	Policy Sponsor: School Council	**Approval Date: May 25, 2020**
DALHOUSIE UNIVERSITY **Student Attendance Policy**	**Responsible Unit:** School of Nursing	**Amendments: January 24, 2021** **Amendments: December 4, 2021** **Amendments: June 23, 2025**

A. <u>Background and Purpose</u>

The purpose of this policy is to address student attendance through a trauma informed lens that considers equity, diversity, inclusion, accessibility, and extenuating circumstances that may impact students' ability to attend learning experiences. The policy achieves this purpose by acknowledging trauma and extenuating circumstances, emphasizing psychological safety, offering flexibility and individualized support, developing clear and compassionate procedures, providing inclusive and culturally responsive supports, sharing responsibility and oversight, and promoting student agency.

The School of Nursing is an integrated competency-based education program in which students apply and synthesize knowledge, professionalism, and competencies that promote high-quality, safe nursing practice. Absences may interfere with students achieving the required level of learning experiences to meet the objectives of the program. It is therefore an expectation that students attend all knowledge, skills, and experiential-based programming. Student attendance in clinical practice, laboratories, simulation settings, classes, tutorials, seminars, examinations, and interprofessional education experiences is mandatory. The School of Nursing is committed to fostering a learner-centered environment, and we will work to the best of our ability with students to support them in achieving a psychologically safe space for learning.

Evidence shows that there is a positive correlation between student attendance and academic success (Doggrell, 2020; Ha et al., 2024; Moore et al., 2023). On entry to practice, nurses are required to be proficient at "attaining, maintaining and demonstrating the appropriate competencies (knowledge, skills and judgment) to practise safely" (Nova Scotia College of Nursing [NSCN], 2017, p. 9). Nurses have a legal and ethical responsibility to maintain fitness to practice (NSCN, 2020). To facilitate their success, students are expected to be active participants in becoming an ethical, competent, and safe nurse.

B. <u>Application</u>

This Policy applies to all students in the Bachelor of Science in Nursing (BScN) program: semesters three (3) to eight (8).

C. Definitions

Asynchronous Learning:
Learning that doesn't necessarily happen at the same time for the instructor and the learners. There is no real-time interaction; the content is created and made available for consumption later.

Learning Experiences:
Comprise theoretical and clinical components.

1. Theoretical Component: the knowledge and evidence required to practice nursing; includes learning that occurs through classes and tutorial experiences.

2. Clinical Component: theory and clinical practice inclusive of a student's clinical practicum in an agency (e.g., hospital or community-focused learning experiences), pre-clinical lab conference, simulation, and laboratory hours.

Examinations:
Examinations include scheduled quizzes, tests, midterms, Objective Structured Clinical Examinations (OSCEs), synchronous student presentations, final examinations, and supplemental examinations as outlined in the Course Syllabus.

Good Standing:
Student's cumulative (overall) and current (most recent term) grade point averages are 2.3 or better.

Short-term Absence:
Absences of three (3) consecutive days or fewer due to minor physical or mental health conditions, or other extenuating circumstances such as caregiving duties; immediate family illness, injury or death; involvement in an accident; legal proceedings or being a victim of a crime, domestic or intimate partner violence (Student Absence Regulation - 2018).

Student Declaration of Absence (SDA):
The SDA form functions for absences of three days or fewer that result in missed or late academic requirements. The SDA form will be located on the course learning management system.

Support Faculty:
The Teaching Assistants (TAs), Tutorial Leads, Simulation Lab Instructors, Clinical Instructors, and preceptors assigned to an individual course.

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.

Time Threshold

The percent of missed time permitted based on the following criteria:

- **10% of the Clinical Component**: Includes total percentage of missed clinical learning experiences. This means the student has missed 10% or greater of any combination of clinical experience time. Students cannot miss 10% of their pre-clinical lab conference/simulation/laboratory **OR** 10% of a clinical placement experience **OR** a 10% combination of all clinical experiences.

- **20% of the Theoretical Component**: Includes total percentage of missed theoretical learning experiences. This means the student has missed 20% or greater of any combination of theoretical learning time. Students cannot miss 20% of their class **OR** 20% of tutorial **OR** a 20% combination of all theoretical learning experiences.

D. <u>Policy</u>

1. Student attendance at all scheduled examinations is mandatory. SDA requests do not cover final examinations.

2. Student attendance in all theoretical and clinical learning components is mandatory. Attendance is required for the student to meet the learning outcomes of the course and supports progression in the program. Any missed time may result in required make-up activities.

3. A student who exceeds the clinical and/or theoretical time thresholds will be responsible to connect with the course professor to discuss a plan to meet the missed course outcomes. This may include initiation of the Competency Attainment Support Policy and/or replacement of missed time. The student plan will be approved at the discretion of the Course Professor. The Course Professor will inform the Associate Director, Undergraduate Student Affairs of the missed time. Replacing missed learning experience time does NOT guarantee that the student will meet the course outcomes.

4. Student attendance at regional or national leadership meetings, conferences, or varsity activities, when <u>pre-approved</u> by the Course Professor is supported. If the time of the scheduled absence exceeds the time threshold, the student will be responsible to connect with the course professor to discuss a plan to meet the missed course outcomes. The student plan will be approved at the discretion of the Course Professor. Replacing missed learning experience time does NOT guarantee that the student will meet the course outcomes.

5. If missed time is <u>greater than the time threshold</u> the student may be required to meet with the Associate Director, Undergraduate Student Affairs and the Associate Director, Undergraduate Academics.

6. Missed time due to university closure or instructor illness would not be calculated in the individual student's time threshold.

7. The School of Nursing recognizes that students may experience short-term physical or mental health conditions, or other extenuating circumstances that may affect their ability to attend required classes, tests, exams or submit other coursework. The Student Declaration of Absence form is used to report short-term missed or late academic requirements ([SDA form](#)).

E. Administrative Structure

1. Authority: This policy falls under the authority of School of Nursing School Council

2. The Student is responsible to:
   a. Complete all theoretical and clinical learning components to receive a passing grade in the course.
   b. Self-identify (when possible) the need for additional support if they are having attendance challenges.
   c. Notify their Course Professor of any absence in an evaluative component by email prior to the scheduled component. Rescheduling of examinations is at the course professor's discretion.
   d. Notify their lab/support faculty, Course Professor, and the clinical unit/agency of any absence in a clinical component, at least one hour before scheduled start time.
   e. Submit an SDA form to the Course Professor for late or missed time related to academic requirements and learning experiences. Student is responsible to connect with the Course Professor to discuss a plan to meet the missed course outcomes.
   f. Document clinical absences (e.g., date and number of hours) on the standard student lab/clinical evaluation form.
   g. Seek additional support if they are having attendance challenges as they deem necessary at any stage of the process. Suggested supports include but are not limited to the following: a) African Nova Scotian Nursing Student Advisor; b) L'nu Nurse and/or Indigenous Nursing Student Advisor, c) Dalhousie University Accessibility Centre; d) Bissett Centre; e) Dalhousie Student Advocacy Services (DSAS); f) Nursing Student Equity Coalition; g) LGBTQIA2S+ Student Advisor; h) Dalhousie Writing Centre; i) Associate Director, Undergraduate Student Affairs; j) Competency Attainment Support Policy.

3. The Associate Director, Undergraduate Student Affairs is responsible to:
   a. Introduce the Attendance Policy in the student orientation.
   b. Provide oversight of student absenteeism.
   c. Identify individual students with attendance challenges who could benefit from additional support.
   d. Work with the Course Professor and/or Semester Lead to support the student to meet the requirements for the course.

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e. Notify students who have exceeded the time threshold, indicating these noted absences and place a copy of the formal notification in their academic file on the SON Sharepoint.
f. Report student progression data to the Undergraduate Student Affairs Committee.

4. The Associate Director, Undergraduate Academics is responsible to:
    a. Provide policy oversight at the Undergraduate Studies Committee.
    b. Collaborate with the Associate Director, Undergraduate Student Affairs and the Course Professor to determine the need for and the opportunity to replace missed program requirements.
    c. Approve, in consultation with the Director of the School of Nursing, extra time for clinical components requiring additional resources.
    d. Collaborate with the Clinical Placement Office and the Course Professor to operationalize the plan to replace missed clinical experiences.

5. The Associate Director, Simulation-based Education and Interprofessional Education is responsible to:
    a. Provide policy oversight for Simulation-based Education and Interprofessional Education
    b. Collaborate with the Coordinator, Clinical Learning and Simulation Centre to support student learning.
    c. Collaborate with the Coordinator, Interprofessional Education to support student learning

6. The Director of the School of Nursing is responsible to:
    a. Approve resources if required to replace missed clinical experiences.

7. The Course Professor is responsible to:
    a. Include the Attendance Policy in the course syllabus, including course-specific information regarding absences and expectations in accordance with this policy, and the URL link to this policy document.
    b. Instruct support faculty of the process to record and communicate student absences.
    c. Record attendance for all theoretical and clinical learning components.
    d. Identify individual students with attendance challenges who could benefit from additional support.
    e. Work with the Semester Lead, as appropriate, and the Associate Director Undergraduate Student Affairs to support the student to meet the requirements for the course. Because student experience differs significantly and resources are in place for all students, including those from Equity-Deserving Groups, suggested supports include but are not limited to the following: a) African Nova Scotian Nursing Student Advisor; b) L'nu Nurse and/or Indigenous Nursing Student Advisor, c) Dalhousie University Accessibility Centre; d) Bissett Centre; e) Dalhousie Student Advocacy Services (DSAS) Nursing Student Equity Coalition; g) LGBTQIA2S+

Student Advisor; h) Dalhousie Writing Centre; i) Associate Director, Undergraduate Student Affairs; j) Competency Attainment Support Policy

 f. Report student absenteeism data as appropriate for theoretical components, clinical components, and unexcused missed examinations to the Associate Director, Undergraduate Student Affairs.

 g. Collaborate with the Associate Director, Undergraduate Student Affairs and the Associate Director, Undergraduate Academics as needed to support students' progression in the program.

 h. Collaborate with the Coordinator, Clinical Learning and Simulation Centre as needed, to determine if there could be additional simulation experiences to support student learning.

8. The Semester Leads/Advisors are responsible to:
   a. Identify individual students who could benefit from additional support if they are having attendance challenges and collaborate with the Course Professor and Associate Director, Undergraduate Student Affairs.

9. The School of Nursing Support Faculty are responsible to:
   a. Record attendance for all required learning experiences.
   b. Report to the Course Professor any missed learning experiences.
   c. Document clinical absences (e.g., date and number of hours) on the standard student lab/clinical evaluation form.
   d. Collaborate with the Course Professor to support the student to meet the course requirements.

10. The Coordinator, Clinical Learning and Simulation Centre, is responsible to:
    a. Collaborate with the Course Professor as needed, to coordinate additional simulation experiences to support student learning.

11. The Clinical Placement Office is responsible to:
    a. Collaborate with the Associate Director, Undergraduate Academics, and the Course Professor to operationalize the plan to replace missed clinical experiences.

F. **Procedures**

1. The Course Professor and Support Faculty record attendance and communicate student absences exceeding the time threshold.

2. The Course Professor will compile absences that exceed the time threshold and send to the Associate Director, Undergraduate Student Affairs.

3. The student and Support Faculty will document absences (e.g., date and number of hours) according to appropriate course processes.

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4. The Course Professor and/or Support Faculty, in consultation with the student will implement the Competency Attainment Support Policy as required.

5. The Associate Director, Undergraduate Student Affairs will notify students who have exceeded the time threshold, indicating these noted absences and place a copy of the formal notification in their academic file on the SON Sharepoint.

6. The Course Professor will collaborate with the Associate Director, Undergraduate Student Affairs, the Associate Director, Undergraduate Academics, and the Associate Director, Simulation-based Education and Interprofessional Education as needed when additional supports are required.

7. When additional clinical experiences are required, further collaboration with the Coordinator of Clinical Placement, the Coordinator, Clinical Learning and Simulation, and the Associate Director, Simulation-based Education and Interprofessional Education Centre is required.

8. 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 Student Affairs, on a semester-by-semester basis.

G. <u>Related Resources and References</u>

Dalhousie Storm Policy
Interprofessional Health Education (IPHE) Policy
Missed or Late Academic Requirements Due to Student Absence Policy
Student Declaration of Absence (SDA)
Undergraduate Program Competency Attainment Support Policy

H. <u>References</u>

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