



## Attendance Policy

Updated December 2007

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### **Purpose:**

The purpose of this policy is to establish a uniform procedure within Western Connecticut State University (hereafter referred to as the “University”) for the review and control of employee absenteeism. It is the intent of the policy to encourage good employee attendance as an insurance policy against an extended illness, and provide employees and supervisors with guidelines defining acceptable and unacceptable attendance for performance purposes, including service rating. This policy is also designed to provide supervisory personnel with a uniform and consistent program for dealing with attendance deficiencies and other attendance related issues.

### **Scope:**

This policy applies to all Classified (Maintenance, Clerical, Protective Services, and Administrative & Residual), SUOAF, and Management/Confidential Employees.

### **Definitions:**

- **Tardiness** – Failure to report for duty at the time scheduled and/or failure to return to duty promptly at any point during the normal schedule (lunch, breaks, etc.).
- **Unauthorized Leave** – Failure to report an absence of any duration according to this policy or to leave or be absent from the worksite without proper authorization.
- **Absenteeism** – Failure to report to work or to remain at work as scheduled, regardless of reason. This includes tardiness, unauthorized leave, unanticipated use of sick leave, and emergency use of any accrued leave. Absenteeism does not include appropriately scheduled leave such as vacation, personal leave, compensatory leave, military leave, medical leave, medical appointments, maternity or other long-term medical leaves.
- **Occasion of Absence** – One continuous period of absence for the same reason and/or a period of absenteeism related to a single cause. A medical certificate is required to support non-consecutive absences related to the same cause if they are to be counted as a single occasion.
- **Abuse of Sick Leave** – Use of sick leave for reasons other than those defined under Personnel Policies for Management and Confidential Professional Personnel (hereafter referred to as “Management/Confidential Personnel Policies”), appropriate bargaining unit contract provisions, or State Personnel Regulations. Abuse of sick leave includes, but is not limited to: 1) Falsely reporting that sick leave is being used for that purposes; 2) Excessive absenteeism; or 3) Failure to provide medical documentation supporting an absence(s).
- **Medical Certificate** – The form prescribed by the State Department of Administrative Services (DAS) and signed by a licensed physician or other practitioner whose method of healing is recognized by the State and is acceptable to the University.

### **Standard:**

Attendance at the level of “good” or better is the basic performance standard at the University. Employees who routinely exceed this expectation should be commended on an annual basis by making a notation on the employee’s evaluation or service rating.



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### **Employee Responsibilities:**

- Employees are expected to report to work on time and remain at their assigned duty station as scheduled.
- Employees are expected to manage their personal affairs in a manner, which will enable them to report to work on a regular and dependable fashion. We recognize that there may be situations beyond an employee's control that cause absences from work. To the extent possible, employees are expected to minimize the absences related to unanticipated absences.
- All employees are expected to notify supervisory personnel as far in advance as practical of expected absences from work. The reporting of such information must include the reason for the absence, expected duration of the absence and expected return to work information, and any other information that would have an impact on the work environment during the employee's absence.
- All employees must report their unscheduled absences, including tardiness, to their immediate supervisor or their designee prior to the start of their workday. Unless an emergency situation dictates otherwise, messages may not be left by third parties (i.e. friends, relatives, etc.) or left with Administrative staff or co-workers unless the immediate supervisor has designated that individual to receive absence notifications.
- In accordance with the State Personnel Regulations, appropriate collective bargaining agreements, or Management/Confidential Personnel Policies, all employees are expected to provide documentation to support sick leave usage, when required.

### **Supervisor Responsibilities:**

Each supervisor shall:

- Be responsible for bringing to the attention of employees under his/her jurisdiction this procedure and any other related University policy or procedure that has been established for the purpose of providing direction and guidance for reporting employee absences.
- Establish a system for monitoring and recording the attendance of his/her staff. This record should include the date of absence, reason for the absence, length of the absence, type of leave charged, and, if appropriate, a notation indicating that the employee failed to provide proper notice of the absence.
- Monitor employee leave balances and ensure that employees do not exceed contractually earned benefits, i.e. annual accruals for family sick or funeral leave benefits, personal leave, vacation, or compensatory leave.
- Use regular progressive discipline (i.e. verbal and written counseling, reprimands, and suspensions) according to the guidelines outlined in this policy to correct attendance deficiencies.
- Incorporate the employee's attendance and any progressive disciplinary action into the employee service rating.

### **Criterion for Evaluating Attendance:**

Attendance records will be reviewed in terms of the criterion listed below to evaluate an employee's attendance and/or determine whether corrective action is warranted. The criterion are as follows:



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1. **Number of Occasions of Absence** – The number of occasions of absence is generally provided greater weight than the cumulative number of days/hours absent since a single cause, such as major surgery, might be the reason for the number of days absent. There are situations when an employee may be absent on non-consecutive days resulting from a single illness or injury. Those series of absences may be considered a single occasion provided that:
  - a. The employee provides a medical certificate from the physician that the treatment program is required and indicating the expected number of visits.
  - b. Advance notice of the appointments is given to the employee’s supervisor.

Sick leave taken due to the death of an immediate family member shall not be counted as an occasion.

2. **Number of Days/Hours Used** – While the first criterion analyzed is the number of occasions of absence, the number of days or hours used by the employee should be considered. Employees who continually exhaust their accumulated unused sick leave may be an indication of an attendance problem.
3. **Pattern of Absences** – Absence occurring in patterns (same day of week, same time of year, adjacent to a weekend, holiday, vacation, or other leave, etc.) may be indicative of an attendance problem.
4. **Mitigating Circumstances** – There are circumstances that may warrant a deviation from the general rating guidelines identified in this procedure. Mitigating circumstances include, but are not limited to, major illness or injury, ongoing therapy or medical treatment, approved family or medical leave, etc. When a supervisor deviates from these general rating guidelines of these procedures, they are required to specify the reason for non-conforming with the rating scale.
5. **Unauthorized Leave Without Pay** – Occasions of unauthorized leave are serious and consequently will accelerate discipline and may negatively impact an employee’s attendance rating.
6. **Tardiness** – In addition to absences, tardiness should be taken into account when rating an employee’s attendance. The number and duration of the occurrences should be examined as well as any mitigating circumstances. Excessive tardiness, in and of itself, may be the basis for disciplinary action and corresponding evaluation rating.

### Performance Guidelines:

As previously stated, it is the University’s standard that attendance be at the level of “good” or better. Because performance rating scales differ among the different employment groups, there is not one definition that can be used for all employee groups. However, it is the intent of the University to apply this policy on as consistent a basis as possible among all employee groups. To that end, in those situations where employee groups have existing performance categories and/or rating scales for attendance or an equivalent category, the University has established guidelines for sick leave, tardiness and unauthorized leave usage. Those guidelines are attached as an appendix to this policy.

It is recognized that there may be situations that justify deviation from established guidelines; in those situations the supervisor should document the mitigating circumstances that warrant the deviation. In evaluating an employee’s attendance, all leave time chargeable to sick leave – i.e. medical/dental appointments (non-pre-scheduled), leaves without pay due to illness, tardiness, unauthorized leaves, etc. should be considered. Do not



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include leaves associated with a workers compensation claim, approved Family Medical Leaves (FMLA), pre-scheduled medical/dental appointments, funerals, or family sick leave.

**Conclusion:**

We hope that this policy has been helpful. It is recognized that situations may arise that are not specifically addressed in this document. In those situations, employee and/or supervisory personnel are encouraged to contact the Human Resources Department for assistance.



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### Appendix A Attendance Guidelines

The chart is provided to establish common rating guidelines and progressive disciplinary steps for attendance. These guidelines are based on an annual basis and if an evaluation occurs for a different period of time, the Occasions of Absence or Tardiness should be prorated for that period. Because not every employee group contains a standard category or rating scale for attendance purpose, the suggested rating should only be used in those situations where a standard rating scale exists. In other situations, supervisors should incorporate comments related to attendance into other appropriate area(s) of the performance appraisal instrument.

Occasions of Absence or Tardiness	Corrective Action	Ratings
0 – 3 (Minimum of 12 hours)	None	Excellent
4 – 6 (Minimum of 16 hours)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Supervisor should carefully monitor attendance.</li> <li>• If occasions occur early in the annual evaluation period, supervisor should speak with the employee indicating a potential problem may exist.</li> <li>• Ascertain whether there are any mitigating factors.</li> <li>• On the fourth (4<sup>th</sup>) occasion an oral counseling of the employee may occur. Employee should be warned that further occasions will result in more severe discipline. Document date and time of oral counseling.</li> </ul>	Very Good / Good
7 – 9 (Minimum of 28 hours)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• On the seventh (7<sup>th</sup>) occasion a formal written reprimand may be issued. Please contact the HR department regarding the process of issuing a letter of reprimand.</li> </ul>	Good / Fair
10 – 12 (Minimum of 40 hours)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• On the tenth (10<sup>th</sup>) occasion the employee may be placed on a medical certificate requirement to support additional use of sick leave. Contact the HR department.</li> </ul>	Fair
13 and up (Minimum of 52 hours)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Suspension or other progressive disciplinary action may be taken. Contact the HR department.</li> </ul>	Unsatisfactory



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### **Appendix A - Miscellaneous Notes:**

- The Administrative & Residual (hereafter referred to as “A&R”) service rating form does not include an attendance category. However, an A&R employee’s attendance can be reflected in the dependability category on the service rating form if:
  1. He/she uses more than the contractually earned 15 sick days per year with frequent occasions
  2. He/she uses less than 15 days but has a clearly identifiable pattern of usage (i.e.: Mondays, Fridays, day before or after holiday, etc.)
  3. He/she uses less than 15 days but has repeated or extended occasions of unauthorized leave without pay.
  4. Frequent absences adversely affect his/her work performance in that category (i.e.: missed deadlines, etc.)

In addition, A&R employees may receive progressive discipline for unacceptable attendance consistent with the above criteria.

- The Protective Services service rating form does not include a single evaluation category for attendance. The rating for attendance falls within the “Other Elements” rating category.
- Managerial and SUOAF evaluations do not include a separate category for attendance. Attendance needs to be considered in relation to performance in the other evaluation categories.