Excused Absence Policy

Participation in “major instrumental ensembles” including the CMU Philharmonic is an essential component of orchestral instrumentalists’ curriculum in the School of Music and must be treated as a top priority. Playing in major ensembles is a curricular requirement of all undergraduate and graduate students studying orchestral instruments. Unless explicitly exempted by a studio instructor, AMS students are also required to play in major ensembles and are expected to prioritize ensembles in their schedules.

The orchestra’s concert and rehearsal schedule is published on the CMU Philharmonic website at the beginning of the summer and is set in stone for the entire year. Therefore, there is no excuse for not knowing what the schedule is. The orchestra’s schedule is built such that there are at least two weeks off between concert cycles when students can plan to gig and do outside work. For these reasons, excused absences from orchestra for reasons other than illness or family emergency will be granted only in very rare circumstances.

Although assignments are published on a per-cycle basis (at least two weeks before the first rehearsal) all eligible instrumentalists in the School of Music should assume that they will be assigned to every orchestra cycle. If a potential conflict with the orchestra’s schedule arises, students should submit their petitions for an excused absence or tardiness according to the protocols and deadlines detailed below.

An excused absence may be granted in the following circumstances:
1. A professional opportunity that has the potential to significantly advance a student’s career. This includes gigs with ensembles that hold a very high profile in the industry, auditions for major orchestra positions, and auditions for major competitions or festivals.
2. Auditions for graduate school or doctorate programs when an alternate, non-conflicting date is not available.
3. Illness or a medical emergency.
4. A family emergency/death in the family.

An excused absence will likely NOT be granted in the following circumstances:
1. If the request is submitted after the deadline (see below).
2. If alternate audition dates/times or travel options are available that would prevent there being a conflict.
3. If the gig, even a paid gig, is with an orchestra/ensemble that does meet a certain level of artistic excellence to justify the student’s absence from the CMU Philharmonic.
**Excused Absence Process**

Even though assignments are made on a per-concert-cycle basis (at least two weeks before a rehearsal cycle begins), do not wait until you are assigned to a cycle to submit your petition for an excused absence or release from a cycle. As soon as you are aware of a potential conflict with an ensemble schedule, you should submit a petition for excused absence as this increases the possibility that that petition may be granted.

The approval or disapproval of an excused absence request is the decision of the Philharmonic Director only.

To request that a tardiness or absence be considered for an excuse, the following steps must be taken:

1. Send an email to daniel.nesta.curtis@gmail.com AND music-philharmonic@andrew.cmu.edu
2. Copy your studio teacher on the email. As most assignments to instrumental ensembles come from studio teachers, it is important that they are aware of any potential conflicts and scheduling issues within their studio.
3. State the following in your email petition:
   a. your name
   b. your instrument
   c. date(s) in conflict
   d. detailed explanation of the reason for the conflict
4. In the same or in a subsequent email, provide official documentation that clearly details the nature of the conflict. Depending on the type of conflict, this documentation may take the form of a doctor’s note, an email invite to an audition or competition, or a hiring letter/contract for a professional performance opportunity.
5. If you are a wind player, percussionist, harpist, keyboard or principal string player, you must find a substitute for your part/s and name him/her on the petition. No petition will be approved without this information.

**Deadlines for an Excused Absence Email**

1. Illness or Emergency: **Email within three days** of the date of the tardiness or absence.
2. Professional Opportunity: **Email at least two weeks** before the first rehearsal of the cycle in which the tardiness or absence is requested.

A request to be released from a rehearsal or concert for a professional opportunity that is not submitted before the two-week deadline will be denied.
Grading

Attendance is required at every rehearsal and concert. An unexcused tardiness or absence will lower your grade significantly.

- **tardy** to 1 rehearsal = ½ unexcused absence
- **tardy** to 1 dress rehearsal = 1 unexcused absence
- **tardy** to 1 concert = 4 unexcused absences

- **absent** from 1 rehearsal = 1 unexcused absence
- **absent** from 1 dress rehearsal = 2 unexcused absences
- **absent** from 1 concert = 4 unexcused absences

Each unexcused absence will lower your grade by one letter. For example, one unexcused absence would lower an “A” to a “B.” Four unexcused absences will result in an “R.” An unsatisfactory grade (D or lower for undergraduate students, C or lower for graduate and AMS students) may result in loss of good standing in the School of Music or being dropped from the School of Music.