

Policy Title:

**McMaster Student Absence Form Policy [MSAF Policy]**

Approved by:

**Senate**

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[Policy on Requests for Relief for Missed Academic Term Work](#)

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Responsible Executive: Vice-Provost (Teaching and Learning)

Policy-Specific Enquiries: [Vice-Provost \(Teaching and Learning\)](#)

**Students should contact their respective Faculty/Program Office - refer to [Section D](#)**

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**Disclaimer:** If there is a discrepancy between this electronic policy and the approved copy held by the University Secretariat, the approved copy prevails.

**Accessible Format Requests and General Policy Enquiries:** [policy@mcmaster.ca](mailto:policy@mcmaster.ca)

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## Section A: Introduction

### Preamble and Scope

1. McMaster University recognizes that undergraduate students periodically require relief for missed academic work due to extenuating circumstances. This Policy will support the management of these requests by reducing the requirement for documentation from a healthcare practitioner for short-term absences, while considering the needs and obligations of undergraduate students, instructors, and administrators.

### Definitions

2. For the purpose of interpreting this Policy:
  - a) **student** means an undergraduate student;
  - b) **extenuating circumstances** are when a student is unable to meet their academic obligations due to a situation that is outside of their control, such as an illness, medical event, or other situation;
  - c) **MSAF (Self-Report)** means the McMaster Student Absence Form (Self-Report), where students can self-report absences that result in missed academic work;
  - d) **MSAF (Administrative Report)** means the McMaster Student Absence Form (Administrative Report), where Faculty/Program Office staff may record approved longer-term absences for students that result in missed academic work

### Types of Absences Referred to Other Policies

3. Accommodations to meet religious, Indigenous or Spiritual Observances may not be processed under this Policy, students are directed to use the [Policy on Academic Accommodation for Religious, Indigenous and Spiritual Observances](#) for these requests.

4. Students seeking accommodations related to a disability or a retroactive accommodation are directed to use the [Academic Accommodation of Students with Disabilities](#) policy.

### **Absences for Other Known Obligations**

5. Students are directed to contact their Faculty/Program Office to seek guidance on absences for obligations that are known about in advance (“**known obligations**”).
6. Known obligations may include the following: mandatory legal obligations (e.g., jury duty, court dates); planned surgeries; and mandatory military obligations.
7. The granting of relief for known obligations is at the discretion of the Faculty/Program Office and are not appealable. These offices will use the MSAF tool for communications.

### **Exclusions**

8. This Policy can **not** be used:
  - a) for the purpose of time-management;
  - b) for academic work such as online assessments (e.g., quizzes, tests, etc.), where the student has already completed the work, or has attempted to complete the work. This includes the viewing and/or partial completion of online assessments (e.g., quizzes, tests, etc.);
  - c) to apply for relief for any final examination or its equivalent (refer to *Petitions for Special Consideration: Request for Deferred Examination*, in the *Undergraduate Calendar*);
  - d) for absences in a student's clinical placement, co-op placement, or internship; and
  - e) for McMaster Continuing Education (MCE) programs and courses. MCE students are directed to contact their course instructor.

## Academic Integrity

9. Requests for relief should be made with a commitment to academic integrity in mind. Requests that deviate from this commitment will be handled under the [Academic Integrity Policy](#) and/or [Code of Student Rights and Responsibilities](#), where appropriate.
10. Requests for relief must be accurate in terms of dates and value of the piece of work, as described in the course outline. For example, representing a piece of work as being worth twenty-four percent (24%) when it is actually worth thirty percent (30%) is a violation of the [Academic Integrity Policy](#).

## Privacy

11. The University, and its employees and agents, will protect personal information and handle records in accordance with the [Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act \(FIPPA\)](#) and the [Personal Health Information Protection Act \(PHIPA\)](#).

## Appeals

12. Decisions by the Faculty/Program Office made under this Policy are final and are not appealable.

## Section B: MSAF (Self-Report)

13. Students are directed to read [Section A](#) for information on the types of absences that do **not** qualify for an MSAF (Self-Report).

### Requirements

14. The MSAF (Self-Report) is a **single request** which covers all of the student's courses and applies only to the work due within the time period of the request.
15. MSAF (Self-Report) requests for relief shall meet all three of the requirements below:
- a) the piece of work is worth **less** than twenty-five percent (**25%**) of the final grade;
  - b) is resulting from extenuating circumstances (refer to the definitions in [Section A](#)); and
  - c) the absence (time period covered by the request) lasts **up to three (3) calendar days**.

### Regulations

16. The MSAF (Self-Report) should be submitted when the student is ready and able to return to their academic studies/duties.
17. Students must submit their MSAF (Self-Report) **within one (1) calendar day** of the end of the three (3) calendar day period, and failure to do so may negate the opportunity for relief.
18. Students may only apply the MSAF Policy once to a single piece of work. A second MSAF submission for the same piece of work is not permitted.

### Restrictions

19. The MSAF (Self-Report) may only be submitted **once per Term**, not per course.
- 20.** Normally, relief for missed work will not be provided where the cumulative value of missed work within a course, prior to the exam period, is **greater than thirty-five percent (35%)**.

## Procedures

21. Before filing an MSAF (Self-Report), students should review their course outline(s) as instructions may have already been provided on how requests will be addressed (e.g., how missed academic work will be accommodated) and further communication expectations.
22. Students shall use MOSAIC to make an MSAF (Self-Report) request, in compliance with the regulations listed above.
23. Students shall **not** submit accompanying documentation with the MSAF (Self-Report) request.
24. The MSAF (Self-Report) is available in the [MOSAIC](#) Student Center (in the drop-down menu under *Other Academic.*)
25. Once submitted, if the request meets the criteria of this Policy, students should consider their request to be approved.
26. An automated email will be sent to the course instructor(s) to inform them of the request.

### Students Required to Contact Instructor

27. Students must contact their instructor(s) **no later than one (1) calendar day** after submitting the request **unless the course outline states otherwise**. Failure to do so may negate the opportunity for relief.
28. Students are advised that instructors teaching large classes may require more time to respond.

### Instructors

29. Instructor(s) will determine the reasonable relief for the request, in accordance with this Policy.



30. In the absence of a statement in their course outline on how requests will be addressed and communication expectations (e.g., posting information on A2L), instructors are expected to inform students of the relief in a reasonable timeframe.

### **Absences Longer Than 3 Calendar Days**

31. For absences that exceed three (3) calendar days, students are directed to the MSAF (Administrative Report), as described in the next section.

### **Meeting with an Academic Advisor**

32. Students **must** arrange a meeting with an academic advisor for absences that last **more than two weeks** or relief may not be provided.
33. Students **must** meet with an advisor to discuss their options when:
- a) the cumulative value of missed work within a course is greater than **thirty-five percent (35%)**; and/or
  - b) they have exhausted their one MSAF (Self Report) and two MSAF (Administrative Reports), and further work is missed.

## Section C: MSAF (Administrative Report)

34. Students are directed to read [Section A](#) for information on the types of absences that do not qualify for an MSAF (Self-Report).

### Requirements

35. The MSAF (Administrative Report) is a **single request** which covers all of the student's courses and applies only to the work due within the time period of the request.
36. MSAF (Administrative Report) requests for relief are for any of the three reasons below:
- a) extenuating circumstances (refer to definitions in [Section A](#)) lasting **more than three (3) calendar days**; and/or
  - b) missed academic work worth **twenty-five percent (25%) or more** of the final grade; and/or
  - c) any request for relief in a term where the MSAF (Self-Report) has already been used once.

### Regulations

37. Students may only apply the MSAF Policy once to a single piece of work. A second MSAF submission for the same piece of work is not permitted.

### Documentation

38. Students should **not** send documentation unless it has been **requested** by the Faculty/Program Office.
39. Supporting documentation may be required for an MSAF (Administrative Report). When requested by the Faculty/Program Office, students shall submit the **McMaster University Student Health Certificate** (completed by the licensed/registered health practitioner).

40. Requests for information and/or supporting documentation will, where possible, be limited to the nature of the limitation or restriction, in order to assess needs and determine whether the request for relief is granted, or if the request should be referred for processing under another policy or procedure.
41. Supporting documentation does not require the disclosure of a medical diagnosis but must be sufficient to allow the University to determine reasonable relief and/or explore reasonable alternatives.

## Restrictions

42. Normally, relief for missed work will **not** be provided:
  - a) where the cumulative value of missed work within a course, prior to the exam period, is **greater than thirty-five percent (35%)**; or
  - b) for more than two (2) MSAF (Administrative Report) requests within a single term.

## Procedures

43. Students must contact their [Faculty/Program Office \(refer to Section D\)](#) to report their absence **within one (1) calendar day after returning** to their academic activities. Failure to contact and report an absence promptly will negate the opportunity for relief.
44. Students may or may not require an appointment to process the request and will be contacted by the Faculty/Program Office within normal business hours.
45. In some circumstances, students may be advised to submit a [Petition for Special Consideration](#).

## Meeting with an Academic Advisor

46. Students **must** arrange a meeting with an academic advisor for absences that last **more than two weeks** or relief may not be provided.

47. Students **must** meet with an advisor to discuss their options when:
- a) the cumulative value of missed work within a course is **greater than thirty-five percent (35%)**; and/or
  - b) they have exhausted their one MSAF (Self Report) and two MSAF (Administrative Reports), and further work is missed.

### **If the Request is Granted**

48. If the request is granted, the Faculty/Program Office will process the relief request and notify the instructor(s) and the student.

### **Students Required to Contact Instructor**

49. Students must contact their instructor(s) **no later than one (1) calendar day after being notified** that their request has been processed **unless the course outline states otherwise**. Failure to do so may negate the opportunity for relief.
50. Students are advised that instructors teaching large classes may require more time to respond.

### **Instructors**

51. Instructor(s) will determine the reasonable relief for the request, in accordance with this Policy.
52. In the absence of a statement in their course outline on how requests will be addressed and communication expectations (e.g., posting information on A2L), instructors are expected to inform students of the relief in a reasonable timeframe.

## Appendix A: Faculty / Program Contact Information

Student enquiries should be directed to their respective Faculty/Program Office.

### Arts & Science Program

[artsci.mcmaster.ca/contact-us/](https://artsci.mcmaster.ca/contact-us/)

### Faculty of Humanities

[humanities@mcmaster.ca](mailto:humanities@mcmaster.ca)

[humadvising.humanities.mcmaster.ca/](https://humadvising.humanities.mcmaster.ca/)

### DeGroote School of Business

[buscom@mcmaster.ca](mailto:buscom@mcmaster.ca)

[ug.degroote.mcmaster.ca/contact/](https://ug.degroote.mcmaster.ca/contact/)

### Faculty of Science

[science@mcmaster.ca](mailto:science@mcmaster.ca)

[science.mcmaster.ca/associatedean/contact-us.html](https://science.mcmaster.ca/associatedean/contact-us.html)

### Faculty of Engineering

[eng.mcmaster.ca/programs/academic-advising](https://eng.mcmaster.ca/programs/academic-advising)

### Faculty of Social Sciences

[socscfac@mcmaster.ca](mailto:socscfac@mcmaster.ca)

[socialsciences.mcmaster.ca/current-students/academic-advising/](https://socialsciences.mcmaster.ca/current-students/academic-advising/)

## Faculty of Health Sciences

### Bachelor of Health Sciences (Honours)

[bhsc.mcmaster.ca/contact/](https://bhsc.mcmaster.ca/contact/)

[bhsc@mcmaster.ca](mailto:bhsc@mcmaster.ca)

### **Honours Biology & Pharmacology Co-op Program**

[biopharm.healthsci.mcmaster.ca](http://biopharm.healthsci.mcmaster.ca)

[biophrm@mcmaster.ca](mailto:biophrm@mcmaster.ca)

### **Honours Biochemistry B.H.Sc. (Honours)**

[healthsci.mcmaster.ca/biochem](http://healthsci.mcmaster.ca/biochem)

[bbsug@mcmaster.ca](mailto:bbsug@mcmaster.ca)

### **Integrated Biomedical Engineering and Health Sciences Program (IBEHS)**

[ibiomed.mcmaster.ca](http://ibiomed.mcmaster.ca)

[ibiomed@mcmaster.ca](mailto:ibiomed@mcmaster.ca)

### **Biomedical Discovery and Commercialization Program**

[bdcprogram.mcmaster.ca/contact/](http://bdcprogram.mcmaster.ca/contact/)

[bdcprogram@mcmaster.ca](mailto:bdcprogram@mcmaster.ca)

### **Midwifery Education Program**

[midwifery.mcmaster.ca/](http://midwifery.mcmaster.ca/)

[midwifery@mcmaster.ca](mailto:midwifery@mcmaster.ca)

### **Bachelor of Science Nursing Program**

McMaster University Site, Mohawk College Site, and Conestoga College Sites

[bscnadvising@mcmaster.ca](mailto:bscnadvising@mcmaster.ca)

### **Physician Assistant Education Program**

[fhs.mcmaster.ca/physicianassistant/](http://fhs.mcmaster.ca/physicianassistant/)

[paprogram@mcmaster.ca](mailto:paprogram@mcmaster.ca)

## Appendix B: Related Policies

This Policy is to be read in conjunction with the following policies, procedures, and guidelines. Any question of the application of this Policy or related policies shall be determined by the Vice-Provost (Teaching and Learning), and in conjunction with the administrator of the other policy or policies. The University reserves the right to amend or add to the University's policies and statements from time to time (this is not a comprehensive list):

- [Academic Accommodation for Religious, Indigenous and Spiritual Observances, Policy on](#)
- [Academic Accommodation of Students with Disabilities](#)
- [Academic Integrity Policy](#)
- [Code of Student Rights & Responsibilities](#)
- [Professional Behaviour Code of Conduct for Undergraduate Learners – Faculty of Health Sciences](#)
- [Storm Emergency Policy](#)
- [Undergraduate Course Management Policy](#)
- [Undergraduate Examinations Policy](#)
- [Undergraduate Calendar](#)
  - General Academic Regulations
  - Petition for Special Consideration: Request for Deferred Examination (Form B):