

Dear Eastern Community,

August 12, 2009

Traditionally and appropriately, attendance policies for classes are set by the instructors. As you may know attendance policies often include some provision for medical documentation. The University Health Service has identified a pattern of use for what seems to be essentially non-medical or non-urgent reasons which result in class or work absences. As a result, we are implementing a change to our medical visit verification process to improve clarification when absence from class or work is recommended or required.

Each semester we receive hundreds of requests from students to provide documentation of medical visits. The students generally ask for documentation even before they have discussed their illness with their instructor or employer. Many students make appointments with a Health Service practitioner for the express purpose of obtaining a written note when they would not have otherwise needed a doctor's evaluation (e.g., for simple colds, a typical migraine headache, minor gastro intestinal ailments, etc.). This limits appointments available for those who are in most need of medical services.

Practitioners often have difficulty making assessments regarding the appropriateness of providing a verification of visit or medical note. For example, some students with simple colds request a medical verification while others with similar illnesses appear to be able to remain in class and perform well. The Health Service is not in a position of judging motives of patients in an attempt to determine whether any given request for an excuse is valid. Medical personnel remain, by definition, the patient's advocate. Moreover, many requests are made by students who may have been legitimately impaired, but did not visit a clinician while ill. It is difficult and often impossible to assess the seriousness of a condition retroactively in the absence of signs or symptoms.

**We will continue to provide specific instructions for class or work attendance for two reasons: 1) cases in which the student is at risk of exposing the illness to others and/or 2) situations in which attending class/work will hamper recovery from the illness or injury. Health Service will continue, as always, to recommend absences for prolonged or serious illnesses. This documentation may come from Health Service or the Registration Office depending on the duration of the recommended absence. This practice has not changed.**

The Health Service staff is committed to teaching appropriate health care utilization. Therefore, Health Service will no longer provide a letter verifying a visit to the Health Service, except for the reasons described above. If required by an instructor or employer, **students may obtain a "Patient Receipt" from the Health Service, which will be available within 1- 2 days of their appointment.**

Enclosed is a copy of our updated Medical Visit Documentation Notice and a policy statement. This information will be available on our web site and has been posted at the Health Service. We hope this information is helpful. Please contact us if we may be of further assistance.

Lynette Drake  
Director of Health Service

Sheila Baker, MD  
Medical Director

# Medical Visit Documentation Notice

Effective August 3, 2009

**A student whose instructor or employer requires documentation of an illness or other medical condition, treated by the University Health Service, may request a “Patient Receipt”. The receipt is generally available within 1-2 business days after a patient visit.** All patient information from the appointment must be entered into the patient’s chart before a receipt may be provided.

Only instructors or employers may excuse a student from class or work obligations. The Health Service does not provide written excuses for class or work absence.

Appointments for the sole purpose of obtaining medical documentation limits appointment availability for those who are most in need of medical services.

Thank you.

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Policy Statement

## **Medical Visit Documentation for Class or Work Absence**

**Effective August 3, 2009**



The Health Service does not provide written excuses for class or work absence. The responsibility of Health Service is to treat students who are ill or injured and to provide education and services regarding health related issues. These programs and services are provided to enhance the ability of students to participate fully in intellectual and personal growth opportunities afforded by the University.

Health Service makes every attempt to schedule a medical appointment around a student's class or work schedule to avoid a conflict of missing class or work obligations. The Health Service will not accommodate visits for the sole purpose of obtaining verification of a visit.

Class attendance is an administrative matter between the faculty and the students. Only faculty or an employer may excuse a student from class or work obligations.

If a student is evaluated at the Health Service for an illness or injury, we will provide specific instructions for class or work attendance for two reasons only: 1) cases in which the student is at risk of exposing the illness to others and/or 2) situations in which attending class will hamper recovery from the illness or injury. Health Service will continue, to recommend absences for prolonged or serious illnesses. This documentation may come from Health Service or the Registration Office depending on the duration of the recommended absence.

If required by an instructor or employer, a student may obtain medical documentation from the Health Service. Medical documentation is generally available within 1-2 business days. Students may also sign an "Authorization to Release Patient Information" if it is necessary to discuss the student's personal health information with faculty or employers.

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**Copies of the above policy statement are available at the Health Service. Questions regarding this policy should be referred to the Director of Health Service or the Medical Director. This policy, a policy letter to the Eastern Community, and a notice bulletin are available on the Health Service website.**

### CLASS ATTENDANCE

Students are expected to attend class meetings as scheduled. When an absence does occur, the student is responsible for the material covered during the absence. When possible, the student should notify the instructor in advance of an anticipated absence.

Instructors will grant make-up privileges (when make-up is possible) to students for properly verified absences due to illness, emergency, participation in an official University activity, or participation in volunteer emergency work); and such absences will not militate against students in classes in which attendance is used directly in determining final grades. It is the student's responsibility to initiate plans for make-up work and to complete it promptly. If in the instructor's judgment the duration or number of absences renders make-up unfeasible, the instructor may contact the Vice President for Student Affairs and the Department Chairperson to determine an appropriate action.

Except for the above stipulations, each instructor sets his or her own policy with respect to class attendance and make-up work; and excuses for absences are handled between the instructor and the student. At the beginning of each grading period, the instructor shall announce, in writing, his or her policy regarding absence, make-up and late work. Instructors planning to use attendance directly in determining final grades must have written department approval and must indicate this intention and the reason, in writing, on the first day of class.

A student whose instructor requests verification of an illness treated by the University Health Service may request a documentation of the visit to share with the faculty member. If a student establishes a record or pattern of absences of concern to the instructor, the instructor may ask of the Vice President for Student Affairs that inquiries concerning the absences be made. The Vice President for Student Affairs also serves as the University contact person when catastrophic events result in extended student absences.

Any student who feels that he or she has been treated unfairly concerning absences or has been misinformed by a faculty member regarding that instructor's absence policy shall have the right to appeal through the department Chairperson, or in the event the instructor is the Chairperson, through the appropriate Dean.

CAA Approval: 4/23/09

Approved:  
President  
August 3, 2009

Monitor: Vice President for Academic Affairs