

MEMORANDUM

TO: Academic Leaders, Faculty Senate, Faculty, Student Government, Students, Accessibility Resource Center, Athletics Advisory Council, Dean of Students, Office of Title IX and Sexual Misconduct

FROM: Committee on Academic Programs (CAP)

RE: Review of Absence and Attendance Policy

DATE: January 24, 2021

Background and Charge: According to TCNJ policy (the [Policy Framework](#)), all campus policies should be reviewed every five years. In reviewing the [Absence and Attendance policy](#), Steering noted that it was last reviewed in February of 2014. Steering asked CAP to review the Absence and Attendance Policy and to seek Tier III testimony from Academic leaders, Faculty Senate, Student Government, the Accessibility Resource Center, the Athletics Advisory Council, the Dean of Students and from any other constituent bodies it deems appropriate. CAP was asked specifically to consider whether this policy is consistent with related policies, including (but not limited to) the Title IX policy.

Method: In Fall 2020, CAP requested initial testimony on the 2014 Absence and Attendance policy, and received guidance from: Academic leaders, Faculty Senate Executive Board, Student Government Cabinet, Accessibility Resource Center, Dean of Students, Director of Title IX Compliance and Sexual Misconduct, and Athletics Advisory Council. A preliminary recommendation was shared with the campus community and written testimony was collected using a Qualtrics Survey (106 respondents).

Final Recommendation: CAP used testimony on the preliminary recommendation to make final revisions to the Absence and Attendance Policy. All perspectives were considered during the 5-year review, resulting in the final recommended adjustments of the policy. CAP members unanimously support the revised policy.

Modifications to the Policy: In addition to minor revisions and addition of clarifying language we made the following substantive changes to the policy:

1. We added a definition of what it means to give advance notice of a planned absence, identifying a two-week notification.
2. In the Class Attendance section IIIA we added in additional language to include clinical (and other similar) experiences as components that require regular attendance. In addition, we added language to stress that outside conflicts need to be avoided during synchronous class periods or final assessment periods. Finally, we added in language to address remote and blended learning, in which some classes may be asynchronous.
3. In the Class Absences section IIIB we made the following modifications:
 - a. Added clarifying language on documentation of a student absence. We noted that instructors are able to request documentation supporting student absence;

however, a student's right to privacy must be maintained. We included examples of other types of documentation that can be requested. Students may request letters of support from the offices of the Dean of Students, Title IX and Sexual Misconduct, or the Accessibility Resource Center.

- b. Defined short-term (new category; section IIIB1) versus extended absences (section IIIB2).
 1. Short-term absence is defined as two or fewer consecutive weeks, or the number of consecutive class sessions that would be equivalent during a special session term (winter, Maymester, summer, etc.) . Instructors maintain discretion over alternate assignment opportunities.
 2. Extended absence is defined as greater than two consecutive weeks during a regular academic semester. In special session terms (winter, Maymester, summer, etc.), extended absence is defined as the number of consecutive class sessions that would impede successful completion. The instructor needs to clarify this after considering course content and teaching mode (e.g., on-campus, remote, blended, etc.).
- c. Added additional language into the Extended Absences section (IIIB2) to:
 1. Suggest that students who are seeking accommodation due to an extended absence work with the Accessibility Resource Center (in addition to the Dean of Students)
 2. Clarify the appropriate use of an incomplete grade verses in progress grades.
 3. Suggest that faculty can work with the Accessibility Resource Center to determine reasonable adjustments for students who have an extended absence.
- d. Added a Special Circumstances category (section IIIB4). Academic flexibility requests may originate by the Dean of Students Office, including the Offices of Title IX & Sexual Misconduct, Off-Campus Resources, and/or TCNJ CARES on the behalf of a student. Instructors must work with the student(s) and Dean of Students Office staff and the Accessibility Resource Center staff in supporting student(s) in these special circumstances.
- e. Added language in section IIIB5 (Absences due to Official College Events) to clarify that club and intramural activities are not considered official college events with respect to absences.
- f. Added a category for Planned Absences due to Career Advancement Interviews (Section IIIB7) with clear expectations of the students and instructor.