College of Veterinary Medicine
UtahStateUniversity

Utah State University
College of Veterinary Medicine
Doctor of Veterinary Medicine Program
Attendance Policies and Procedures

Approved by the College of Veterinary Medicine faculty on November 7th, 2024

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General Rules and Guidelines

- The Utah State University (USU) College of Veterinary Medicine (CVM) encourages students to attend all didactic and hands-on classes, laboratories, and clinical activities in the Doctor of Veterinary Medicine (DVM) degree curriculum.
- All faculty, staff, and students must follow this policy, creating a cohesive and conscientious environment conducive to fairness and the well-being of all.
- The Disability Resource Center (DRC) and the CVM will consider disability-related absences on an individualized and case-by-case basis.
- Attending major assessments and other required activities, as specified by the course director and course syllabus, is mandatory. Instructors must get approval from the USU CVM associate dean for academic programs (ADAP) before including course-specific required activities in their syllabus.
- A required activity is defined as a laboratory session, discussion, or any activity that the course instructors deem necessary for students to participate in, as specified by the course syllabus and course director.
- A major assessment is defined as any assessment (e.g., exam, quiz, assignment, objective structured clinical examination) that comprises more than 15% of a student's overall course grade.
- When an absence from an assessment or required activity is necessary, students must follow the procedures described in these policies and procedures to request an excused absence.
- It is the student's responsibility to understand their duties, expectations, and scheduling in the DVM curriculum and to initiate a request for an excused absence. The student must consult course materials and class schedules to determine which assessments and/or required activities will be missed and the difficulty level in replicating the activity objective.
- All requests for an excused absence require completion of the absence request form located on the CVM website.
- In the interest of maintaining the rigor of the program, any makeup work must meet similar expectations as the original activity or assessment.
- It is strongly recommended that students do not commit any money to travel plans, conference registration, etc., until the excused absence request is fully approved.
- There are certain assessments or required activities that are not amenable to make up, and excused absences will not be approved to miss those experiences unless for extenuating circumstances or the student is approved for disability-related accommodation. This list includes, but is not limited to, the following:
    - All final exams
    - 2nd year Fall semester: diagnostic challenge exercises, clinical pathology exams
    - 2nd year Spring semester: communication laboratories

Composition of the Attendance Committee

Each year-specific attendance committee will consist of 2-3 teaching faculty members and will be chaired by the ADAP.

Responsibilities

- Implementation of policy: For years 1 to 2 of the curriculum, the USU CVM Office of Academic Programs (OAP) is responsible for implementing and applying this policy. Any questions regarding the policy should be directed to this office.
- Requesting excused absences: Students are responsible for submitting appropriate requests and documentation to the OAP.
- Evaluation of requests: The semester attendance committee is responsible for evaluating the legitimacy of each request.
- If the absence is excused, students are responsible for arranging a meeting with the instructor to develop a plan to make up missed work. The instructor must either provide the student with an opportunity to make up the missed work or provide an alternative of the instructor's choosing by a date set by the instructor in consultation with the student. In some cases, such as classes that include time-dependent group activities, field or laboratory sessions, and assessments, instructors are not required to recreate a precisely equivalent experience. They may identify a suitable alternative that respects their time and meets educational goals.
- Every effort will be made for excused absence requests to be processed within ten instructional days of submission.

Unplanned Absences

Acceptable reasons for unplanned absences include the following:

a) Injury, illness, mental illness, or medical condition/status that is too severe or contagious for the student to participate in the assessment or required activity.
    - The CVM only handles excused absences in isolated (acute) cases of injury or illness.
    - Students with disabilities that may impact attendance are encouraged to contact the DRC before a disability-related absence occurs. Any student who requests unplanned absences more than twice in a semester or for more than two consecutive assessments/required activities may be referred to the DRC or asked to provide additional documentation (see prolonged absences for details).
    - At the discretion of the attendance committee, injury or illness confirmation may be obtained through a note from a healthcare professional affirming the date and time of the visit. A medical professional can provide a medical confirmation note only if that medical professional is/was involved in the medical care of the student. Medical documentation can be collected after the missed participation has occurred.
    - An absence for a non-acute (e.g., elective) medical service does not qualify for an excused absence.
    - The university requested absence for quarantine or isolation.
b) Major injury, illness, or medical condition/status in a student's immediate family.
c) A death in a student's immediate family.

Note: A family member as defined for this policy includes a student's spouse or domestic partner, child, son-in-law, daughter-in-law, foster child, parents, parents-in-law, brother, sister, brother-in-law, sister-in-law, grandparent, grandparent-in-law, grandchildren, and an equivalent step-relative.

- When advance notification is not feasible, the student must submit an absence request form (located on the CVM website) as soon as possible. If applicable, this notification should include an explanation of why notice could not be sent before the missed assessment or required activity. If the situation requires it, a student may be asked to provide additional documentation or be referred to the DRC to establish accommodations (https://www.usu.edu/drc/).
- The student is responsible for working with the instructor to develop a plan to make up missed work within two instructional days of returning to school activities. The makeup work must be completed within ten instructional days of returning to school activities.

Procedure: Unplanned Absence Approval Process
1. The student must consult course materials and class schedules to determine which assessments and/or required activities will be missed.
2. The student is responsible for notifying the OAP by submitting an absence request form as soon as possible.
3. The first request by the student in that semester will automatically be approved.
4. The student will receive notification of the decision.
5. If the request is approved, a notification of approved absence will be sent to semester instructors.
6. A plan for makeup work must be completed within two instructional days of returning to school activities, and the makeup work must be completed within ten instructional days of returning to school activities.

Planned Absences

- A planned absence requires completion of the absence request form located on the CVM website.
- The form must be submitted at least four weeks before the beginning of the absence. Requests submitted less than four weeks before an absence may not be approved.
- For first-year students with planned absences during August and September, the absence request form must be submitted by the end of the second week of the semester or two weeks before the date of the absence, whichever comes first.
- Any planned absence taken without prior notification and permission is considered unexcused. Because timely notification of absences is critical, failure to submit an absence request within the set time frame can be grounds for denial of such request, even if the absence itself is for a justified reason.
- If the planned absence request is approved, the student will be responsible for contacting the instructor to develop a plan to make up missed work.
- If the student requests a planned absence more than twice in a semester or for more than two consecutive assessments/required activities related to a medical or mental health condition, they may be referred to the DRC or be asked to provide additional documentation.

Acceptable Reasons for Planned Absences

Reason 1. Required participation in military duties, including mandatory medical appointments for veterans and military personnel.

Reason 2. Mandatory admissions interviews for professional or graduate school or internships that cannot be rescheduled.

Reason 3. Participation in legal proceedings or administrative procedures that require a student's presence.

Reason 4. Prearranged major life events (e.g. surgery or weddings).

Reason 5. Accommodation or other support requests, as negotiated with student service offices, such as the Disability Resource Center (DRC), the CARE Office, or the Office of Student Conduct and Community Standards.

Reason 6. Supportive measures requested through the Office of Equity related to sexual misconduct and/or discrimination (see USU Policy 339).

Reason 7. In accordance with Title IX of the Educational Amendments of 1972, pregnancy and related conditions are a justification for an excused absence for so long a period of time as is deemed medically necessary by the student's physician.

Reason 8. The student is presenting at a scientific meeting, participating in university-sanctioned or professional development activities central to the student's professional development. Students are allowed to attend one professional conference per year in addition to Student American Veterinary Medical Association (SAVMA) Symposium.

Reason 9. Attendance at the annual SAVMA Symposium or required SAVMA delegate activities.

Reason 10. Religious holy days.

Procedure: Planned Absence Approval Process

1. The student must consult course materials and class schedules to determine which assessments and/or required activities will be missed and the difficulty level in replicating the activity objective.
2. The student submits an excused absence request form which will be sent to the OAP.
3. A staff member in the OAP may approve the absence if the reason clearly fits into the approved reasons for excused absences (see below).*
4. If the staff member cannot approve the absence, it will be sent to the semester attendance committee.
5. The committee may request documentation or additional information from the student.
6. Once all requested information is received, the attendance committee will vote to approve or deny absences as described by the committee's bylaws.
7. In the case of a tie, th ADAP will cast the deciding vote.
8. The student will receive notification of the decision.
9. If the request is approved, a notification of approved absence will be sent to semester instructors.
10. The student will develop a plan with the instructor to make up assessments or required activities.

* To streamline the approval process and avoid overburdening the attendance committees, the OAP may approve an absence request submitted four weeks before the absence without consulting with the attendance committee for the following reasons (9 and 10):

- Attend the annual SAVMA Symposium or required SAVMA delegate activities.
- Religious holy days.

Prolonged Absences

Students requesting excused absence approvals for longer than two consecutive assessments and/or required activities may be referred to the DRC or be asked to provide additional documentation.

Disability Resource Center-Approved Accommodations

Students receiving accommodations will take all exams at the Logan Campus DRC, where all accommodations can be appropriately offered. Should a student choose to take an exam in the classroom, DRC accommodations may not be afforded due to the constraints of utilizing classroom space for exams. If such required activities or assessments cannot be completed at the DRC office, the students will make arrangements with the instructor(s) to provide reasonable accommodations. In the future, DRC accommodations may be available at the Veterinary Medical Education Building. DRC-approved accommodations cannot be applied retroactively.

Unexcused Absences

All instructors will handle unexcused absences in the same manner. An unexcused absence from a required activity or assessment will result in the student not being allowed to make up missed work and receiving a zero grade for the missed assessment and/or required activity. If an assessment/activity is required to pass a course, an unexcused absence may result in failure of the course.

Appeals Process

Students may appeal the committee's decision that an absence is unexcused if they believe that they have presented adequate substantiating evidence for an excused absence or that the decision was arbitrary, capricious, or prejudicial. Any appeal must be initiated within three instructional days of being informed of the attendance committee’s decision. In the appeal process, the student bears the burden of proof. The student will submit the appeal to the dean’s office and provide any additional information requested.

Leave of Absence

The dean must approve all leave of absence requests. A leave of absence may require the student to return in a subsequent year and join a later graduating class. Students must work with the OAP to initiate this process.

Graduate Student Absences

Graduate students enrolled in a graduate program within the CVM will follow the USU guidelines regarding absences (Attendance & Excused Absences USU Catalog).