

Student Guidance to the Absence Reporting System

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When is it necessary to report an absence?

You are required to report any absence from your studies which causes you to miss:

- Compulsory labs, lectures or tutorials
- Assignment deadlines or examinations
- Seven consecutive working days during term / semester time
- Any other departmental requirements for the award of credit (e.g. a minimum level of attendance at tutorials or lectures). Check with your course handbook or Course Coordinator for details.

And which cannot be compensated for through alternative arrangements (see [below](#)).

These are known as significant absences.

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What is a 'significant absence'?

A significant absence is any absence which fulfils the reporting criteria and cannot be compensated for through alternative arrangements such as attending a repeat of tutorial at a later date. See [above](#).

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Do I have to report all absences?

No. Absence does not always mean falling behind in your studies; it is often possible to arrange a suitable alternative with your lecturers and tutors. For example:

- If you miss a seminar or laboratory session, your tutor may agree to allow you to attend one of their other groups held on the same material but at a different time.
- Many larger lectures are repeated in morning or afternoon sessions - it may be possible to attend one of these repeats.

In both of the examples above it should be possible to compensate for your absence by attendance at a similar session held at another time: your absence is therefore not considered [significant](#) and does not require reporting. You should, however, seek confirmation from the appropriate lecturer or tutor where necessary that the alternative arrangements are possible and appropriate.

In situations where the appropriate lecturer or tutor indicates that this isn't possible (e.g. one-off class tests or lab experiments which are only run once) an absence report must be submitted through [WebSurf](#).

Students with a disability related absence and who have their support co-ordinated by the Student Disability Service are not expected to complete multiple absence reports for absences related to their disability.

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What constitutes an acceptable reason for absence?

Absence can significantly affect your understanding and grasp of the material on your course, and missing too many coursework deadlines, exams or tutorials can have serious implications for progression in your studies.

It is important that absence is avoided wherever possible and never undertaken without good reason.

In general at least one of the below should apply:

- I. The reason for your absence was unavoidable and out of your control (e.g. serious and unexpected transport problems)
- II. You were absent due to illness or other health problems
- III. You were dealing with a personal or family emergency requiring urgent attention that could not be dealt with outside of University hours (e.g. serious family illness, a gas leak in your flat etc.)

- IV. You had obtained prior permission to be absent (e.g. to participate in a faith-based event, to attend a medical or equivalent appointment either as the patient or as support for an individual for whom you have caring responsibility)
- V. You were prevented from returning to the UK on account of a disaster in your home country

The acceptance of your reason for absence by departmental staff must be understood as provisional only: the final decision rests with the independent [Board of Examiners](#).

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Who are the board of examiners?

Boards of examiners are responsible for awarding overall course grades and final degree classifications. The independent nature of the boards guarantees fairness and accuracy in all assessment and marking procedures; they are responsible for ensuring that all students are assessed on a body of work representative of their true performance, and consequently have ultimate authority to employ discretion where absence may have impinged on an individual's performance.

The board comprises both representatives from your department as well as external members from other universities brought in to ensure national consistency: for this reason local staff acceptance of your reason for absence can only be considered provisional subject to the approval of the board of examiners.

Equally, because of anonymous marking, the internal examiners will not be aware of personal circumstances when evaluating marks: it is essential therefore that you provide all the information that you want the board of examiners to take into account through the absence reporting section of [WebSurf](#).

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Who should I contact prior to an expected absence?

The most relevant person to inform will depend on the material missed or the nature of the event:

Event	Suitable Contact
Lectures, labs and seminars	Relevant Tutor or Lecturer
Coursework deadlines and examinations	Relevant Course Coordinator
General absence	Adviser of Studies
Pregnancy-related absence	Adviser of Studies or another member of staff with whom you may feel more comfortable
Maternity support / paternity leave	Adviser of Studies or other departmental / faculty member of staff
Time out of study to fulfil caring responsibilities	Adviser of Studies, Department or Faculty member of staff
Faith-based event or holiday	Adviser of Studies, Head of Department, Course Convener or other appropriate member of staff (but advance permission to be absent from classes and / or examinations must be requested as early as possible after class enrolment)

This will give staff an advance opportunity to arrange remedial measures where necessary and they may be willing in consequence to support your justification of absence in your absence report (see [Supporting Documentation](#)).

Where an absence is considered [significant](#) you must create an absence report on [WebSurf](#) regardless of any prior notification.

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How do I report an absence?

You should report [significant absences](#) through the 'Absence Records' section of [WebSurf](#). There are two parts to an Absence Record:

Part One

- Part one requires you to fill in the first date of your absence and the expected date of return.
- This section should be completed as soon as possible.
- You can personally delete part one if you make a mistake or decide later that an absence report is no longer required as a result of alternative arrangements made with staff.

Part Two

- This section requires additional information on the reason for your absence and has facilities to upload supporting documentation which corroborates this (more on suitable documentation below).
- This should be completed within seven days after your return to University.
- Part two cannot be removed manually; if you wish a report to be deleted at this stage you must contact your Adviser of Studies.

Your absence record will be invalid unless both sections are completed.

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What additional information should I provide?

You should include as much relevant information as possible to justify the reason for your absence. For example:

- If you were ill, briefly describe your condition / symptoms and how this would have affected your ability to carry on as normal.
- If you missed your regular bus / train you should explain what alternative modes of transport (if any) you attempted.
- If you were forced to stay in due to personal emergency or a problem with your home requiring urgent attention (e.g. a broken boiler or a gas leak) make sure to detail this as fully as possible.

Be as full and specific as possible in justifying your absence.

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What constitutes supporting documentation?

Supporting Documentation of some form is required for all significant absences. Your absence report will be considered incomplete unless supporting documentation is attached.

There are two main types:

Medical Documentation

This is only required for absences due to a medical condition which has caused you to miss seven days or more; however, you are recommended to submit medical documentation for absences of a lesser duration where available.

Examples of suitable documentation include:

- A medical certificate or report
- A note from a hospital staff member
- A hospital or GP appointment letter or reminder card
- A prescription or printed instruction label on prescription medicine

If you miss an exam due to ill health you must submit confirmation from a medical practitioner that you were unfit to sit the exam. This also applies to other types of assessment.

If your doctor charges for preparing a report and you cannot afford to meet this cost, you may be able to get help from the [University Hardship Fund](#); visit the student services desk in the Fraser building for details of how to apply.

In order for medical documentation to be useful, you must have consulted the doctor at the time that you were ill. If it was not possible to consult a doctor at the appropriate time, you must explain why.

Other Documentation

This is required in all other cases of significant absence. Suitable forms of documentation will be specific to each situation but may include:

- A letter from your landlord
- Evidence from a member of staff who was alerted to the circumstances surrounding your absence at the time
- A letter from a student counsellor (provided you have already attended an appointment with the [Student Counselling and Advisory Service](#)) or other professional
- A note from the Police
- A note from any other independent responsible person who can confirm the circumstances that led to your absence

You should contact your Adviser of Studies for guidance if you are unable to identify a suitable individual to provide supporting documentation.

Keep copies of all supporting documentation in case you are required to present it at a later date.

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Where are there facilities to scan in supporting documentation on campus?

You will find scanners on level 3 of the University Library and some departmental computer clusters. Science students can use the facilities on level 3 of the Boyd Orr Building in the Science Faculties Support Office.

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I don't feel comfortable scanning in my supporting documentation - is there an alternative?

Although all personal documentation uploaded to WebSurf is securely stored and access restricted, it is understood that you may not always wish to disclose personal problems in this manner.

In these circumstances you may contact your Adviser of Studies instead and arrange to show them your supporting documentation in person; they will subsequently update your absence record to reflect that they have seen the information personally and that an upload to WebSurf is no longer required.

It is advisable to retain a copy of your documentation at home should you be asked to present the information to a [board of examiners](#) at a later date.

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Who should I contact to make alternative arrangements for missed work?

The most appropriate contact may well differ depending on the work missed. In general you should speak to the lead member of staff overseeing the work which you have missed (e.g. for seminars, this will be your seminar leader).

If you are unsure of who to speak to, contact your departmental secretary or Adviser of Studies for guidance.

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Should I be aware of any other related policies?

Yes, there are two new Policies that have a bearing on student absence reporting:

[Student Maternity, Maternity Support and Adoption Policy](#) (introduced 2009-10)
[Policy on Religion or Belief](#) (introduced 2009-10)

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