Ashland University Attendance/Participation Policy

A) Policy Required

The Higher Learning Commission, U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs and the Department of Education require that the University has an attendance policy for enrolled students. Ashland University does not require instructors take attendance but periodic, monitoring and reporting of academically related participation is required according to the chart below. It is in the best interest of students to understand that regular class attendance/participation is critical for academic success. It is also in the best interest of the University to have a policy where academically related participation is reported at key points during the term to assist various offices in monitoring student enrollment and to assist students via the Early Alert system as noted below:

1. The Office of Institutional Effectiveness provides critical data to external and internal parties. Enrollment data as of the census date(s) is necessary to report accurate data. Accurate academically related participation records at census are also important in the determination of retention data.

2. The Center for Academic Support depends on Early Alerts from faculty to provide counseling and academic support services that may be critical to a student’s academic success. Faculty participation in Early Alerts have a significant impact on the University's improving retention rates.

3. Higher Learning Commission – according to the Quality Scorecard, taking attendance helps ensure:
   - Opportunities to engage students with the program and institutions in order to minimize feelings of isolation and alienation (criteria 3E).
   - A process is in place and followed for the assessment of support services for faculty and students (criteria 4A).
   - A process is in place and followed for the assessment of student retention in online courses and programs (criterion 4A, 4C).

4. The Office of Records and Registration sends a monthly enrollment report to the National Student Clearinghouse. This information is provided to the National Student Loan Data System that determines when students are to start or continue loan repayment. If enrollment information is not correct, the government may be paying interest on student loans when they should not be which would be a liability to the University.

5. Financial Aid/Business Offices
   - The Business Office is required to refund Title IV aid credit balances to the student/parent no later than 14 days after the term begins. Refunds of Title IV aid cannot be given unless the Business Office has confirmation that the student has academically related participation in a class.
   - Title IV aid must be returned to the Department of Education expediently if the student is withdrawn (official or unofficial) or never attended class. Faculty need to report “no shows” to the Office of Records and Registration at the end of the first week of class.
   - Return to Title IV (R2T4) regulations require that when a student withdraws during a term, the last date of attendance must be determined so that a refund calculation can be made and Title IV aid returned to the Department of Education.
   - If a student receives all F’s, the last date of attendance is the midpoint of the term unless there is documentation of attendance or academically related participation later in the term. If the midpoint of the term is used, then the University may be returning more Title IV aid to the
Department of Education than may have been required with up-to-date academically related participation records. The absence of academically related participation negatively impacts the University’s finances.

- Monitoring academically related participation in on-line classes is especially important to thwart attempts by “students” to defraud the Department of Education of Title IV aid.

6. Office of Veterans Services

- Must report on a regular basis the enrollment of students who receive GI Benefits. Students who stop attending classes where attendance is not taken may be receiving more benefits than they are entitled to.

B) Monitoring Academically Related Participation

To meet compliance standards, students are required to participate in an academically related activity (see examples below) within the first eight days of the start date of the course. Students may be administratively withdrawn from the course and may lose financial aid funding if academically related participation does not occur within the first eight days of the course.

1. Face-to-Face, Hybrid, Web-Enhanced, Synchronous (faculty and students meet at the same time) Courses

Academically related participation for face-to-face, hybrid, and web-enhanced or other synchronous courses include but are not limited to, one or more of the following activities, according to the Federal Student Aid (FSA) Handbook (dated June 2017, 5-60):

- Physically attending a class where there is an opportunity for direct interaction between the instructor and students,
- Submitting an academic assignment,
- Taking an exam, completing an interactive tutorial, or participating in computer-assisted instruction,
- Attending a study group that is assigned by the school,
- Participating in an online discussion about academic matters,
- Initiating contact with a faculty member to ask a question about the academic subject studied in the course.

According to the Federal Student Aid (FSA) Handbook (dated June 2017, 5-60), “Participation in academic counseling and advising are no longer considered to be academic attendance or attendance at an academically related activity.”

2. Online and Asynchronous (faculty and students may engage with course materials at various and separate times) Courses

Academically related participation for online courses include but are not limited to one or more of the following activities, according to the Federal Student Aid (FSA) Handbook (dated June 2017, 5-61):

- Student submission of an academic assignment,
- Student submission of an exam,
• Documented student participation in an interactive tutorial or computer-assisted instruction,
• A posting by the student showing the student’s participation in an online study group that is assigned by the institution,
• A posting by the student in a discussion forum showing the student’s participation in an online discussion about academic matters,
• An e-mail from the student or other documentation showing that the student initiated contact with a faculty member to ask a question about the academic subject studied in the course.

Simply logging into a course online via the Learning Management System (LMS) or discussing the course with an academic counselor or advisor is not considered an academically related activity. Participation in a discussion board of a non-academic topic, such as an ice breaker or an “Introduce Yourself” post, also does not count as an academically related participation.

C) Reporting Academically Related Participation

At a minimum, all faculty will report academically related participation as follows:

1. The faculty will report academically related participation (see Section B) at the first participation check noted in the table below to the Office of Records and Registration indicating whether each student participated in academically related activity during the first week of class.
2. The faculty will report academically related participation (see Section B) at the second participation check noted in the table below to the Office of Records and Registration indicating whether each student participated in an academically related activity during the second or third week of class.
3. The faculty will report academically related participation (see Section B) at the 60% point of the term as Title IV regulations consider all Title IV aid earned if a student withdraws after the 60% point of the term.
4. For a student who receives an “F” in a class, the faculty member must enter the last date of attendance. Attendance includes any academically related participation outlined in Section B.

D) Tracking Academically Related Participation

Faculty are encouraged to use the Learning Management System (LMS) or another means of tracking academically related participation. Faculty will document student academically related participation by verifying academically related participation has occurred for each student in each class. This can also be tracked in the LMS Attendance Tool or other means deemed appropriate. In each week when reporting of academically related participation is required (see chart below) faculty will be required to submit records to the Office of Records and Registration by Sunday at midnight at the end of each week. If the faculty has chosen to use the LMS Attendance Tool, an additional submission to the Office of Records and Registration will not be necessary.

<p>| Minimum Requirements for Faculty to Report Academically Related Participation in Each Class |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Course Duration</th>
<th>First Participation Check</th>
<th>Second Participation Check (Census)</th>
<th>Third Participation Check (approx. 60% point)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>16 weeks</td>
<td>End of 1st week of class</td>
<td>End of 3rd week of class</td>
<td>End of 10th week of term</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12 weeks</td>
<td>End of 1st week of class</td>
<td>End of 3rd week of class</td>
<td>End of 10th week of term</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7 weeks</td>
<td>End of 1st week of class</td>
<td>End of 2nd week of class</td>
<td>End of 7th week of term</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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E) Student Absence

If a student needs to be absent for an extended time, arrangements must be made with the instructor prior to the absence. Specific arrangements such as allowing students to work ahead in the course, finish the course upon the student’s return, giving a grade of “I” and allowing student to finish the course within the next semester, or another arrangement as deemed appropriate by the instructor, are determined by each individual instructor for each course. A possibility of special arrangements for absence must be clearly stated in the course syllabus.

Students who will miss class due to University-sponsored events such as athletics, music, drama or field trips are to be excused absences. The student must notify the faculty member in advance of the absence (preferably at least 14 days) and make arrangements to complete all academic requirements of the class. Specific details are determined by each individual instructor for each course but, again, the possibility of special arrangements must be clearly stated in the course syllabus.

F) Veteran/Military Leave

According to policies and procedures set forth by Ashland University’s Office of Veterans Services, the University will grant service members requiring more than a 30-day leave a release from coursework. Contact the Office of Veterans Services for more information regarding this process.