

Phil Choong
Department of Rhetoric & Language
Sample Attendance Policy

Limited Justification-Free Attendance Policy: Rationale

I designed this policy with the goal of empowering students to be active decision-makers in their learning and encouraging them to communicate their needs with me, as they feel comfortable doing so. By not requiring documentation, I want to signal that students don't need to "justify" their absences to me. This policy still tracks students' attendance, but in a way that is not tied directly to their grade in the course. So far, the only times that I have had to invoke the grade penalty for not meeting with me about their absences have been situations when the student has stopped coming to class altogether and is already missing critical assignments. I also keep the format of that meeting flexible; email contact from the student or their CASA advisor accomplishes the same goal and thus also counts for me.

In my experience using this attendance policy so far, students have expressed appreciation for its flexibility and understanding, and I've been able to use the meetings to connect students with campus resources that have helped them.

Policy Explanation from Syllabus

As an active class that involves practice in speaking and listening, your attendance and participation are very important. However, I also understand that life may be unpredictable. Thus, you start our semester with three "personal days." These are no-questions-asked, no documentation required, and automatically excused. If possible, be strategic with your use of these personal days. If you need to take multiple personal days for a specific reason (e.g., extended illness, family emergency, travel, etc.), I strongly recommend contacting me to discuss what's going on and whether we need to make alternate arrangements for your participation in the course.

After your third personal day, please contact me to schedule a meeting to discuss your attendance and participation. In my experience, frequent absences are the biggest potential barrier for students being unable to complete this course. In our meeting we will make a plan to ensure you are caught up with coursework in a timely manner. After our meeting, your personal days will reset. If we do not meet, your final grade will be lowered by one-third of a letter grade for each absence past the third (e.g., from an A to A-, B- to C+, etc.).

When representing the University of San Francisco in intercollegiate competition (e.g., athletics, debate, etc.), students shall be excused from classes on the hours or days such competition takes them away from classes. Absences for religious observance will also be excused and will not count toward your personal days.