
Faculty Handbook

Faculty Relationships with Student Athletes

Last updated: 4/15/2020

V. INSTRUCTION (Cont.)

This statement was issued by the Office of the Provost on August 6, 1996 and revised on August 4, 2003 and April 15, 2020.

Michigan State University enrolls more than 700 student-athletes who participate in 25 intercollegiate sports. MSU recognizes the special responsibilities and privileges of these student-athletes. The University is committed to provide the environment and support necessary for student-athletes to establish and realize high levels of academic and athletic success.

Student-athletes are governed by policies and regulations of the National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA) and the Big Ten Conference as well as by Michigan State University. All of these regulations are intended to establish shared restrictions and expectations for all student-athletes while recognizing the special burdens created by intercollegiate athletic competition.

The NCAA and Big Ten Conference regulations cover all aspects of recruiting, academic eligibility, and athletic financial aid of matriculated student-athletes. For faculty members, there are two general guidelines that are important to remember:

1. You cannot do anything for a student-athlete that you would not do for another student in a similar situation. On the other hand, you should not refuse to do something for a student-athlete, if you would do it for another student.
2. There are some things that you can do for an individual student that you cannot do for an individual student-athlete: for example, you cannot buy anything, not even a soft drink, for a student-athlete; you cannot provide a ride for a student-athlete; you cannot let a student-athlete charge a long distance telephone call to your business or home telephone number.

Policy and Process Items

ACADEMIC PROGRESS REPORTS: These reports are sent electronically to faculty members by the Office of the Registrar during the fifth and eleventh weeks of Fall and Spring semesters. If you are teaching a course and receive the forms, please fill them out and respond as fully as possible. The Student-Athlete Support Services Office is charged with monitoring academic progress for student-athletes, and needs the information in a timely way. If you have concerns about the academic performance of a student-athlete, you can recommend academic assistance for the student-athlete by calling the Director of Student-Athlete Support Services.

ACADEMIC ADVISING: Counselors in the Department of Intercollegiate Athletics do not provide academic advising. Student-athletes are advised by advisors in their majors or in the University Undergraduate Division (UUD) or by the assistant/associate dean of the college in which they are enrolled and should be referred to these sources. However, student-athletes can receive additional academic support from Student-Athlete Support Services, e.g., assignment to a study hall, availability of a tutor or referral to additional services provided on campus.

CLASS ATTENDANCE: Student-athletes are excused from class when competing in official events or games. Athletic Council recommended that competition schedules be so constructed as to limit the number of missed days to seven per semester. (This may not always be possible.) Each student-athlete should bring a team schedule to the instructor at the beginning of the semester to verify the excused absences. However, an

excused absence does not excuse the student-athlete from completing the work assigned. [Student-athletes are frequently advised to schedule classes with mandatory attendance policies in the off-season or summer term.]

The faculty and staff should be sensitive to the absences so that students who absent themselves from classes on these days are not seriously disadvantaged. It is the responsibility of those students who wish to be absent to make arrangements in advance with their instructors. Some instructors attempt to cover all reasons for student absences from required academic events such as quizzes or exams with a blanket policy, e.g., allowing the student to drop one grade or two quizzes without penalty. If this is meant to extend to athletic events, the instructor should state this clearly at the beginning of the term. If instructors require make-up exams, they retain the right to determine the content of the exams and the conditions of administration, giving due consideration to equitable treatment.

ATHLETIC DEPARTMENT CONTACTS: Coaches are not permitted to call instructors or TAs assigned to courses. Student-Athlete Support Services or the college or department or UUD academic advisor may appropriately contact faculty members about a student-athlete's progress, attendance or behavior. However, any undue attempt to influence your judgment or secure a particular action on behalf of a student-athlete should be reported immediately to your department chairperson.

INCOMPLETES: A student-athlete must make up incomplete coursework and have the grade entered in Campus Solutions before the first day of class in the next semester if the course is necessary for academic eligibility. Authorized staff in departments and colleges that offer the course enter the final grade in Campus Solutions. This eligibility-related rule is more stringent for student-athletes than the University rule is for all students and can be crucial for competition.

PRIVACY OF RECORDS: The Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) prohibits dissemination of any information about a student-athlete's academic progress to anyone but the student, the student's advisor, and the Student-Athlete Support Services Office unless the student-athlete grants permission for this information to be shared.

Religious Observance

V. INSTRUCTION (Cont.)

This policy was issued by the Office of the Provost with an effective date of January 9, 2023, after consultation with the University Committee on Faculty Affairs, the University Committee on Students Affairs, the University Committee with Undergraduate Education, and Faculty Senate. This policy can also be found in the [Academic Programs](#).

Michigan State University is a home for a vibrant, diverse, and multicultural community of students, faculty, and staff, and we value and actively support that diversity, including the diversity of spiritual expression and practice. Therefore, it is the policy of the University to enable students and faculty [1] to observe those days set aside by their chosen religious faith. As Michigan State University has become increasingly multicultural, the incidence of conflicts between mandatory academic requirements and religious observances has increased. In the absence of a simple and dignified way to determine the validity of individual claims, the claim of a religious conflict should be accepted at face value.

Applicability

This policy states institutional and individual expectations for faculty, academic staff, and students to enable students and faculty to observe those religious days set aside by their chosen religious faith.

The faculty and staff must be sensitive to the observance of these observance days so that students who absent themselves from classes on these days are not disadvantaged in any way. Students who miss class, assignments, or exams to observe a religious day must be accommodated in ways that include, but are not limited to, the following:

- (1) Professors and instructors should make every effort to avoid scheduling exams and oral presentations during the major religious days on campus (Jewish, Muslim, Hindu, etc.). If a professor has scheduled such an exam or oral presentation, exams must be reasonably rescheduled without academic penalty.
- (2) Absences may not be counted as a missed class in any course in which attendance is a measure of academic performance. Some instructors attempt to cover all reasons for student absences from required academic events such as quizzes or exams with a blanket policy, e.g., allowing the student to drop one grade or two quizzes without penalty, or allowing a certain number of "unexcused" absences during the course of a semester. This kind of policy should not be applied to religious observances, as this penalizes religions with more observance days that require absences than others.
- (3) Reasonable extensions of time must be given, without academic penalty, for missed assignments; students must be allowed to schedule presentations around such absences. Make-up work should be appropriate and not more difficult than the original assignment.
- (4) It is the responsibility of those students who need to be absent to inform their instructor at least two weeks before the observance day, make arrangements in advance with their instructors, and to catch up on any material discussed and assignments given during that class period. Accommodations must never fundamentally alter an essential requirement of the course or academic program.
- (5) All faculty must refer to this religious policy in their syllabi as well as provide the deadline in the syllabus by which students need to inform instructors of a conflict. Faculty should remind students of the deadline during the first day of class.

(6) Orientation programs for new students -- including the orientations for international students -- must inform incoming students about this policy and urge them to check for conflicts before the deadline for informing their instructors.

Information on religious days:

There are members of many faiths at the university, including Bahá'í, Buddhism, Christianity, Hinduism, Islam, Jainism, Judaism, Sikh, their associated branches and more. Information about the dates of observance is available on the [religious observance calendar](#) webpage maintained by the Office of the Provost.

Please note that Jewish religious days â including the weekly observance of the sabbath - begin at sundown the evening before the date listed. Shabbat, the Jewish sabbath, is observed weekly from before sundown on Friday to sundown (when three stars are visible) on Saturday and during this time observant Jews are required to refrain from work, use of electricity and other activities. Be aware that more observant Jews will have a more extensive period of observance for some religious days and will need to take time off.

Islamic religious days are based on the lunar calendar and will be celebrated approximately around the dates listed. During Ramadan, faculty should make final exam accommodations for students who fast and request such accommodations. Students should have the opportunity to reschedule a late afternoon exam in the morning, and vice versa.

[\[1\]](#) The term faculty is used broadly throughout this policy and is intended to cover both faculty and academic staff.