

# STUDENT ABSENCES & COURSE ATTENDANCE

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## Student Absences

Students are expected to attend all classes unless they have an excused absence: a severe medical issue, family emergency/death, or significant career-related activity. All excused absences are at the faculty member's discretion. Faculty may refer students to their Advising Dean in SIPA Student Affairs for additional support. For career-related activities, students should request to be absent in advance, secure notes from another student, and complete an additional assignment related to the topic for the missed session.

Because MIA and MPA students are expected to complete an internship, and because some internships require students to attend informational activities or interviews, many instructors will excuse students from one class session to participate in such activities or interview for a job.

Instructors must indicate their expectations regarding unexcused and excused absences in their syllabi, clearly articulating how absences affect a final grade.

If an approved absence results in the rescheduling of an exam, faculty are responsible for scheduling and proctoring the exam and finding a room. Faculty may direct students to the designated make-up final exam day, where SIPA Student Affairs will proctor their exam. This make-up day usually falls on the last day of the final exam period.

## Religious Holidays

It is the policy of Columbia University to respect the religious beliefs of its faculty, students, and staff. In accordance with New York State law, no student may be penalized for absences due to religious beliefs.

Students should inform their instructors at the beginning of the semester of plans to observe a religious holiday so that instructors and students can form a plan for the term that takes into account any necessary alternative arrangements. It is important for students to understand that they are responsible for all course requirements, even when absences can be accommodated; for example, if participation in each class session is a course requirement, a student who misses a class for religious observance may be asked to make up the missed participation in some alternative way (e.g., a written response to the reading assignment). If a suitable arrangement to accommodate absences for religious observation cannot be worked out between the student and the instructor, the student should consult their advising dean in SIPA Student Affairs. If an additional appeal is needed, it may be taken to the Provost, whose determination is final.

Instructors who have questions about particular religious holidays or forms of observance can write to [religiouslife@columbia.edu](mailto:religiouslife@columbia.edu) to consult with one of the religious life advisers in [The Earl Hall Center for Religious Life](#). Instructors who have concerns regarding the academic implications of a student's religious observance should contact the student's advising dean in SIPA Student Affairs.

## Attending Courses with Schedule Overlap

Students at SIPA are generally prohibited from registering for courses with overlapping schedules. However, an exception may be made for foreign language courses to accommodate their irregular timetable.

Students should consult their Advising Dean in SIPA Student Affairs for additional information.

## Attending Courses with Multiple Sections

In courses with multiple sections, students are required to attend the section for which they have registered. Students may not register for one section and attend another section's time to avoid course overlap. In limited instances, the instructor may permit a student to attend another section to make up coursework missed due to an approved absence.