

# **Association of Students of the University of Nebraska-Lincoln**

## **Graduate Student Assembly**

### **Special Rules - Attendance**

#### **Section 1. Definition**

The Association of Students of the University of Nebraska-Lincoln (ASUN) Graduate Student Assembly (GSA) representatives are expected to attend all GSA monthly meetings.

#### **Section 2. Alternate Representatives**

If, for any reason, a representative is unable to attend one of these meetings, they must contact the alternate representative for their department. If their alternate can attend the meeting, no absence will be counted. If they do not have an alternate or the alternate is unable to attend, the representative is expected to follow the absence protocol laid out in this policy.

#### **Section 3. Types of Absences**

1. Excused: In order to receive an excused absence, the absence needs to meet the following criteria.
  - a. No reasonable accommodation could be provided that would make attendance possible, such as attending via Zoom or other online video platform.
  - b. The reason needs to fall under one of the following two categories:
    - i. Category A: The reason for the absence involves a scheduling conflict with University-sponsored activities, or other scheduled activities that are not necessarily sponsored by the university but are an expected part of graduate student work (i.e. presenting research at an academic conference, attending an external professional development opportunity, etc.). Typical weekly activities such as class and work are not considered valid reasons.
    - ii. Category B: The reason for the absence involves an unanticipated injury, illness, or other personal or family emergency.
2. Unexcused
  - a. If the representative and their alternate are both absent, and the representative has failed to follow any part of the absence protocol or the reason for the absence falls outside the criteria for excused absences then the absence will be considered an unexcused absence.

#### **Section 4. Allowed Absences**

Each representative is allowed two excused and one unexcused absence per academic year. If a representative exceeds the allowed absences, the GSA will follow the protocol for excessive absences below.

## **Section 5. Protocol for Excessive Absences**

1. Excused Absences
  - a. If a representative reaches the allowed number of excused absences, the vice president of representation will contact the representative directly to remind the representative of the attendance policy and confirm that they are able to follow this policy.
  - b. If the representative has concerns about their ability to follow the policy for the remainder of the academic year, the Vice President of Representation will encourage the representative to follow their department's protocol for finding a new representative.
  - c. Any additional absences will automatically be considered unexcused absences, and the Vice President of Representation will follow the protocol for unexcused absences below.
2. Unexcused Absences
  - a. If a representative reaches the allowed number of unexcused absences, the vice president of representation will contact the representative and their graduate chair or director to remind them of the attendance policy and inform them that any additional unexcused absences will result in the department being declared vacant, which will prevent all graduate students in their department from applying for GSA related funding (GTAP, SPGP, etc.).
  - b. If a second unexcused absence occurs, the Vice President of Representation will consider the position vacant and fill the position as outlined in the GSA Bylaws.

## **Section 6. Protocol for Reporting Absence**

1. Excused Absence Reporting Protocol
  - a. If the reason for the absence meets category A above, the representative will need to submit the absence form (<https://www.unl.edu/gsa/absence>) a minimum of 24 hours in advance of the scheduled start time for the meeting they will be unable to attend. Failure to submit 24 hours in advance will result in the absence being unexcused.
  - b. If the reason for absence meets category B above, the representative will need to submit the absence form (<https://www.unl.edu/gsa/absence>) as soon as the emergency situation has stabilized enough for it to be reasonable that they do so, or within one week of the absence, whichever comes first. If the situation has not stabilized enough to enable communication within a week of the absence, it will be considered an unexcused absence.
  - c. If reasonable accommodation—such as attending via Zoom—is an option, the representative must fill out the absence form (<https://www.unl.edu/gsa/absence>), which

will automatically send them the necessary information (such as the Zoom link) for the accommodation. Representatives are strongly encouraged to submit this form a minimum of 24 hours in advance, though if the absence would fall under Category B above, the form will be accepted with less than 24 hours' notice.

2. Unexcused Absences

- a. If the representative and their alternate are both absent, and the representative has failed to follow any part of the absence protocol or the reason for the absence falls outside the criteria for excused absences then the absence will be considered an unexcused absence.

## **Section 7. Commitment to Promoting Diversity through Equitable and Inclusive Attendance Policy Practices**

1. In order to best support the needs of all graduate students, the GSA recognizes the importance of diverse representation. As a result, the GSA is committed to equitable and inclusive practices that promote a diverse body of representatives.
2. If a representative is experiencing barriers to attendance connected to academically or socially marginalized identity categories, such as chronic health/pain issues or financial/housing/child care/transportation insecurity, the Vice President of Representation and the representative will work together to develop reasonable accommodations that will enable the representative to participate in the GSA.
3. If a representative experiences or anticipates they will experience these kinds of barriers to attendance, they are expected to reach out to the Vice President of Representation and communicate their concerns at the start of their term, or as soon as possible.
4. Similarly, if the representative experiences a temporary barrier to attendance, such as an injury or illness that impacts mobility, they are expected to reach out to the Vice President of Representation and arrange temporary accommodations for the duration of the barrier.

## **Section 8. Appeals**

Absences without reasonable excuse as determined by these special rules, as interpreted by the Vice President of Representation, may appeal to the GSA Executive Committee by writing to [gsa@unl.edu](mailto:gsa@unl.edu).

## Appendix A. Absence Form

The GSA Absence form should be formatted as follows (or similarly).

[BLOCK 1]

### GSA Absence Form

Thank you for starting the GSA Absence Form. As a reminder of GSA's attendance policy, each representative is allowed **two excused** and **one unexcused** absences per academic year. Please use this form to report both excused and unexcused absences.

Descriptions of what counts as un/excused absences are provided later in this form. If you have reasonable need for a Zoom link to the meeting (i.e., you are unable to attend in-person), a Zoom link will be provided to you at the end of the survey upon submission.

NOTE: Please do not email, text, call, etc. any member of the Executive Committee (including the President or VP of Representative) to indicate that you will be absent from an assembly meeting (especially the day of the meeting!). By completing this form, you are indicating you will be absent and your answers will be reviewed and recorded by the VP of Representation. Please see the GSA Bylaws document for more information about the GSA attendance policy and your responsibilities as a representative.

1. What is your name?
2. What department do you represent?
3. What meeting/event are you unable to attend? Please include the date (e.g., April 2<sup>nd</sup> Assembly meeting)
4. If your department has elected an alternate representative, please write their name below. If you do not have an alternate, please write "N/A".
5. If your department has an alternate representative, have you contacted that person to attend the meeting/event in your place?
  - Yes, I have contacted them AND they have indicated they will attend in my place  
→ If selected, display: You've indicated that your alternate representative will take your place for the meeting/event you will miss. Therefore, you do not need to submit an absence form because your department will be represented.

As long as your alternate shows up to the meeting/event in your place either in person or via Zoom, there is nothing else you need to do at this time.

- Yes, I have contacted them AND they are unable to attend in my place.

- No, I have not contacted my alternate representative.
  - You've indicated that you have not contacted your alternate representative to take your place at the meeting/event you cannot attend. **Your next step before completing the GSA Absence Form is to contact your alternate to determine if they can take your place.**

If it is confirmed that your alternate cannot take your place (I.e., your department will not be represented at the meeting/event you are missing), please restart the form and indicate that you have contacted your alternate AND they will NOT take your place.

- I do not have an alternate representative.

[BLOCK 2]

1. GSA Attendance Special Rules indicate that reasonable accommodations will be offered to representatives if in-person attendance is not possible. If you (or your alternate) are unable to attend the meeting/event in person, but are able to attend via Zoom, please indicate below.

- I (or my alternate) need a Zoom link to the meeting/event because I have a valid reason I am unable to attend in-person
  - Thank you for completing the GSA Absence Form. You've indicated that you ARE able to attend the meeting/event, but have a reasonable need for a Zoom link to attend virtually. As such, your virtual attendance at the meeting/event will be counted as present.

Please use this link to attend the meeting virtually: xxxxxxxxx

You do not need to do anything else at this time.

- I (or my alternate) cannot attend in-person OR via Zoom and I need to report this un/excused absence.

[BLOCK 3]

PLEASE READ the following GSA's bylaws related to absences and indicate the type of absence you are reporting:

Types of absences:

**Excused:** In order to receive an excused absence, the absence needs to meet the following criteria.

- No reasonable accommodation could be provided that would make attendance possible, such as attending via Zoom or other online video platform.
- The reason needs to fall under one of the following two categories:

- Category A: The reason for the absence involves a scheduling conflict with University-sponsored activities, or other scheduled activities that are not necessarily sponsored by the university but are an expected part of graduate student work (i.e. presenting research at an academic conference, attending an external professional development opportunity, etc.). Typical weekly activities such as class or labs and work are not considered valid reasons.
- Category B: The reason for the absence involves an unanticipated injury, illness, or other personal or family emergency.

**Unexcused:** If the representative and their alternate are both absent, and the representative has failed to follow any part of the absence protocol or the reason for the absence falls outside the criteria for excused absences then the absence will be considered an unexcused absence.

Please indicate the type of absence you are reporting:

- Excused, Category A (I know ahead of time that I will be absent)
  - Thank you for completing the GSA Absence Form. You've indicated that your absence falls under Category A (relevant and valid scheduling conflict).

If you or your alternate is able to attend via Zoom, please use this link: xxxxxxxx. If you are able to attend via Zoom, you will not be counted as absent.

If attending via Zoom is not possible, your absence will be counted as one of the two excused absences allowed per academic year (pending review by the VP of Representation).

- Excused, Category B (an injury, illness, or emergency came up within 24 hours of the meeting/event)
  - Thank you for completing the GSA Absence Form. You've indicated that your absence falls under Category B (injury, illness, or personal emergency).

If you or your alternate is able to attend via Zoom, please use this link: xxxxxxxx. If you are able to attend via Zoom, you will not be counted as absent.

If attending via Zoom is not possible, your absence will be counted as one of the two excused absences allowed per academic year (pending review by the VP of Representation).

- Unexcused

Please briefly describe the nature of your absence (this will only be read by the VP of Representation to determine whether your absence is un/excused)

[End of Survey]

Thank you for completing the GSA Absence Form. Your responses have been recorded by the VP of Representation.