

Academic Senate of Sierra College

TO: Sierra College Faculty
FROM: Academic Senate
RE: Attendance Policy and related recommendations
DATE: Fall, 2021

Some faculty members have requested information and guidance around our attendance policy, grading on attendance and 'excused' absences.

It is up to each faculty member to assess and grade students according to your own standards. As you craft your own attendance, participation and make-up policies, please be aware of the current policies and recommendations captured below to help guide you. Your policy must be written and distributed to all your students, usually through the syllabus and applied equitably to all students.

Attendance:

The attendance policy is published in the catalog and is as follows:

Attendance

Sierra College regards regular attendance and participation in all classes as an important student obligation. Attendance is an integral part of student success.

Attendance at First Class through Census Date: Students must attend the first scheduled meeting of each class in which they are enrolled or risk being dropped from the class by the professor. Instructors shall clear their rolls of inactive students not later than the end of the last business day before the census day (typically Monday of the third week for full term classes). Students who are dropped or drop themselves by the published, course-specific Add/Drop deadline are entitled to a refund.

Attendance during the Semester/Session: A professor has the right to drop any student who has accumulated excessive absences. Generally, excessive absences are defined as 10% of the total hours of class time or the equivalent of two weeks of a full-term class. The application of excessive absences may vary by department and/or instructor according to the demands of the curriculum. Any exceptions to this attendance policy will be communicated to students by professors in the class syllabus. A student dropped by a professor in error may petition for reinstatement to the class. Following the Add/Drop deadline, student who choose to stop attending class(es) retain the responsibility of officially withdrawing themselves from the class(es) and are not entitled to a refund.

Grading using attendance:

Grading using attendance as the primary factor is not allowed per Title 5 and Education Code. However, the product of attending class, participation, is a grading factor.

Therefore, if coming to class is essential to a student's success in the class, participation points can be awarded to reflect the student's essential work during the class period. Participation points are not required, simply a means by which a faculty member can acknowledge the

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important work that takes place during class and which cannot be replicated outside of the class session or setting.

ASCCC Guidance:

- **Can an instructor assign a grade or points based on a student's attendance?**

Title 5 section 55002.a.2.A states, "Grading Policy. The course provides for measurement of student performance in terms of the stated course objectives and culminates in a formal, permanently recorded grade based upon uniform standards in accordance with section 55023. The grade is based on demonstrated proficiency in subject matter and the ability to demonstrate that proficiency, at least in part, by means of essays, or, in courses where the curriculum committee deems them to be appropriate, by problem solving exercises or skills demonstrations by students." Students must be assessed on their ability to demonstrate proficiency in meeting the course objectives. Attendance is not part of a course subject matter or a discipline-specific skill and therefore may not be separately assessed as part of the course curriculum.

However, Title 5 section 55002.a.2.B. states, "The course grants units of credit based upon a relationship specified by the governing board between the number of units assigned to the course and the number of lecture and/or laboratory hours or performance criteria specified in the course outline." Since college credit units are calculated in part based on a given number of hours spent in class, students who miss an excessive amount of class time cannot be said to have fulfilled the course requirements and may be dropped from the course. The manner and criteria by which excessive absences are calculated is not stated in Title 5 and is therefore generally determined by local policy.

In addition, because class participation is one of the ways in which students demonstrate their proficiency with class material, and students who have not attended class have therefore not participated in class discussion, many instructors include "attendance and participation" as a factor in determining a course grade. This aspect of the grading criteria cannot be used to override all others, but it can be factored into a grade, especially if the participation is in part demonstrated by students through the completion of specific in-class activities, assignments, and quizzes.

School-related Activities:

It is recommended that students who, with advanced notice and under full obligation to complete any missed work, miss class due to participation in school business (e.g. Athletics, ASSC obligations/conferences) not be penalized for their absences. Athletes are reminded by their coaches and counselors that advanced planning and notification along with follow through are important steps in managing their many priorities.

Out-of-Class Events (on-campus):

Faculty have the option of encouraging students to attend an event in lieu of attending classes scheduled during the same time period or attending an event for extra credit if the event is outside of class time. If faculty members require student attendance, however, students should be offered the option of an alternative assignment if the event is of a sensitive nature.

Culture-related Activities

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It is also recommended that students not be penalized for absences due to participation in cultural, tribal, religious, and familial matters. Such flexibility is an important aspect of enacting cultural humility and equity in our classrooms by ensuring that students, particularly from historically underrepresented backgrounds, are able to access and succeed in higher education while also maintaining connections to their cultures, communities and families. Students should be advised that they are expected to provide advanced notice and that they will remain fully obligated to complete any missed coursework.