



healthyhorns

University Health Services, Counseling and Mental Health Center & Longhorn Wellness Center
Division of Student Affairs

100 West Dean Keeton Street • Austin, Texas 78712
healthyhorns.utexas.edu

Dear Faculty Member,

Consistent with American College Health Association recommendations and the policies of our peer institutions, University Health Services (UHS) does not provide written excuses for students who miss classes or assignments due to a short-term illness or an injury.

Policy Rationale

People often miss work or school when they feel symptomatic from a cold, gastrointestinal upset, or another minor, self-limiting illness or injury. In many cases, the best course of action is to rest and practice self-care at home. Further, since the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic, we have encouraged anyone with symptoms to stay home, and if they test positive, to isolate according to guidance from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. With the increasing reliance upon self-test kits for diagnosing COVID-19, it is likely that a healthcare provider may not even become aware that a patient has COVID-19 unless the patient chooses to report the diagnosis.

When students see a healthcare provider solely to get an excuse:

- The student incurs the cost of an office visit.
- These visits take appointments that could be offered to students who need medical care, which increases wait times for appointments.
- Students risk aggravating their illness or injury by traveling to an appointment.
- Those with contagious illnesses risk exposing others.

Becoming an independent adult involves learning how to take care of oneself when sick and how to decide when to see a doctor. To support this aspect of student development, UHS provides a free 24/7 Nurse Line (512-475-6877) for students who have minor medical concerns. Registered nurses answer calls 24/7/365 to offer self-care instructions and guidance regarding whether and when to get medical attention.

Handling Missed Classes

We recommend students who need to miss class, or a deadline follow the instructions on the course syllabus for notifying the instructor, preferably before the test/deadline/class. We encourage faculty members to communicate with students to help them identify ways they can fulfill their academic responsibilities without jeopardizing their health or that of others. We appreciate any flexibility you can offer students who are unwell, practicing self-care, or isolating to prevent the spread to others. Please be aware that UHS cannot share medical information unless the student signs a release form.

Additional Resources

University resources for students with significant health problems include:

- Student Emergency Services at deanofstudents.utexas.edu/emergency, (512) 471-5017
- Disability and Access, which coordinates course load reductions and medical withdrawals, at community.utexas.edu/disability, (512) 471-6259

UHS remains willing to provide medical care and appropriate documentation as needed to students who suffer a serious or prolonged illness, injury, or disability. My staff and I are honored to share your dedication to the welfare and growth of our students. Should you have any questions about this policy or otherwise about UHS, please feel free to contact me. Thank you for your support.

Sincerely,

Terrance Hines, M.D.
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