



THE UNIVERSITY OF TEXAS AT AUSTIN
UNIVERSITY HEALTH SERVICES

P.O. Box 7339 • Austin, Texas 78713-7339 • 512-471-4955 • healthyhorns.utexas.edu

Dear Faculty Member:

University Health Services (UHS) clinicians do not routinely provide written excuses for students who miss classes or assignments due to short-term illness or injury.

People often miss work or school when they feel miserable from an upper respiratory infection, the flu, a gastrointestinal “bug” or another, usually minor, illness. While they may feel too sick to go to work or class, most do not seek in-person medical care, choosing instead to remain at home to rest and care for themselves.

At UHS, we actively encourage self-care for students with these types of minor illnesses. We have invested substantially in our 24-Hour Nurse Advice Line system, which makes it very convenient for students to receive self-care instructions for a variety of medical conditions at no charge. These nurses also educate students about whether and when to seek medical attention.

Problems arise when ill students feel they must come to UHS for an appointment just to provide documentation of their condition for a missed class, test, or deadline. Firstly, the student must leave the comfort of their apartment or room when they feel ill for a potentially unnecessary medical appointment. Also, students who see a healthcare provider only to satisfy their instructors greatly reduce the availability of appointment times for those who do need professional medical care. Finally, if the ill student is contagious, he or she places others at risk of exposure, which can cause these exposed students to miss classes as well.

We encourage students who need to miss class to notify their faculty that they are ill or injured and unable to attend, preferably before class, and to follow the instructions provided on the course syllabus. We encourage faculty members to have a conversation with the student that allows them to represent their situation and identify how they can fulfill their academic responsibilities while working around their illness.

Our policy is consistent with recommendations from the American College Health Association and the policies of our peer institutions. It also reflects our commitment to maintaining patient confidentiality, teaching students how to use healthcare resources appropriately, and supporting meaningful dialogue between students and teachers. Respecting students’ right to privacy, we cannot release information directly to professors unless the student has signed a release form.

Your assistance in working with students who are ill or injured but practicing self-care would be greatly appreciated. UHS staff will continue to assist the colleges and schools by helping students with significant health problems obtain course load reductions and/or medical withdrawals. Should you have any questions about this policy or otherwise about UHS, please feel free to contact me.

Thank you for your support.

Sincerely,

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Director
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