

Textual History of Carleton's Class Attendance Policy, 1973-2010

By: Connor Jansen and Sarah Raman

Introduction

In investigating the Class Attendance section of Carleton's Academic Regulations and Procedures from 1973 to 2010, we noticed a large number of relatively small changes throughout the document's history. However, we also noticed a major change between 1994 and 1995, and thus chose to represent the text's evolution in two parallel sections before and after this change. Both sections include a critical apparatus that meticulously details the revisions during their respective time periods. In this way, every alteration to the text is reflected in the edition while making the changes between 1994-1995 as clear as possible. What follows is a high-level overview of the evolution of the texts followed by the edited texts themselves.

1973-1994:

Some changes in the period from 1973 to 1994 were accidental in the sense that they did not substantially change the meaning of the section. The numerous pronoun changes in the first sentence are an example of small changes that did not affect the text's larger meaning. However, one could speculate about why the changes were made, perhaps because of a growing feminist consciousness in campus administration that prompted gender neutral language or a perception that such language was more fitting of a school like Carleton. From 1980 to 1994, the Dean of Students Office was replaced in the text by Associate Dean of Students/Educational Counseling, another variant that does not significantly impact the text's meaning but which probably reflects a shift in administrative oversight or college policy. The last part of the section has a history of variants that reveals distinct tones and meanings. In 1973, a professor's request for a student to confirm their intent on staying in the class was included because students whose intent was to drop the class nonetheless remained in it for various reasons. In 1978, these students were called out as failing to drop in time, suggesting that the phenomenon was a growing issue. In 1989, the sentence was changed, perhaps because the issue became less important or the language was seen as unseemly.

1994-1995:

The attendance section is marked with an asterisk in the 1995-1996 booklet as a section significantly changed from the previous year. One substantial change is the introduction of the first sentence: "It is expected that students attend classes" ("Students are expected to attend class!" from 1995-1998), making this expectation explicit in the attendance policy for the first time. The second paragraph of the document, which outlines the policy for students absent from initial class meetings, was also completely rewritten between the two years. Beginning in 1995, the policy applies only to classes with waitlists, however a procedure is codified that allows instructors to drop absent students from their courses. In sum, then, these changes make attendance more of an imperative, with more severe consequences for absence.

1995-2010:

Although no sections of the document were rewritten between 1995 and 2010, it did undergo changes, the majority of which were formal and did not affect meaning. Four significant evolutions of the content itself, however, are traceable. First, the evolution of the first sentence, from “Students are expected to attend class!,” to nothing, to “It is expected that students attend classes.” A second meaningful change, the limitation of an instructor’s ability to drop a student from their class to the first week of the term. A third, the introduction of the policy that prolonged absence may be grounds for removal from the college, and the fourth, the removal of the imperative that instructors inform students when class attendance is mandatory. Although the removal and subsequent reintroduction of the first sentence invites some further questions, on the whole, these changes represent an evolution towards more personal responsibility and obligation to attend class for the student and less power for the instructor.

Reprinted from the 1994-1995 edition of the booklet:

CLASS ATTENDANCE

Attendance at classes is the responsibility of the student, who will be held accountable for work missed.¹ Instructors have been requested to inform the class when they will be requiring attendance or basing part of the grade on class participation.² They are also requested to inform the Associate Dean of Students,³ when a student's attendance record gives cause for concern. The Academic Standing Committee may, on occasion, require regular class attendance of a student on academic review.

In courses that have limited enrollment,⁴ an instructor may request a student who has not attended either of the first two class meetings to drop the course or declare his or her⁵ intention of staying in the course⁶ so that students who want to add the course will be able to do so.

¹ The second half of this sentence was changed multiple times between 1973 and 1994 to use different pronouns. It appeared as, "and he is accountable for work he misses" from 1973 until 1979. In 1979, a change to a gender neutral pronoun was accompanied by missing words: "Attendance at classes is the responsibility of they are accountable for work they miss." In 1980, the sentence was corrected but the second half read, "and she is accountable for work missed." Thus the pronoun was changed again and the voice changed from active to passive. It was changed again in 1984 to read: "who must assume accountability for work missed." In 1990, it was changed to read: "who will be held accountable for work missed."

² The additional phrase "because of the nature of the course" was included after the word "when" in the sentence in 1973, while the phrase "or basing part of the grade on class participation" was absent. The latter phrase was added in 1980 and the former phrase was dropped in 1988 to reach the form printed above.

³ In 1973, this was "Dean of Students Office." In 1980, the text read, "Associate Dean of Students/Educational Counselor," which in 1981 became "Associate Dean of Students/Educational Counseling," possibly reflecting the creation of a new committee or a change in oversight of an existing committee. This idea is supported by the use of a comma instead of a slash between 1990 and 1994: "Associate Dean of Students, Educational Counseling." The latter was removed from the sentence in 1994, probably because it was incorporated into the Dean of Students Office.

⁴ In 1973, this read, "Because there are courses of limited enrollment," and was changed in 1989 to read, "In courses which have limited enrollment." "Which" was changed to "that" in 1994.

⁵ Like the first sentence, the pronouns appearing here have changed over time. In 1973, the masculine was used, but was changed to the feminine in either 1975 or 1976. In 1984 it was changed to include both.

⁶ Until 1994, the sentence ended here and was followed by another. In 1973, the subsequent sentence read, "Too often, students who want to add the course will be prevented from doing so because of enrolled students who do not intend to remain in the course." In 1978, the second half was rephrased: "because enrolled students who do not intend to remain in the course fail to drop in time." In 1989, this sentence was dropped and the less biting phrase above was added to the previous sentence.

Reprinted from the 2009-2010 edition of the booklet:

CLASS ATTENDANCE

It is expected that students attend classes⁷. While attendance at classes is the responsibility of the student, who will be held accountable for any missed work^{8,9} instructors are also requested to inform an associate dean of students¹⁰ when a student's attendance record gives cause for concern. The Academic Standing Committee (ASC)¹¹ may, on occasion, require regular class attendance of a student on academic review.

Any student who fails to attend the first two classes in a course for which there is a wait list¹² and who has not otherwise contacted the faculty member by the end of the second class¹³ to confirm enrollment will be officially dropped from the course if¹⁴ a signed request from the instructor is received by the registrar¹⁵ by the end of the first week of class.¹⁶ This faculty prerogative does not relieve a student of final responsibility for proper registration.¹⁷

Any student who fails to attend classes prior to the end of the second week of the term may be withdrawn from the College.¹⁸

See also REGISTRATION.

⁷ From 1995-1998, this first sentence read: "Students are expected to attend class!". From 1999-2006, the section instead began: "Attendance at classes is the responsibility of the student. . .," perhaps recognizing that the exclamation point of the original did not match the tone of the rest of the policy. The opening sentence: "it is expected that students attend classes" appeared for the first time in 2007, bridging the gap between an imperative and a more formal register.

⁸ "Any missed work" appeared as "work missed" from 1995-1998.

⁹ From 1995-1998, this sentence did not begin with "while" and ended here. The following two sentences read: "Instructors have been requested to inform the class when they will be requiring attendance or basing part of the grade on class participation. They are also requested to inform an Associate Deaf Students when a student's attendance record gives cause for concern." Beginning in 1999, "while" was added, and the sentences were merged: "While instructors have been requested to inform the class when they will be requiring attendance or basing part of the grade on class participation, they are also requested to inform an Associate Dean of Students when a student's attendance record gives cause for concern. The current wording, and significantly, the removal of the stipulation that instructors inform classes when attendance is mandatory, first occurred in 2007. Given the trends towards a more severe policy, this edit may be read as forcing an interpretation that attendance at *all* classes is mandatory.

¹⁰ Associate Dean of Students was capitalized until 2003.

¹¹ This abbreviation first appeared in 1998. It appears to have been implemented throughout the booklet in that year.

¹² Appeared as one word ("waitlist") in 1995.

¹³ "By the end of the second class" appeared bolded in 1995 and italicized in 1996. It appeared without typographical distinction beginning in 1997.

¹⁴ "If" appeared bolded for the first time in 2000.

¹⁵ "Registrar" was capitalized until 2004.

¹⁶ From 1995-1999, this clause instead read: "if a signed request is sent from the instructor to the Registrar". The limitation of the policy to the first week of class was not present. It seems plausible that this was a reactionary edit, stemming from abuse of the policy or logistical issues it caused before the time constraint was implemented .

¹⁷ This sentence first appeared in 1998.

¹⁸ This sentence first appeared in 1999.