



## Proposal to Promote Mental Health and Equity in the Excused Absence Policy

**PRESENTED BY** Amy Karlsson, Chair

**REVIEW DATES** SEC – November 16, 2022 | SENATE – December 7, 2022

**VOTING METHOD** In a single vote

**RELEVANT POLICY/DOCUMENT** [V-1.00\(G\)](#) – University Of Maryland Policy On Excused Absence

**NECESSARY APPROVALS** Senate, President

### ISSUE

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In August 2021, Senator M Pease, an Undergraduate from the College of Behavioral and Social Sciences, submitted a proposal ([Senate Document #21-22-04](#)) on behalf of themselves and Associate Professor John Cummings, Associate Professor in the A. James Clark School of Engineering, to the Senate Executive Committee (SEC) regarding the excused absence policy. The proposal suggested that the current excused absence policy, [V-1.00\(G\)](#), prioritizes physical health and, in so doing, disadvantages students who cannot receive respite due to mental health concerns, as the current excused absence policy does not name mental health as a reason for an excused absence.

The proposal stemmed from concerns that Pease had cited from their constituency related to interest in improving leniency for mental health days or other approaches to address student mental health concerns that have been exacerbated by the pandemic. There were also concerns that the current policy requirement of physician-signed notes could create a barrier for students from under-represented minority backgrounds or disadvantaged socioeconomic backgrounds.

### RECOMMENDATION(S)

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The APAS Committee recommends that the proposed revisions to the University of Maryland Policy on Excused Absence (V-1.00(G)), as shown immediately following this report, be approved.

In addition to the proposed revisions, the APAS committee has several recommendations to be considered by the University:

- The University should develop and disseminate resources and best practice guidelines for faculty on designing courses to improve the educational experience of students who are experiencing mental health difficulties, without creating undue burden on faculty, including: course-level excused absence policies that may be more flexible than the campus policy, designing flexible assignments, recording lectures, and other ways of making course materials available to students.
- The committee recommends the University improve educational awareness centered around student and faculty understanding of the excused absence policy.

- The committee has heard positive sentiment regarding the addition of a fall break or associated mental health days. The committee recommends the University explore the benefits and complications of adding a fall break or mental health days.
- The committee has heard the real complexity and challenges associated with the mental health crisis on faculty and students alike. The committee recommends the University continue to be cognizant of the mental health crisis, continue to incorporate practices that promote student mental health, and continue to avoid placing undue burden on faculty and staff members.

## **COMMITTEE WORK**

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The SEC charged the APAS committee with reviewing the proposal, the current excused absence policy, any recent exceptions to University policies that recognized the impact on student mental health, and best practices at Big10 peer institutions. The committee was also charged with consulting with the proposers, a representative of the Office of Undergraduate Studies, Associate Chairs for Undergraduate Studies in departments that offer laboratory or experiential courses, a representative of the University Counseling Center, a representative of the Office of the Registrar, a representative of the Office of the Senior Vice President & Provost, and the Senate Student Affairs Committee.

In its charge the APAS committee was asked to consider if the University should have specific provisions that address excused absences. The committee heard historical concerns from the representative from Undergraduate Studies regarding separate provisions in the policy and her recommendation that those not be again replicated. It became clear, from various consultations, to the committee that while the original intent of the excused absence policy was meant to define health as both physical and mental health that this needed to be explicitly defined in the policy. The committee also heard real concerns from faculty about the dangers of increased workload, especially for those in large lecture and experiential courses, should there be any increased number of absences added to the current policy. However, the committee heard that there are initiatives, like educational awareness campaigns, that can help instructors understand flexibility outside the scope of policy. The committee learned from both the representative from the Office of the Registrar and the Provost's Office that adding a day to the University calendar would be difficult and that advocating to the Board of Regents would perhaps have a greater impact.

After due consideration, the APAS committee voted to update the excused absence policy to refer to mental and physical health. By electronic vote, the committee also voted to include a list of recommendations to pass on to ensure further consideration of these issues. Senate office staff was in contact with the Office of General Counsel to review revisions to the policy.

## **ALTERNATIVES**

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The Senate could choose not to accept these recommendations.

## **RISKS**

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There are no risks to the University in adopting these recommendations.

## **FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

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There are no known financial implications to adopting these recommendations.



## Proposal to Promote Mental Health and Equity in the Excused Absence Policy

### 2022-2023 Committee Members

**Amy Karlsson** (Chair)  
**Gabrielle Angeletti** (Undergraduate Student)  
**John Bono** (Faculty)  
**John Buchner** (Faculty)  
**William Cohen** (Ex-Officio- Provost's Rep)  
**Adrian Cornelius** (Ex- Officio- University Registrar Rep)  
**Alice Donlan** (Staff)  
**Caroline Eades** (Faculty)  
**Joseph Eggen** (Faculty)  
**Jason Farman** (Faculty)  
**Alka Gandhi** (Faculty)  
**Shannon Gundy** (Ex-Officio-Director of Undergraduate Admissions Rep)

**Isaiah Hilsenrath** (Undergraduate Student)  
**Prudence Iwundu** (Undergraduate Student)  
**Katherine Izsak** (Faculty)  
**Lisa Kiely** (Ex-Officio- Undergraduate Studies Rep)  
**Andrew Lewis** (Graduate Student)  
**Li Ma** (Faculty)  
**Kellie Rolstad** (Faculty)  
**Monica VanKlompberg** (Faculty)  
**Zeena Zakharia** (Faculty).

### Date of Submission

November 2022

## BACKGROUND

In August 2021, Senator M Pease, an Undergraduate from the College of Behavioral and Social Sciences, submitted a proposal ([Senate Document #21-22-04](#)) on behalf of themselves and Associate Professor John Cummings, Associate Professor in the A. James Clark School of Engineering, to the Senate Executive Committee (SEC) regarding the excused absence policy. The proposal suggested that the current excused absence policy, [V-1.00\(G\)](#), prioritizes physical health and, in so doing, disadvantages students who cannot receive respite due to mental health concerns, as the current excused absence policy does not name mental health as a reason for an excused absence.

The proposal stemmed from concerns that Pease had cited from their constituency related to interest in improving leniency for mental health days or other approaches to address student mental health concerns that have been exacerbated by the pandemic. There were also concerns that the current policy requirement of physician-signed notes could create a barrier for students from under-represented minority backgrounds or disadvantaged socioeconomic backgrounds.

The proposal cited specific areas of change in the current policy: the lack of acknowledgment of mental health in V-1.00(G).I; the lack of options for excused absences based for mental health purposes in V-1.00(G).II; the requirement in V-1.00(G).II.2.a for physician-certified notes for more than one absence or for absences coinciding with major grading events; and any other changes the Senate may deem appropriate to create a more empathetic and equitable excused absence policy.

The proposers saw these changes as a way to promote wellness in the University community, to relieve pressure placed on students, and to address barriers to taking needed time off without severe academic consequences.

In August 2021, the SEC charged the APAS committee with reviewing the proposal, the current excused absence policy, any recent exceptions to University policies that recognized the impact on student mental health, and best practices at Big10 peer institutions. The committee was also

charged with consulting with the proposers, a representative of the Office of Undergraduate Studies, Associate Chairs for Undergraduate Studies in departments that offer laboratory or experiential courses, a representative of the University Counseling Center, a representative of the Office of the Registrar, a representative of the Office of the Senior Vice President & Provost, and the Senate Student Affairs Committee. The SEC asked the committee to make recommendations to the Senate on whether changes to the current excused absence policy are needed. The APAS committee's response was due to the Senate Office no later than November 11, 2022.

## **CURRENT PRACTICE**

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Section I of V-1.00(G), the current excused absence policy, lays out a set of obligations for student and faculty in regards to an excused absence. For an excused absence, it states specifically that, "within reason," students are "entitled to receive any materials provided to the class during the absence." In the current policy, an excused absence does not excuse a student from the work missed due to that absence. Faculty are obligated to provide necessary materials for a student due to an excused absence.

Section II of V-100(G) the policy calls specific attention to "medically necessitated absences." This policy outlines that one time per course per semester, a student is allowed to provide a self-signed excuse as documentation of an absence from a single class that does not interfere with a "major assessment or assignment due date." Currently, the policy is a minimum guideline that all classes must adhere to but flexibility may be exhibited across different courses or instructors.

## **COMMITTEE WORK**

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The APAS Committee began reviewing its charge (Appendix 1) in February 2022. Committee members expressed concerns and suggestions related to the implementation process of the proposed additions to the excused absence policy. Members shared concerns for instructors who teach courses with several hundred students and that implementation of any more excused absences mandated in policy may be impractical for those instructors. Other members were concerned about lack of viable enforcement of such policies by the University and the dangers of a one-size-fit-all approach to such a policy. A working group was formed to look at other Big10 institutions to examine best practices at other universities (Appendix 2).

Early in its review, the committee met with the proposers to share their perspectives on the proposal. The proposers made clear that mental health should be recognized in the excused absence policy and access to equity is impacted by requiring students to have a note signed by a physician. Of particular concern for this proposal were students from marginalized communities, as the proposers brought up that these students would most be affected by lack of access to intervention or professional guidance. They added that policy should consider accessibility to treatment and documentation and that education of policy and practice, including best practice guidelines, would be useful in addition to any policy revisions. From these discussions it was clear that policy should accommodate the needs of small, team-based courses as well as large lectures. One of the proposers provided to the committee a document of community testimonies that were gathered in support of the proposal. The document included over 30 testimonies from undergraduates of ranging years and disciplines that voiced personal reflections of the importance of this proposal. This was distributed and considered by the committee as part of its review. The working group also reported on its review of other Big10 institutions, citing that most institutions do not directly address mental health issues currently but cited a recent letter to Congress, suggesting

that it is an issue of concern for a large number of institutions. The committee convened discussion on the proposal for the summer.

The committee resumed consultations on the proposal in the fall by first establishing a list of questions to bring to the remaining consultations. Committee members were invited to add their questions to a collaborative document to bring to each consultation. The committee consulted first with the Student Affairs committee in September. Student Affairs committee members listed concerns around generational and cultural differences of what “health” means, stating that not every person has the same preconceptions of what health includes. The Student Affairs committee members were also in favor of a limit to the number of excused days off, with that policy being a minimum and faculty having the flexibility to go up from that requirement. Students voiced that seeing uniformity across syllabi of the same courses would be important and would mitigate confusion. A major concern was raised regarding the awareness of the current excused absence policy, specifically the knowledge that students do not have to specify their particular illness to their instructor. The Student Affairs committee members were interested in the possibility of adding a fall break day or mental health day in the semester.

The APAS committee consulted with a representative of the Office of Undergraduate Studies. It was clear from the consultation that students’ concerns from the Student Affairs committee regarding the uncertainty that they did not have to specify illness on a self-signed note were surprising. One key point was raised by the representative, that “health” and “medically necessitated” in the current excused absence policy was originally intended to mean both physical and mental health. The representative shared, however, that revisions to make the policy more clear, holistic, and broad may be beneficial for the APAS committee to consider. A great deal of attention was also given to the idea that awareness campaigns would be beneficial to promote education about the current policy. During the same meeting, the committee also consulted with a representative of the Office of the Registrar. While the representative shared that the excused absence policy was not aligned with the purview of the Office of the Registrar he was able to share information to committee members about the feasibility of adding extra days to the calendar. He shared that due to the nature of the academic calendar, implementation of extra days during the semester (i.e., a fall break) would be difficult to navigate.

In its review, the committee sought the help of the Provost’s representative to distribute a Qualtrics survey to departments that offer laboratory or experiential courses. The representative expressed a concern in being able to accomplish the charge as written, citing that there was no clear and distinct way to define an “experiential course.” The committee member proposed that sending the survey to all departments would solve the problem and allow for a bigger sample size to be included for the committee’s considerations. Chair Karlsson agreed and a memo (Appendix 3) was distributed to Senate Leadership and the SEC detailing the exact revisions to the charge. Senate Leadership approved the revisions to the charge and the revised charge (Appendix 4) was distributed to committee members. The survey, which was populated by questions from committee members and translated into a survey-appropriate format by a committee member, was distributed to all Associate Chairs and Directors of Undergraduate Studies on October 3, 2022. The deadline for survey responses was October 10, 2022.

The APAS committee received the survey response data from the Associate Chairs and Directors of Undergraduate studies on October 12, 2022. There were several takeaways that the committee learned from the survey data. Most respondents were empathetic to being flexible to students experiencing a mental health crisis. However, of great concern, was the impact and burden that more leniency or added days to the excused absence policy would create for large lecture and

laboratory courses. There were also concerns reflected in the survey data about the potential abuse of a more lenient excused absence policy and that students would fall behind too greatly in their coursework. However, responses generally seemed supportive of adding mental health explicitly to the current excused absence policy. Respondents of the survey seemed to think that a policy should cover both small and large classes. Committee members noted consistently the complexity of the issues surrounding mental health and this charge.

The committee also met with the director of the University Counseling Center. The director had several key takeaways that he impressed upon the committee for their consideration. He shared that there is good evidence that mental health issues are increasing in severity across Universities and this should be kept in mind when coming to a decision. The committee also learned that the University is set up to attend to short and medium term mental health needs but long term needs are handled by the University to the best extent possible. He shared with the committee his opinion that the policy should be updated to add clarification and such a clarification will help legitimize mental health in a formal way. He also shared with the committee potentially impactful starting places for faculty looking to supplement the current policy, like including mental health on syllabi and talking about mental health with their students.

The APAS committee, finally, consulted with a representative from the Office of the Senior Vice President and Provost. The Provost's representative let the committee know that the Provost Office has been in tune with the discussions happening around campus and around the country in regards to mental health. The committee learned that the Provost and the Vice President for Student Affairs have collaborated and formed a mental health taskforce to address mental health concerns systemically and institutionally. The Provost's representative shared that the Provost's principle concern in this area is about student's academic progress and that additional absences could create a circumstance in which students would fall further behind. The committee learned that the policy is blunt in the fact that it can only say what the minimum is, which is challenging due to the wide variety of disciplines offered by the University. The Provost's representative added that there are more things that could be done at the course level rather than to enshrine in policy something that is potentially inflexible. He shared that the Provost's office thinks that the current policy is adequate; however, he added, he has heard a real interest in making the mental health provisions explicit in the current policy. The representative shared that the policy could be more explicit about covering both mental and physical health conditions and cited some dimensions of the policy that could be explained more fully. Committee members questioned if policy was necessarily the correct lever of change for this issue.

In its charge the APAS committee was asked to consider if the University should have specific provisions that address excused absences. The committee heard historical concerns from the representative from Undergraduate Studies regarding separate provisions in the policy and her recommendation that those not be again replicated. It became clear, from various consultations, to the committee that while the original intent of the excused absence policy was meant to define health as both physical and mental health that this needed to be explicitly defined in the policy. The committee also heard real concerns from faculty about the dangers of increased workload, especially for those in large lecture and experiential courses, should there be any increased number of absences added to the current policy. However, the committee heard that there are initiatives, like educational awareness campaigns, that can help instructors understand flexibility outside the scope of policy. The committee learned from both the representative from the Office of the Registrar and the Provost's Office that adding a day to the University calendar would be difficult and that advocating to the Board of Regents would perhaps have a greater impact.

After due consideration, the APAS committee voted to update the excused absence policy to refer to mental and physical health. By electronic vote, the committee also voted to include a list of recommendations to pass on to ensure further consideration of these issues. Senate office staff consulted with the Office of General Counsel (OGC) to review revisions to the policy.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

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The APAS Committee recommends that the proposed revisions to the University of Maryland Policy on Excused Absence (V-1.00(G)), as shown immediately following this report, be approved.

In addition to the proposed revisions, the APAS committee has several recommendations to be considered by the University:

- The University should develop and disseminate resources and best practice guidelines for faculty on designing courses to improve the educational experience of students who are experiencing mental health difficulties, without creating undue burden on faculty, including: course-level excused absence policies that may be more flexible than the campus policy, designing flexible assignments, recording lectures, and other ways of making course materials available to students.
- The committee recommends the University improve educational awareness centered around student and faculty understanding of the excused absence policy.
- The committee has heard positive sentiment regarding the addition of a fall break or associated mental health days. The committee recommends the University explore the benefits and complications of adding a fall break or mental health days.
- The committee has heard the real complexity and challenges associated with the mental health crisis on faculty and students alike. The committee recommends the University continue to be cognizant of the mental health crisis, continue to incorporate practices that promote student mental health, and continue to avoid placing undue burden on faculty and staff members.

## APPENDICES

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Appendix 1 — Original Charge from the Senate Executive Committee

Appendix 2 — Peer Institution Data

Appendix 3 — Memo of Charge Revisions

Appendix 4 — Amended Charge Dated September 30, 2022





**V-1.00(G) UNIVERSITY OF MARYLAND POLICY ON EXCUSED ABSENCE**  
(Approved by the President May 6, 2016; Technical Amendments August 7, 2017; Technical Amendments October 1, 2019)

**I. Policy**

An excused absence is an absence for which the student has the right to receive, and the instructor has the responsibility to provide, academic accommodation.

Students are expected to take full responsibility for their own academic work and progress. Students, to progress satisfactorily, must meet all of the requirements of each course for which they are registered. Students are expected to attend classes regularly. Consistent attendance offers students the most effective opportunity to gain command of course concepts and materials. Excused absences must be requested promptly and must be supported by appropriate documentation.

Excused absences do not alter the academic requirements for the course. Students are responsible for information and material missed on the day of absence. Students are within reason entitled to receive any materials provided to the class during the absence. Students are responsible for making provision to determine what course material they have missed and for completing required exercises in a timely manner.

Events that justify an excused absence include religious observances; mandatory military obligation; **physical or mental health conditions of the student or an immediate family member** ~~illness of the student or illness of an immediate family member~~; participation in university activities at the request of university authorities; and compelling circumstances beyond the student's control (e.g., death in the family, required court appearance). Absences stemming from work duties other than military obligation (e.g., unexpected changes in shift assignments) and traffic/transit problems do not typically qualify for excused absence.

**II. Notification and Documentation**

To receive accommodation for an excused absence:

1. The student must notify the instructor in a timely manner. The notification should be provided either prior to the absence or as soon afterwards as possible. In the case of religious observances, athletic events, and planned absences known at the beginning of the semester, the student must inform the instructor during the schedule adjustment period. All other absences must be reported as soon as is practical.
2. The student must provide appropriate documentation of the absence. The documentation must be provided in writing to the instructor by the means specified in the syllabus.



- a. For **health-related medically-necessitated** absences, **including mental and physical health**: **s**tudents may, one time per course per semester, provide a self-signed excuse as documentation of an absence from a single class (e.g., lecture, recitation, or laboratory session) that does not coincide with a major assessment or assignment due date. For all other **health-related medically-necessitated** absences, a course instructor may request that students provide documentation from a **health care provider physician** or the University Health Center to verify an absence. In cases where students are asked to provide verification, the course instructor may request the dates of treatment or the time frame that the student was unable to meet academic responsibilities, but may not request diagnostic information.
  - b. For all other absences students must provide verifiable documentation upon request (e.g., religious calendar, court summons, death announcement, etc.).
3. Providing false information to University officials is prohibited under Part 10.e.1 of the University of Maryland *Code of Student Conduct* (V-1.00[B]) and may result in disciplinary action.

### **III. Academic Accommodations**

In keeping with the USM III-5.10 Policy Concerning the Scheduling of Academic Assignments on Dates of Religious Observance, “Students shall not be penalized because of observances of their religious holidays and shall be given an opportunity, whenever feasible, to make up within a reasonable time any academic assignment that is missed due to individual participation in religious observances.” For all other excused absences, the student must be provided academic accommodation. The accommodation provided should, within reason, neither advantage nor disadvantage either the student or the rest of the class.

If the accommodation is a makeup assessment, it must be timely, at a time and place agreed upon by the instructor and student, cover the same material, and be at the same level of difficulty as the original assessment. In the event that a group of students requires the same makeup assessment, one time and place may be scheduled. The makeup assessment must not interfere with the student's regularly scheduled classes, and must be consistent with the V-1.00(A) University of Maryland Policy on the Conduct of Undergraduate Classes and Student Grievance Procedure.

If makeup work is not feasible, an alternate accommodation for excused absences will be provided. Alternate accommodations will be according to the principles established by the unit offering the course.

Students who miss a substantial number of class sessions or course assignments should seek guidance from an academic advisor with respect to academic options.

Extended absences stemming from active military duty are addressed in the USM V-7.00 Policy on Students who are called to Active Military Duty during a National or International Crisis or Conflict.

Absences related to a student's disability are addressed in the VI-1.00(D) University of Maryland Disability & Accessibility Policy and Procedures.

#### **IV. Appeals**

Students who feel that they have unfairly been denied either excused absence or appropriate accommodation for an excused absence should first seek to resolve the disagreement with the course instructor. If the student and instructor are unable to find a mutually agreeable resolution, the student may file an appeal with the head of the administrative unit offering the class. In most cases this will be the Chair of the Department. In the case of non-departmentalized units and interdepartmental programs, this role will be taken by the Dean (or the Dean's designee).

The unit head should use procedures similar to those specified in the III-1.20(B) University of Maryland Procedures for Review of Alleged Arbitrary and Capricious Grading – Undergraduate Students – but with clear indication that the appeal is with regard to excused absence, not arbitrary and capricious grading.

#### Replacement for:

*Policy III-5.10(A) University of Maryland Policies and Procedures Concerning Academic Assignments on Dates of Religious Observances*

*Policy V-1.00(G) University of Maryland Policy for a Student's Medically Necessitated Absence from Class*



### **Proposal to Promote Mental Health and Equity in the Excused Absence Policy (Senate Document #21-22-04) Academic Procedures & Standards (APAS) Committee | Chair: John Lea-Cox**

The Senate Executive Committee (SEC) and Senate Chair Williams request that the Academic Procedures & Standards (APAS) Committee review the concerns raised regarding student mental health and equity in the University's Excused Absence Policy.

Specifically, the APAS Committee should:

1. Review the Proposal to Promote Mental Health and Equity in the Excused Absence Policy ([Senate Document #21-22-04](#)).
2. Review the University of Maryland Policy on Excused Absence ([V-1.00\[G\]](#)).
3. Review any recent exceptions to University policies that recognized the impact on student mental health.
4. Review provisions for addressing student mental health concerns in excused absence policies or through other procedures and processes at Big10 and other peer institutions.
5. Consult with the proposers.
6. Consult with a representative of the Office of Undergraduate Studies.
7. Consult with Associate Chairs for Undergraduate Studies in departments that offer laboratory or experiential courses.
8. Consult with a representative of the University Counseling Center.
9. Consult with a representative of the Office of the Registrar.
10. Consult with a representative of the Office of the Senior Vice President & Provost.
11. Consult with the Senate Student Affairs Committee.
12. Consider whether the University should have specific provisions that address excused absences associated with student mental health in its policies.
13. Consider whether the requirements for excused absences associated with student mental health concerns should be made more flexible.
14. Consider whether the University should allow designated self-certified wellness days or designated university-wide mental health days off built into the calendar.
15. Consider the impact of excused absences from laboratory or other experiential courses on student learning outcomes.

16. Consider the resource and workload implications of mandated make-up laboratory or other experiential assignments if additional options for excused absences are permitted.
17. Consider whether there are equity implications related to documentation for excused absences, and whether any such implications should be addressed in policy or practice.
18. If appropriate, recommend whether University policy and/or procedures should be amended.

We ask that you submit a report to the Senate Office no later than **November 11, 2022**. If you have questions or need assistance, please contact Reka Montfort in the Senate Office, [reka@umd.edu](mailto:reka@umd.edu).

## Appendix 2 - Peer Institution Data

Institution	Campus-Wide Policy?	Mental Health Policy?	Excused Absence Make-up Policy?*	Do they mention things UMD doesn't?	Notes
Big 10					
Ohio State	Y?	N			Faculty can set attendance policies, there's a list of "legitimate" excused absence
Ohio State Part 2	N?				
			Evening exams. If there's a conflict, they must be made up, but it's not clear if daytime exams must be made up; Assume the daytime policy is broad enough to cover that.		
Illinois	Y	N	If excused absence is an exam, must be made-up	Volunteer emergency work (state law), pregnancy, citizenship, acts of nature, illness and injury to family	There's an official letter students get, documentation might be required
Rutgers	Y	N	Policy defers to instructors to schedule and make up exams	"Personal obligations claimed by the student and recognized as valid by the instructor.", weather,	
MI State	N				"There is no university-wide regulation requiring class attendance. However, attendance is an essential and intrinsic element of the educational process. In any course in grade. It is the responsibility of the instructor to define the policy for attendance at the beginning of the course."
MI	Y	N			Limited to Illness, Religious, University sanctioned events
Penn State	Y	N	Policy defers to Instructors to schedule and make up exams	Voting, school/employment interviews	Students can fail for not attending
Wisconsin	N		Policy defers to Instructors and/or Dept to schedule and make up exams		"The faculty and departments have the authority to determine what types of excuses for absences are acceptable or what measures shall be taken in the case of a student activities, not including practice activities for performances or athletic events.
Wisconsin part 2					"University classes may be officially dismissed at any campus whenever they conflict in time with: A previously announced public appearance on or near that campus by the President of the United States."
Wisconsin part 3				US presidential speeches.	"Generally, faculty will allow for a certain number of missed classes
Indiana	Y	N	No specifics on make-up exam policy	Threat to personal safety	
Minnesota	Y	--->Y<---	If excused absence is an exam, must be made-up	Pregnancy, participation in university governance SAT, ACT exams, voting,	"For circumstances not listed in (1), the instructor has primary responsibility to decide on a case-by-case basis if an absence is due to unavoidable or legitimate circumstances"
Purdue	Y	N	If excused absence is an exam, must be made-up	Parenting Leave (includes adoption)	
Iowa	Y	N	If excused absence is an exam, must be made-up		illness needs a letter
Iowa Part 2					They put religious and military exemptions here, but leave other policies up to the college
Nebraska	Y	N			There is no automatic reasons to miss class
Northwestern	N				Schools and units maintain their own policies
			have a campus wide policy on make-up		

## Appendix 3 - Memo of Charge Revisions



**UNIVERSITY SENATE**

**MEMORANDUM | #21-22-04**

**Academic Procedures & Standards Committee (APAS)**

### **Amendment to the Mental Health and Equity in the Excused Absence Policy (Senate Document #21-22-04) Charge**

**TO** Rochelle Newman, Chair of the Senate

**FROM** Amy Karlsson, Chair, APAS Committee

**DATE** September 23, 2022

In the course of the Academic Procedures & Standards (APAS) Committee's review of the Proposal to Promote Mental Health and Equity in the Excused Absence Policy (Senate Document #21-22-04) the following amendment to charge element #7 was proposed by a Committee member and agreed with by Chair Karlsson:

Consult with Associate Chairs **and Directors of** ~~for~~ Undergraduate Studies **across the whole University** ~~in departments that offer laboratory or experiential courses.~~

The Committee member in question was solicited by the APAS Committee and Senate Staff to help distribute a survey to fulfill the consult to departments that offer laboratory or experiential courses. The Committee member expressed a concern in being able to accomplish the charge as written, citing that there is no real working definition of what would constitute an "experiential course."

In order to meet this element of the charge, Chair Karlsson is asking the SEC to review these proposed changes to the charge element to broaden the scope so as to allow the survey to be distributed amongst Associate Chairs and Directors across all departments of the University.

## Appendix 4 - Ammended Charge



**UNIVERSITY SENATE**

**CHARGE**

Charged: February 22, 2022 | Deadline: November 11, 2022

### **Proposal to Promote Mental Health and Equity in the Excused Absence Policy (Senate Document #21-22-04) Academic Procedures & Standards (APAS) Committee | Chair: John Lea-Cox**

The Senate Executive Committee (SEC) and Senate Chair Williams request that the Academic Procedures & Standards (APAS) Committee review the concerns raised regarding student mental health and equity in the University's Excused Absence Policy.

Specifically, the APAS Committee should:

1. Review the Proposal to Promote Mental Health and Equity in the Excused Absence Policy ([Senate Document #21-22-04](#)).
2. Review the University of Maryland Policy on Excused Absence ([V-1.00\[G\]](#)).
3. Review any recent exceptions to University policies that recognized the impact on student mental health.
4. Review provisions for addressing student mental health concerns in excused absence policies or through other procedures and processes at Big10 and other peer institutions.
5. Consult with the proposers.
6. Consult with a representative of the Office of Undergraduate Studies.
7. Consult with Associate Chairs and Directors of Undergraduate Studies across the whole University.
8. Consult with a representative of the University Counseling Center.
9. Consult with a representative of the Office of the Registrar.
10. Consult with a representative of the Office of the Senior Vice President & Provost.
11. Consult with the Senate Student Affairs Committee.
12. Consider whether the University should have specific provisions that address excused absences associated with student mental health in its policies.
13. Consider whether the requirements for excused absences associated with student mental health concerns should be made more flexible.
14. Consider whether the University should allow designated self-certified wellness days or designated university-wide mental health days off built into the calendar.
15. Consider the impact of excused absences from laboratory or other experiential courses on student learning outcomes.



16. Consider the resource and workload implications of mandated make-up laboratory or other experiential assignments if additional options for excused absences are permitted.
17. Consider whether there are equity implications related to documentation for excused absences, and whether any such implications should be addressed in policy or practice.
18. If appropriate, recommend whether University policy and/or procedures should be amended.

We ask that you submit a report to the Senate Office no later than **November 11, 2022**. If you have questions or need assistance, please contact Reka Montfort in the Senate Office, [reka@umd.edu](mailto:reka@umd.edu).