

SUBJECT: Faculty Presence, Availability, and Engagement Policy

POLICY INFORMATION

The University of Houston-Clear Lake is committed to creating a strong campus community that values collaboration, interaction, and excellence in student instruction and mentoring, university, college, and departmental service, and research, scholarship, and creative activity. For this reason, it is essential to the vitality of the university for faculty to maintain an on-campus presence so that they may participate in and contribute to campus life. Campus Presence is defined as the active and visible involvement of faculty within the physical campus environment. Examples include but are not limited to: holding regular office hours (in-person and virtual), mentoring students, participating in institutional affairs, contributing to the sense of campus community, and creating a learning environment that supports student success.

PURPOSE AND SCOPE

This policy has been established to comply with the University of Houston-System [SAM 02.A.20. Texas Government Code, Section 658.007](#) has set provisions regarding the working hours for full-time salaried state employees that apply to faculty and staff. [Texas Government Code, Section 658.010](#) has provisions regarding where work can be performed by state employees that also apply to faculty and staff.

These provisions apply to all full-time faculty. Full-time Faculty Members are faculty members who hold the rank of lecturer, senior lecturer, instructor, clinical assistant professor, clinical associate professor, clinical professor, assistant professor, associate professor, and professor. Faculty compliance with this policy is crucial in fostering a vibrant and engaging academic community. Failure to meet the campus presence and engagement expectations is considered a dereliction of duty and may result in disciplinary action up to and including termination (SEE Faculty Discipline Policy X.XXX.XX) and will be reflected in the annual evaluation score.

This policy does not apply to faculty while they are on a formally granted leave of absence, including leave covered by the Family and Medical Leave Act (FMLA).

PROCEDURE

Full-time faculty members (hereafter, faculty) shall maintain an in-person presence on campus to fulfill their professional obligations to students, colleagues, and the University for the duration of any term in which they are employed by UHCL, except for when UHCL is closed or during student holidays (e.g., Fall and Spring Break). Faculty employed on nine-month contracts are expected to maintain an in-person presence on campus beginning, in the fall semester, at least one week before the start of classes through fall commencement (or the final submission of grades, whichever is later) and, in the spring semester, at least one week before the start of classes through spring commencement (or the final submission of grades, whichever is later).

Faculty employed to teach summer courses in any modality (e.g., face-to-face, online, hybrid, hyflex) shall discuss with their chair the departmental expectations to maintain an on-campus, in-person presence during the summer session(s) in which they teach.

All twelve-month administrative positions with faculty rank (typically some center directors, department Chairs, Deans and above) are expected to maintain in-person campus presence year-round unless the University is closed, they are on approved leave (e.g., sick, vacation, [FMLA](#) or miscellaneous leave), attending a conference, conducting research, scholarly, and/or creative activities, study abroad, or engaging in professional development. All such absences must be approved in advance by the Chair, Dean, or Provost in accordance with [MAP 02.F.03](#). Miscellaneous leave types are outlined in [MAP 02.D.04](#).

Full-time faculty are expected to hold at least three in-person office hours spread over at least two different days per week during each long semester. Part-time faculty are expected to hold at least one in-person office hour per week for each three hours of credit taught (unless they were hired to teach solely online). Faculty may choose to offer additional office hours, including virtual office hours, in addition to the in-person office hours as they see fit. In-person office hour schedules must be posted in course syllabi and submitted to the respective departmental chair by the syllabus approval deadline. Because UHCL offers courses across multiple sites, office hours may be spread across the sites where they are teaching, rather than being held exclusively in the faculty members assigned office, to best accommodate the students' needs. Summer office hours may be determined by the faculty member in conjunction with the department chair. Office hours may be moved by the faculty with at least 24 hours notice to students and their department chair. If a faculty member must be absent for office hours that have not been rescheduled for any reason, a sign with an expected return should be placed on the office door and/or the suite secretary should be notified as to how to contact the faculty member should a student arrive. Being available for consultation with students outside of class is an important part of a faculty member's responsibilities. Faculty should be responsive to student-initiated contact by returning emails and other messages within a reasonable period, such as no more than two business days, to facilitate student learning and be consistent with professional practice.

In addition to face-to-face classes and office hours, faculty and department chairs are expected to attend in person all faculty retreats and/or other major campus events at which the president and/or provost have/has requested, with a minimum notice of ten business days, faculty to be present. Furthermore, faculty and department chairs are expected to attend at least one commencement ceremony per calendar year. If a faculty member will not be able to attend a required campus meeting/event, they should provide their supervisor with timely notification and an appropriate reason.

Colleges and departments are expected to conduct University-related business in person, including, but not limited to, faculty meetings, committee/council meetings, and face-to-face community or recruiting events. For work-related activities that are off campus and that conflict with the faculty member's on-campus presence (such as field trips, research, donor meetings, etc.), faculty should inform their supervisors prior to those activities.

. Faculty may attend conferences or other professional events and remain in compliance with this policy. Written notification must be submitted to the chair for approval prior to their absence. Written notification, including plans for any

classes that will be missed during the time away, must be submitted to the Chair for approval prior to their absence. This written notification may be an email. Students will also need to be notified of any changes in classes via the LMS.

- . Faculty are not expected to be on campus on any holiday listed in the annual UHCL Holiday Schedule, scheduled university closure during the winter break, or during an expected or unexpected (emergency) closure of campus. For student holidays (e.g., Fall and Spring Breaks), faculty are expected to maintain responsiveness to student and university emails and attend required meetings; however, they are not required to maintain office hours.
- . Faculty seeking or receiving accommodations under the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) that may impact their campus presence should contact Human Resources to explore campus presence arrangements that reasonably accommodate their disability.
- . All requests for exceptions to this policy must be submitted in writing to the faculty member's department chair prior to the start of a semester. Requests for exceptions are subject to review by the faculty member's chair and dean.

If a faculty member misses an activity requiring their presence for a personal reason, written notification must be submitted to the Chair. This written notification may be an email. If the personal reason has an appropriate leave category, that leave must also be taken. If the personal reason does not have an appropriate leave category, it is automatically an excused absence if (1) the work hours are made up promptly and (2) the total of excused absences does not exceed 40 hours in an academic year, and (3) the total of excused absences used for classroom obligations does not exceed 12 hours in an academic year. Absences that are not automatically excused are evaluated by the department chair.

Faculty should make every reasonable effort to schedule themselves in ways that do not conflict, such as not scheduling office hours or volunteering for committees that meet during other meetings or scheduled class time. In the event of conflicting events, generally the top priority is (1) classroom obligations, followed by (2) office hours, (3) scheduled required meetings, (4) campus events with required RSVPs, and finally (5) drop-in campus events. If a faculty member misses a higher priority event in favor of a lower priority one, they must notify their Chair. Notification is not required when missing an equal or lower-priority event in favor of a high priority one nor is it required for office hours if rescheduled with 24 hours notice and made up within one week. Finally, notification is not required for incidental partial absences such as ending a class ten minutes early to attend a meeting, or removing a student from office hours briefly to take a phone call or use the bathroom, or occasionally being a few minutes late to a meeting. However, habitual partial absences will result in closer time monitoring at the discretion of the department chair or dean.

Failure to meet the campus presence and engagement expectations is considered a dereliction of duty and may result in immediate disciplinary action, under the Faculty Discipline Policy (BBB.bbb.bb), and will be reflected in the annual evaluation score.

REVIEW AND RESPONSIBILITIES

Responsible Party: Senior Vice President for Academic Affairs and Provost

Review Schedule: Every three (3) years on or before the date the policy was last approved.

I. REFERENCES

University of Houston-System [SAM](#)
[02.A.20 Texas Government Code,](#)
[Section 658.002](#)
[Texas Government Code, Section](#)
[658.007](#)
[Texas Government Code, Section](#)
[658.010](#)
[MAP 02.F.03](#)
[MAP 02.D.04](#)
[MAP 02.D.06](#)