

From: [Office of the MSU Provost](#)
Subject: UHP Medical Excuse Practice
Date: Thursday, December 05, 2019 12:35:29 PM
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Office of the Provost

Dear MSU Faculty,

Over the past two years, Medical Services at University Health Partners (UHP) has been discussing ending the practice of providing medical excuses (aka “doctors notes”). As a reminder, MSU has no policy requiring faculty to make accommodations for absences, except when students are representing MSU in athletic events or in other official capacities (sec. 310.1 of the Student Conduct Code).

UHP discussed rationale for ending the practice of medical excuses with Academic Council, Faculty Senate, and ASMSU Senate, among other groups. Reasons for updating UHP practices, include:

- Part of the university learning experience for students includes communicating directly with a faculty member, in a manner similar to how they would need to communicate with their future employer, when they needed to miss a work assignment.
- Illness is only one possible “legitimate” reason for an absence (others might include a family emergency, sick child, mandatory court appearances, jury duty, car trouble, etc.).
- Students who visit UHP for only a medical excuse create problematic consequences for UHP and for other students because:
 - Visits by students merely seeking a doctor’s note, use scarce resources that that are needed for students who truly need medical attention.
 - Visits by students merely seeking a doctor’s note can lead to unnecessary lab tests and x-rays.
 - For public health reasons, UHP will recommend that students with a highly contagious illness (e.g., influenza) not go to class and only seek medical care if they have unusual symptoms or a co-existing chronic health condition.
 - Students who use the existing excuse system to “game” the faculty and avoid their responsibilities are equally adept at misleading medical providers for many illnesses that otherwise have no physical or laboratory finding (migraines, abdominal pain, nausea, etc.). Medical providers need to trust that a patient is providing an honest account of their illness in order to accurately diagnose and treat them. If there is a secondary gain of being excused from an assignment, class, or test by visiting the medical provider, it calls that open, honest dialogue into question, and provides disingenuous information to the faculty member.

Examples of similar policies at other universities include: University of Wyoming <https://www.uwyo.edu/shser/medical-excuses.html> , Washington State University <https://cougarhealth.wsu.edu/documents/2018/05/absence-excuse-letter.pdf/> , Oregon State University <https://studenthealth.oregonstate.edu/policies-and-guidelines/medical-excuse-policy>

The Center for Faculty Excellence has included links on their web site with examples of absence policies for course syllabi that you might find useful.

<http://www.montana.edu/facultyexcellence/teaching/resources/SyllabusLanguage.html>

In summary, MSU University Health Partners will no longer provide medical excuses beginning at the start of Spring Semester, 2020.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Bob".

Dr. Robert L. Mokwa | Executive Vice President and Provost

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