



Faculty Responsibilities and Extended Absences from Campus

In response to a request for guidance from the Provost, the Professional Standards Committee issues this clarification of expectations for faculty (approved by the committee in April 2003).

The university encourages faculty research and the dissemination of ideas resulting from scholarly work. Moreover, the university recognizes the challenges of balancing teaching and research responsibilities. Participation by faculty in professional organizations and conferences contributes to the sharing of ideas and may otherwise enhance the faculty member's professional development. Such participation may well entail short absences from the campus during an academic term.

The *Faculty Code* includes within its discussion of the specific duties of faculty members a statement on the duration of the academic year and faculty responsibilities during that time. The *Code* indicates that "Faculty are to be available for normal duties in connection with the arrival of the students for advising and registration for fall term and until after commencement and final submission of grades for spring term. Faculty members are to use fully the academic term by meeting all classes through the final exam week, keeping office hours, meeting students for scheduled appointments, and fulfilling other duties that support the teaching-learning environment."

As this passage states clearly, faculty must normally maintain a regular presence on campus during orientation week at the beginning of fall term (this is especially important for those who have orientation responsibilities or freshman advisees), during the fall and spring terms when classes are in session, during final exam weeks, and through commencement. They should keep posted office hours and be available for appointments during these times. Faculty are enjoined by the *Code* to make full use of the academic term and to meet scheduled classes through and including the time scheduled for a final exam. The reading period and final exam week are a normal part of the term, and individual faculty may not normally choose to absent themselves from the campus for the entire reading period or exam week without placing themselves in violation of expectations for faculty performance under the *Code*.

The question arises as to when and on what terms faculty may absent themselves from campus for short periods during the term to pursue professional activities related to their appointments. A faculty member may reasonably miss two or three days of normally scheduled classes during a term to attend a significant professional meeting or research conference pertinent to the faculty member's appointment and teaching responsibilities. The faculty member should normally plan course schedules such that classes are not simply cancelled during an anticipated absence; the faculty member may arrange presentations by other faculty or visitors, proctored exams, or student assignments that clearly advance the work of the course. The faculty member should also inform the department chair of travel dates so that the chair, when feasible, can avoid scheduling important meetings or activities during those times and be aware of students or advisees who may need assistance during that period. Each faculty member who anticipates an absence has the responsibility to mitigate its effects to the greatest degree possible for students and for colleagues.

A faculty member should not normally plan to be absent from the campus for any contiguous week while classes are in session and should not normally miss more than a week's worth of classes in the same course through any combination of planned absences. A faculty member considering professional travel that would entail an absence of a contiguous week or more, or that would entail missing more than a week's worth of classes in the same course during the semester, is responsible for consulting with the department chair and the provost before making any commitment to such travel.

1. The **faculty member** must notify the department chair and the provost of the potential absence, explaining the purpose of the trip, the relationship of the scholarly conference (or conferences) involved to the work of the faculty member, and the anticipated contributions of the faculty member to the proceedings of the conference(s). The faculty member should be prepared to provide information on the duration of the conference(s) and should be willing to plan individual participation in ways that will reasonably limit time away from campus.

2. The **faculty member** should explain what steps will be taken to provide for the continuing development of courses and the progression of class sessions during the faculty member's absence.

3. The **department chair** (or school director or program director) will comment on the apparent value of the conference(s) for the individual faculty member, evaluate the adequacy of the proposed arrangements for course continuity, and indicate to the provost whether the absence appears justified from the perspective of the department.

4. The **provost** will evaluate the rationale and arrangements for the proposed absence, seek additional information if needed, and approve or disapprove the interruption of the faculty member's campus responsibilities.

The process described in 1-4 above need not require any written documentation. Consultation may occur orally, through email, or in any other form the parties find mutually acceptable. It must be clear to all concerned, however, that the chair has had an opportunity to comment and that the provost has provided explicit authorization before the faculty member undertakes a longer absence, as defined above.

For absences due to personal medical, family medical, or parental leave, please see the [Faculty Medical and Family Leave Policy and Faculty Disability Policy](#).