definition of absence to align with updates made to Senate Regulations</p>	Updated	-	April 2015
1.1	Review date changed to August 2025		Academic Policy Officer (Taught Degrees)	June 2022
1.2	Definition updated to account for online education programmes.	Updated	Academic Policy Officer (Taught Degrees)	July 2023
1.3	Minor typographical update to reflect current practice	Updated	Administrative Officer	October 2023