THE CITY UNIVERSITY OF NEW YORK

Executive Vice Chancellor and University Provost

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To: Chief Academic Officers
Vice Presidents of Enrollment Management
Vice Presidents of Student Affairs

From: Alicia M. Alvero, Executive Vice Chancellor and University Provost

Re: Attendance at CUNY: Frequently Asked Questions

Date: October 6, 2026

The Office of Academic Affairs has developed the attached "Attendance at CUNY: Frequently Asked Questions" to provide guidance on attendance-related matters across our campuses.

In particular, questions often arise about what it means for CUNY to be described as a "non-attendance taking" institution and whether that designation affects classroom practices, grading, or faculty discretion. Misunderstandings about these terms can create confusion and inconsistent application.

Please review the FAQ and share it with the appropriate members of your campus community. It will also be available on the Office of Academic Affairs website. Any further questions may be directed to Anne Lopes, Vice Chancellor of Academic and Faculty Affairs, at anne.lopes@cuny.edu.

Thank you for your attention to this important matter.

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Attendance at CUNY: Frequently Asked Questions

1. What does it mean when CUNY says it is “non-attendance taking”?

   CUNY is considered a non-attendance-taking institution because it does not have a University-wide requirement to track daily student attendance and collect daily attendance records, and federal financial aid rules do not require it to do so. *(Note: there is a brief Verification of Enrollment obligation described more fully in Question 2 below).*

   Faculty may still take attendance for instructional, pedagogical, classroom management, grading, or other course-related purposes, but they cannot be required to submit their attendance records (e.g., to the campus registrar).

   CUNY's designation as a "non-attendance-taking" institution means that the University does not collect daily attendance records for federal financial aid purposes; it does not prevent faculty from taking attendance or using attendance and participation as part of their courses.

2. If CUNY does not use attendance records for financial aid, how does the University verify a student’s enrollment status?

   Because CUNY does not require attendance records, faculty must submit Verification of Enrollment information for all students as of the census date. This process confirms whether each student has engaged in academic activity at least once, such as attending class, submitting an assignment, or participating in required online activities. Please note that for online courses, merely tracking that a student logged in through an online portal is insufficient to confirm the student’s engagement in academic activity. Colleges assign a WN grade to students reported as not having engaged in academic activity, and courses assigned a WN cannot be included in federal aid eligibility. This academic engagement reporting is separate from daily attendance records, which are not required.

3. Do federal financial aid rules prevent faculty from taking attendance?

   No. Federal financial aid rules do not govern classroom attendance practices and do not prohibit faculty from taking attendance.

4. Can faculty take attendance if they want to?

   Yes. Faculty may take attendance for instructional, pedagogical, classroom management, and other course-related purposes.

5. Can attendance be used as part of grading or course requirements?

   Yes. Faculty may include attendance as a component of academic participation as part of course requirements or grading, as long as expectations are clearly described in the syllabus and applied consistently.

6. Are faculty required to submit attendance records to the University, College or the Registrar?

   No. Because the U.S. Department of Education has designated CUNY a "non-attendance taking institution," in order for CUNY to maintain that designation for federal financial aid purposes, CUNY must not require that faculty take attendance or submit attendance records for either institutional or federal financial aid purposes. Daily attendance records are not collected by the University, College or Registrar.

7. Why is there confusion about attendance at CUNY?

   The term “non-attendance taking” is sometimes misunderstood to mean that attendance is not allowed or does not matter. In fact, it describes only how the University meets federal financial aid reporting requirements.

8. What should students rely on if they have questions about attendance?

   Students should rely on the syllabus and guidance from their instructor, since attendance expectations may vary by course.