

Policy regarding absences in the Summer Digital News Immersion:

This policy applies to all new Annenberg Graduate Journalism students who are about to begin their academic study at USC in the Summer Immersion program. Given the importance of the Summer Immersion and the extent to which it prepares students for a successful Fall and Spring Semester any absences during the program are strongly discouraged. Below is the school policy regarding absences during this key session.

Brief Absences for illness, emergencies, etc.: These are allowed as per our usual policy regarding these kinds of unfortunate occurrences and are handled initially at the summer faculty's discretion. Faculty may, however, reach out to others at Annenberg if the absences become frequent or are more than brief in duration.

Extended absences for illness, emergencies, etc.:

The student should discuss these kinds of instances with their graduate advisor, their program director, the Immersion director and, if need be, administrators in Annenberg Student Services. Options such as an incomplete or a deferral to another academic year should be offered to the student if they are going to miss more than 4 days of the Immersion due to unexpected reasons such as health or family emergencies. Summer faculty will then be informed of any arrangements that are made to accommodate the student's needs.

Brief Absences for other reasons:

If a student is requesting to schedule a day or two off for outside (non-Immersion and non-emergency) needs then that request should be discussed with the student's instructor team and may or may not be granted at the faculty's discretion. Instances like this could include requirements for other courses, brief travel for classes or school projects and/or outside work needs.

Extended scheduled absences for reasons:

Students may request more extended absences for requirements for other courses, travel for classes or school projects and/or outside work needs. It is required arrangements for extended absences must be requested and worked out well in advance of the 7/1 Immersion start date. The student must discuss the request with their graduate advisor, their program director and the director of the Immersion program, who will then communicate any agreed upon arrangements to the summer faculty involved.

To be clear, students cannot take a job or outside assignment during the summer program and then request relief. Late requests for such absences will not be granted.

Requests of this type that are granted must follow specific parameters required by the Immersion program director. For instance, S-J or SJ-Arts students (who don't have as many summer classes) may be working professionals so the school will do what it can to accommodate a work schedule. If the student, however, finds they cannot balance work and school in a way that has them attending most classes then they should defer to another year. In

the case of SJ students, a few have been allowed to leave class 30 minutes early on certain days or miss two or three classes over the course of the Immersion. Bottom line, if students are committed to completing graduate school then they need to figure out how to make it work with their job needs. No student has ever been excused from all of a course's class meetings or assignments for this kind of reason. Students do have the option of petitioning to have a course waived through our normal petition process.

Another example would be students who are doing work with Annenberg Faculty and who petition for some absences. This is usually only granted to students who have extensive prior journalism experience or students who are Progressive Journalism students from Annenberg's Undergraduate Journalism Program (in other words, they already know all the basic Annenberg skills and systems which are taught early in the Summer Immersion). These students may petition to travel for up to two weeks at the beginning of the Immersion as part of a project led by an Annenberg faculty member. Again, any such arrangements must be worked out well before the start of the Immersion.

In any of the above cases (or any other situation) where a student is granted an absence for a reason other than health or family emergency, they are still expected to contribute equally to their classes and their Summer Immersion group project. They must also be back on campus full time for the last 3-4 weeks of the Immersion.

Family/personal travel, job demands, charity work and other outside activities are not grounds to grant extended absences to students. Students who prioritize those kinds of things over graduate school should defer to another year. Internships are also not a reason for extended absences. Several MS, SJ and SJ-Arts students have scheduled their internships around the Immersion and successfully completed both. If there is a conflict, the student needs to decide what is more important to them – the internship or graduate school. There are plenty of opportunities for internships that are easier to schedule in the fall and spring semesters (and after commencement).

Late Enrollment or Attendance in the Summer Immersion:

Occasionally, a student will get the summer program start date (7/1) wrong and join after the first day of the program. These students fall into two categories, those who enrolled but failed to show up on the first day and those who forgot to enroll by the start of the program and may have also missed the first day or so of the Immersion.

A student who enrolls and/or arrives for classes before the end of the first week of the Summer Immersion can join the program. There should be a discussion between the student, their graduate advisor, their program director and the Immersion program director to make sure the student is brought up to speed quickly and does not fall behind. The student's instructor team should also be advised of the addition to their class and the arrangements worked out between the student and administrators to handle the late arrival.

Students who try to enter the program after the first week should be advised that missing one entire week (and the opening week when much is explained) of a seven-week Immersion program puts them at a severe disadvantage and they should defer to the following year. No student will be allowed to join the Summer Immersion after the first week.