

 <p>DALHOUSIE UNIVERSITY</p> <p>Student Attendance Policy</p>	<p>Policy Sponsor: School Council</p> <p>Responsible Unit: School of Nursing</p>	<p>Approval Date: February 28, 2022</p> <p>Amendments: January 24, 2021</p> <p>Amendments: December 4, 2021</p>
--	--	--

A. Background & Purpose

Students enrolled in the Bachelor of Science in Nursing (BScN) program at Dalhousie University are adult learners often navigating competing responsibilities. Currently there is no required attendance policy for non-clinical synchronous and asynchronous classroom sessions. Insofar as nursing is a discipline comprised of both theoretical and practical knowledge, attendance in all areas of learning is expected to foster nursing excellence. Entering the clinical environment presupposes a breadth and depth learning, therefore it is an expectation that students will attend all lectures, seminars, and classroom activities.

The Student Declaration of Absence (SDA) is used when a student in the BScN program is (or will be) absent from a required assignment, test, quiz, and/or exam. The SDA Form functions the same way as the sick note did previously.

In the case of clinical, laboratory, and/or simulation settings where the development of nursing knowledge, skills and competencies are necessary for a nursing student to advance their nursing practice, regular attendance is an expectation of the program and a requirement for successful completion of the BScN program.

The purpose of this policy is to provide an understanding of the student attendance policy as it relates to the clinical, laboratory, and/or simulation setting, and the mechanisms used to ensure regular and punctual attendance of nursing students in these settings

B. Application

This Policy applies to all students in the Bachelor of Science in Nursing (BScN) program.

C. Definitions

1. 'extenuating circumstance'- a situation that is unforeseen and/or a personal crisis.
(Travel and social/ recreational activities are not considered extenuating circumstances).
2. 'clinical practice setting'- includes clinical placements in a clinical agency (hospital or other institution), family visiting, community-focused clinical learning experiences, simulation and orientation activities.
3. Student Declaration of Absence (SDA)- introduced in select courses to replace sick

notes for absences of three days or fewer that result in missed or late academic requirements. The Student Declaration of Absence Form functions the same as a sick note did.

4. 'good standing' - a student's cumulative (overall) and current (most recent term) grade point averages are 2.3 or better.
5. Synchronous learning refers to all types of learning in which learner(s) and instructor(s) are in the same place, at the same time, in order for learning to take place. This includes in-person classes, live online meetings when the whole class or smaller groups get together.
6. Asynchronous learning is learning that doesn't necessarily happen at the same time for the instructor and the learners. There's no real-time interaction; the content is created and made available for consumption later on.

D. Policy

1. Any absence from lab or clinical must be based on a valid reason such as illness or documented extenuating circumstance.
2. Students are expected to notify both their clinical instructor and the clinical unit/agency of any absence in a clinical practice setting, at least 1 hour before scheduled start or as per agency requirements.
3. Student attendance at regional or national leadership meetings, conferences and/or varsity activities may be considered a valid reason for absence, as long as, the student is in good standing at the time of the scheduled absence, and only with prior discussion and approval by the Associate Director, course professor, clinical instructor and clinical agency/preceptor if relevant.
 - I. Students who are hoping to attend such activities are expected to notify course professors about such potential conflicts at or before the start of a course.
 - II. The course professor may attempt to accommodate the conflict by placing the student in a non-conflicting clinical group or otherwise adjust a schedule.
 - III. If a schedule conflict still exists, and an absence is approved, generally such an absence would be limited to 1 day.
 - IV. The student, in consultation with the course professor and/or clinical instructor is expected to develop a plan in writing outlining how missed time, which may include course information, clinical hours, quizzes and assignments, will be made up.
 - V. Documentation may be required for each instance of such absence (e.g. letter from a coach, conference receipts) however this is at the discretion of the course faculty.
 - VI. Students are required to confirm academic dates by consulting the course syllabus and current Undergraduate Calendar before scheduling vacation time.
 - VII. Being absent from more than 10% of a clinical/simulation/laboratory experience places a student at risk for failure.
 - VIII. Students are responsible for completing all clinical/laboratory/simulation work to receive a grade in the course. If permission is provided by the course professor and Associate Director (Undergraduate Studies), a student may be given an opportunity to make up deficient time if arrangements can be made to obtain a Clinical Instructor, and the clinical placement concerned provides approval.

Documentation by the student will be requested at such time. The student is responsible for the financial responsibility associated with the absent clinical experience. The minimum fee for such experience is \$45.00/hour or as per the standard rate for a Registered Nurse.

E. Authority:

This policy falls under the authority of School of Nursing School Council

Policy Repository:

All SON policies are available on the School of Nursing website and shared drive.

Policy Oversight Committee (s):

Undergraduate Student Affairs Committee
Undergraduate Studies Committee
School of Nursing School Council

Review:

The Responsible Unit will in relation to University Policies within their area of operational or academic responsibility:

- a. Review those School policies every 5 years, or earlier as required, and recommend amendments to or revocation of such policies;
- b. Ensure those School policies are communicated appropriately;
- c. Monitor compliance and assess outcomes.

F. Procedures

1. The student and clinical instructor will document clinical absences (i.e. date and number of hours) on the standard student clinical evaluation form. If there is documentation for the reason for the absence, this must be attached to the student's clinical evaluation form.
2. The need and opportunity to make up time for absences related to illness or extenuating circumstances from family, community or institutional practice experience will be determined jointly by the course professor, clinical instructor and Associate Director (Undergraduate Studies, Academic), and will be based on assessment of clinical competence, total hours missed and resource availability.
3. Missed clinical time information will be submitted to the Clinical Placement Office by course professors, tracked on HSPnet, and monitored by the Associate Director (Undergraduate Studies, Academic), on a term by term basis, followed by an annual review. Students missing two or more clinical days without prior approval will receive a letter indicating noted absences and a copy placed in their academic file.
4. All course syllabi will include course-specific information regarding absences and

expectations in accordance with this policy, and the URL link to this policy document.

5. The School of Nursing – Halifax site follows Dalhousie Storm Closure Policy (https://cdn.dal.ca/content/dam/dalhousie/pdf/dept/university_secretariat/policy-repository/UniversityCancellationPolicy.pdf) with respect to storm closures.

Based on local weather conditions, the Dalhousie School of Nursing-Yarmouth campus Site Administrator will be responsible to announce closures at that site. If the University is closed students are not required to attend clinical, laboratories or tutorials. Students who arrive at a clinical site after the University has announced a closure will be required to return home at the earliest safe opportunity.

*Exceptions to this are students in their final practicum in precepted experiences and students who are not in the immediate vicinity of Dalhousie University Halifax campus. These students are expected to use their local weather conditions and their best judgment to determine their ability to attend the practicum.

G. Related Resources and References

[Student Declaration of Absence](#)

Approved at Undergraduate Studies Committee May 4, 2020

Approved at SON Council May 25, 2020