

SCSD MScA Absence Policy

A. Preamble

As future speech-language pathologists (SLPs), students in the SCSD MScA program must respect the social contract between SLPs and society. The University confers the MScA degree when our school attests that the student has achieved the objectives of the program as accredited by the Council for Accreditation of Canadian University Programs in Audiology and Speech-Language Pathology. The accreditation standards, as laid out by the Academic Equivalency Framework, include participation in specific academic and practical components. That is, passing grades in the required courses is not sufficient to meet the objectives. Rather the school commits to designing and providing learning experiences that help students achieve the program objectives that include competencies across a range of professional roles. The student commits to meeting the MScA program's expectations regarding professionalism and all aspects of the curriculum. This policy regarding absences, leaves and deferrals enables the student to respect their professional obligations.

B. Principles

1) *Expectations*. Unauthorized absences are not permitted for any program elements including orientation, classes, labs, practice activities, practicum and internship and mandatory seminars. Students are expected to attend all classes in this program. Furthermore, students are expected to be punctual. These expectations relate not only to the requirement to achieve a passing grade in each course. Attendance supports preparation for clinical practicum and is therefore required to achieve clinical competence as a speech-language pathologist. Punctuality and consistent attendance also reflects a professional attitude and respect for the instructor and fellow classmates.

2) *Responsibilities*: Students are responsible for course material and practicum experiences and are therefore expected to make up missed content independently. Instructors and clinical educators may choose to help by providing compensatory work or extra tutorial but are not obligated to do so. The obligation to make up extra work may require working during evenings or weekends.

3) *Assessment standards*: Students who have been absent or taken a leave will be assessed by the same standards when they return to make up missed material or take deferred exams. Unauthorized absence from an exam or failure to submit an assignment without an authorized extension will normally result in a 0 grade or "fail" unless an alternative policy was stated on the class syllabus.

C. Procedures

1) *Informing the school of an absence*: If you are going to miss a class please send an email with the reason for missing the class, lab, practicum or other pedagogical event as soon as possible before the event to (a) the instructor; (b) scsd@mcgill.ca; and (c) susan.rvachew@mcgill.ca. Should an unavoidable event result in a missed class or other event, use the same procedure to inform us as soon as possible after the scheduled event. Include a doctor's note or other documentation as required. After informing the instructor, the instructor will inform the student if the absence is authorized.

2) *Unacceptable absences*. The following are examples reasons to miss class that are NOT acceptable: a) study for exam or complete assignments; b) prepare for stages/practicums; c) paid employment; d) extending lunch hours, weekends, or breaks in the program; e) attending social events.

3) *Acceptable absences*. You may need to miss class or request an accommodation for an extended absence in the event that you are (a) ill; (b) pregnant (c) must care for an acutely ill child; (d) have an unavoidable appointment with a health care practitioner or counselor; (d) must attend the funeral of a close family member; or (e) religious holiday. In these cases, the professor(s) teaching the missed class(es) will help you make up for missed material in the most efficient way possible. Professors are not obligated to reteach material to individual students although they might choose to do this if they cannot transmit the information to you by any other means.

4) *Requesting an extended leave*: In the case of an extended absence from class or practicum (i.e., more than 5 consecutive week days), a leave of absence may be requested for health, parental or family reasons in accordance with the regulations. Please consult with the *Student Affairs Coordinator* **and** *Graduate Program Coordinator* to ensure that you know the most current policies and procedures.

5) *Requesting a change in course requirements*: If you must request a change to course requirements, that is a change in deadline for an assignment or a new date to write a quiz or midterm exam, request the change in writing by sending an email with the reason for the requested change as soon as possible before the event to (a) the instructor; (b) scsd@mcgill.ca; and (c) susan.rvachew@mcgill.ca. Include a doctor's note or other documentation as required.

6) *Request a deferral of a final exam*: you must formally request the deferral from the instructor and GPS. Please consult with the *Student Affairs Coordinator* **and** *Graduate Program Coordinator* to ensure that you know the most current policies and procedures.

7) *Doctor's notes and other documentation*: In each academic year the student is entitled to 5 days of medical leave and 2 days of personal leave without a doctor's note or other documentation to explain the *authorized* absence from class or practicum. Additional days of absence will require documentation to justify the absence (e.g., doctor's note to document illness, funeral notice to explain personal leave). All requests for an extended leave must be accompanied by a doctor's note. All requests for final exam deferral must be accompanied by a doctor's note.

8) *Clinical practicum and internship*: Please see the Clinical Training Manual for additional details.

D. Special Considerations during the COVID-19 Pandemic

Due to the hybrid nature of teaching during the pandemic it might be difficult for the student and the instructor to be sure whether the student is present or absent for learning activities. Many of the remote learning activities are meant to be experienced independently. During zoom lectures, the instructor may not be sure who is actively present. Therefore, some additional guidance is provided regarding the requirement to inform instructors and the director when the student is not available for learning. The following principles apply:

1) A typical week of study in the SCSD MScA program requires at least 50 hours work including "in class" time, labs, practicum hours and time spent studying or completing assignments. The student should expect to spend 50 hours per week on "school work" including participating in zoom lectures, watching recorded zoom lectures, attending Q & A sessions by zoom, reading material including slide outlines, texts and articles, remote or in person labs, practicum hours and time spent studying for exams or completing assignments. If the student is not feeling well enough or encounters other events (child care or urgent personal crises) that prevent the student from participating in this level of school work, the student should talk with their instructors by email or zoom to determine if a short-term absence or longer term leave should be authorized. It is important to understand that under typical circumstances a sick leave cannot be authorized retroactively. Therefore, if a student wants an extension on an assignment or receives a poor grade on an assignment, illness over the previous week cannot be taken into account as a mitigating factor unless the instructor was informed of the illness at the time of its onset. For this reason, it is in the student's best interest to disclose illness when it impacts performance even if it does not feel like any "classes" are being missed in the remote learning environment.

2) If the student requires a change in course requirements, an extended leave, or a final exam deferral the procedures listed in C4, C5, and C6 must be followed, as appropriate.

3) If the student is not well, the student should complete the COVID-19 Symptom Self-Assessment Check and follow the guidelines on the COVID-19 Information page for students:

<https://www.mcgill.ca/coronavirus/resources/health-guidelines/potential-covid-19-exposure-what-do>

4) In particular, if you answer "yes" to any of the COVID-19 Symptom Self-Assessment Check, do not attend any clinical lab activities or other events on campus. Inform your instructor that you will not be able to participate.