



The absence limit – Directive Udir-3-2016, including local clarifications and additions by the County Executive

First approved by the County Executive on 28 June 2016. Last revised in July 2020. Effective from 1 August 2020.

This document follows the same structure as Directive Udir 3-2016 (passed by the Norwegian Directorate for Education and Training; Udir), and text within the directive is reproduced in its entirety. In some places, short extracts from Udir's directive are omitted or rewritten for editorial reasons. These instances are marked with a separate footnote.

The County Executive's local additions and clarifications have been inserted into the document in italicised font. The local additions and clarifications were originally drawn up following discussions with union representatives, the School Student Union of Norway, the Pupil and Apprentice Ombudsman, school principals and the County Governor.

The absence limit in brief

The absence limit applies to all pupils in upper secondary schools, but does not apply to apprentices, trainees or adults. Nor are pupils following Vg3 alternative training in school included under the absence limit, as they receive neither half-year assessment grades nor a final grade.

The provision is included in the [final paragraph of § 3-3 of the regulations to the Education Act](#) and the final paragraph of § 3-3 of the regulations to the Independent Schools Act.

- Pupils in upper secondary schools must attend and actively participate in their education.
- If a pupil has more than 10 per cent undocumented absence in a subject, he or she will, as a rule, not be entitled to a half-year assessment grade or final grade in that subject, nor is the teacher allowed to give such grades.
- The pupil must present relevant documentation in order to have their absence excluded from the absence limit.
- If the pupil's undocumented absence rate is between 10 and 15 per cent but the reason for absence means it would be clearly unreasonable for the pupil not to receive a grade, the principal may decide that he or she should still receive a grade.
- The absence limit concerns absence from lessons in an individual subject, not the pupil's overall absence rate.
- The pupil shall receive a warning if he or she is at risk of not receiving a grade due to absenteeism.



The rules for applying for absence of up to ten days in the school year to be written off, and the guidelines for self-certification within the school rules apply in addition to the absence limit

The school rules regarding the use of self-certification apply independently of the absence limit. Absence that has not been agreed or notified in advance, or for which self-certification or other documentation has not been submitted, could have consequences for a pupil's grade for orderliness.

The pupil must submit a separate application for absence of up to ten days not to be recorded on their leaving certificate (cf § 3-47 of the regulations to the Norwegian Education Act). Such an application is to be submitted towards the end of the school year on a separate application form before the deadline set by the school. Relevant documentation must accompany the application and be submitted independently of any documentation submitted during the school year in connection with the absence limit.

All absence will count

All absence, regardless of the reason, counts towards your absence percentage.

If the pupil is missing from class due to an entitlement under the Education Act, this is not classed as absence. Such entitlements include:

- counselling at school
- meetings with the educational and psychological counselling services or Norwegian Support System for Special Education (*Statped*)
- scheduled study work agreed with the subject teacher in advance
- student council work etc. approved by the school
- agreed meeting with the principal or other member of staff
- apprenticeship interview

It should be emphasised that schooling at home or at an institution due to long-term illness, or similar, is part of regular schooling and, therefore, does not count as absence.

Nor will pupils be classed as absent from lessons which the school has included on the timetable but are subsequently cancelled *due to unforeseen circumstances*¹.

¹ Omitted: "e.g. the sounding of the fire alarm, missing supply teachers, etc."



Some absence can be excluded

A pupil can still receive a half-year assessment grade and final grade if he or she can document that absence beyond 10 per cent was due to:

- reasons of health and welfare
 - *Illness*
 - *Caring for family members, such as one's own children*
 - *Baptisms, weddings, funerals*
 - *Appointments with a doctor, dentist or Community Mental Health Service or agreements with the school health service etc.*
- union representative work
 - *Representation on a municipal youth council or youth county executive board*
 - *Being a representative at a meeting or for other work in the School Student Union of Norway*
- political work
 - *Participation in a national convention for a registered political party or its youth wing*
 - *Membership of a municipal council*
 - *Membership of a political committee at county level*
 - *Being a party representative in school debates at another school during local and national elections*
 - *Other work for a political organisation, including party-independent organisations, if this cannot be performed outside of school hours*
- relief work
 - *Participation in search operations via humanitarian organisations*
 - *Participation in mandatory exercises for relief work training in humanitarian organisations*
- mandatory attendance
 - *Examination for military service*
 - *Summons to a court case, or a witness summons*
- representation at a national or international event (cf. § 3-47, fifth paragraph, (a)-(f))
 - *Such events include:*
 - *Representation at various national or international sports championships or competitions*
 - *Representation at national or international concerts and art and cultural events*

Where there is uncertainty, the principal (or their proxy) will decide whether the absence falls under one of the above points.



Pupils may also have absence of up to ten days excluded for religious holidays outside of the Norwegian church (cf. regulations to the Education Act [§ 3-47, eighth paragraph](#)).²

The same absence is exempt from being recorded on the leaving certificate.

Absence applying to the compulsory driving instruction course for driving licence category B may also be documented and exempted from the maximum absence limit. This applies to the 4 hour compulsory safety course on track circuit (stage 3) and 9 hour safety course on roads (parts 2 and 3 of stage 4). Reasonable travel time will also be covered by the documented absence. The other parts of the driving instruction course, including the driving tests, are not exempt from the maximum absence limit. The driving instruction course may not be omitted from the upper secondary school leaving certificate and certificate of competence. Rules on the driving instruction course for driving licence category B, including a description of the various stages, can be found in Chapter 11 of the Regulations concerning driver training and driving tests, etc.

[We expand on the difference between the absence limit and the rules for recording absence on the leaving certificate further on in the directive.](#)

If absence from schooling is due to conditions which are clearly beyond the pupil's control, such as shutdowns or delays on public transport, the principal or *their proxy* will determine whether the absence should be recorded.

If absence is to be exempted, it must be documented

There is no requirement to document absence until the 10 per cent limit is exceeded, however, pupils may choose to present documentation before the limit is reached. The limit is set at 10 per cent undocumented absence. If a pupil has e.g. 10.4 per cent undocumented absence in a subject, this may not be rounded down.

Absence on health grounds must be documented from the outset with a doctor's certificate or documentation from another expert, such as a physiotherapist, dentist or psychologist (including a Community Mental Health Service professional). Absence on health grounds cannot be documented with self-certification from a parent, or pupil of full age and legal capacity, alone. *The County Executive stipulates that parents/guardians do not count as experts in this situation.* It is not a requirement that the documentation provide information on the health condition concerned. It simply needs to confirm that the absence was on health grounds. The pupil may also choose to omit/redact parts of a doctor's certificate that contain surplus information.

² Omitted: "It should be noted that 'welfare grounds' also includes caring duties, such as for one's own children. Absence due to appointments with a doctor, dentist or Community Mental Health Service or agreements with the school health service etc. also count as absence on health grounds, which can be documented and exempted from the absence limit."



Conditions which, by their nature, make it difficult or inappropriate to visit a healthcare professional on every occasion, can be documented by way of self-certification together with another form of documentation. Another form of documentation could be a declaration from a *healthcare professional* confirming that the pupil has a chronic illness, or documentation showing that they are being investigated or monitored for an undiagnosed condition. *Unless otherwise indicated, documentation of a chronic illness will be valid for the current school year.* The principal or their proxy will determine whether the presented documentation is suitable, or whether there is a need for another type of documentation.³

In the case of welfare reasons, such as a funeral, a statement from parents or a pupil of full age and legal capacity can normally be used. Absence for political reasons, relief work, union representative work, representation in a national or international event, and mandatory attendance must be documented by a letter from the organisation for which the work is being carried out.

Any absence from the driving instruction course that may be exempt from the maximum absence limit must be documented by the driving school.

Discretion up to 15 per cent

In special cases, the principal or their proxy may decide whether a pupil who has exceeded the 10 per cent limit without providing sufficient documentation can still receive a half-year assessment grade or final grade. The reason for the absence must be of such a nature that it is clearly unfair for the pupil not to be graded, and the undocumented absence rate in the subject must not be higher than 15 per cent.

This is a restricted exemption clause that makes it possible to help pupils who find themselves in a difficult life situation. The exemption can help students with particular challenges to achieve and receive an assessment even if they have an absence rate higher than 10 per cent.

The principal must undertake a robust evaluation of the pupil's situation to determine why he or she did not attend lessons. It is the reason for absence that will determine whether the principal can use this exemption. The grade that the pupil stands to receive, or the consequences of the pupil being ungraded in a subject, are irrelevant to the evaluation.

This exemption is in addition to the exemption for documented absence. This means that the evaluation will not be affected by the amount of documented absence (e.g. sickness absence) the pupil has. In other words, the pupil may have an absence rate

³ Omitted/rewritten: "Absence for political reasons can be validated by a political organisation and for relief work by a relief agency, or similar. In the case of welfare reasons, such as a funeral, a statement from parents or a pupil of full age and legal capacity can normally be used. County councils may choose to draw up more specific guidelines for the types of documentation required for different kinds of absence."



higher than 15 per cent overall, but the undocumented absence rate must not exceed 15 per cent. In all cases, the teacher must have a sufficient basis for assessment in order to give you a grade.

[We expand on the difference between the absence limit and missing basis for assessment further on in the directive.](#)

Further information on absence recording and calculations

In the national framework regulating the distribution of teaching hours per subject, one lesson corresponds to one full hour.⁴ If teaching is arranged in shorter sessions (e.g. 45 minutes), the figures for lessons and absence must be recalculated.

If a pupil arrives a little late, e.g. five minutes, this should be taken into account in the grade for orderliness or conduct⁵. *If a pupil arrives more than 15 minutes late for a lesson, this should be recorded as absence of one full hour rather than as lateness. If teaching is arranged in shorter sessions (e.g. 45 minutes), absence equal to the length of the session should be recorded.*

If teaching covers several subjects simultaneously, such as on subject days or school trips, the subject teachers must clarify in advance which subjects any absence will count towards and how it will be apportioned between the subjects. *Unless otherwise agreed in advance, absence shall be recorded against those subjects which are entered on the normal timetable during the period concerned. The teacher responsible for the subject must record the absence. It must be clearly stated to the pupil in advance, which subject any absence will be recorded against.*

It is emphasised that absence from all lessons must be recorded. Clear distinction should be made between absence measured in lessons and absence measured in days. Absence for the week shall be recorded in Everyday by Friday of that week. Subject teachers shall send warnings to the pupil without delay and on the basis specified when the absence is recorded in Everyday.

Form teachers will review absence for the preceding week and evaluate absence in connection with any documentation submitted by a pupil. Submission of documentation or any comments from the pupil in respect of the recorded absence must be made within ten days of the subject teacher's deadline for recording absence at the end of the week. If there are compelling reasons for which the pupil

⁴ Subtitle changed from "One lesson corresponds to one full hour" to "Further information on absence recording and calculations".

⁵ Omitted: "The county council, or school, should stipulate in the school rules when absence for parts of a lesson should be calculated as lateness and when absence should be recorded as a full hour."



cannot be blamed, the principal may decide that the documentation or comments can be accepted after this deadline.

The documentation should be placed in the pupil's folder in Everyday with the correct code. Form teachers will change any absence codes in Everyday in relation to submitted documentation. In some cases, this will mean that the warning sent to a pupil by a subject teacher will no longer be valid after the documentation has been submitted and reviewed by the form teacher. In such cases, the warning will be withdrawn by giving the pupil verbal or written notice that it has been withdrawn (it is not necessary to cancel the warning in the pupil's folder). If the warning is withdrawn, a new warning must be given if there is a further risk of the pupil not receiving an assessment.

The form teacher is responsible for ensuring that every single subject teacher is fully informed of documented absence. The principal will develop procedures for ensuring good information flow regarding this at the school. The school also has a duty to investigate absence not supported by documentation.

The absence calculation shall be based on the number of planned and fixed annual teaching hours in a subject. The school owner is free to provide more teaching than is set down in the national framework regulating the distribution of teaching hours per subject. If the school owner wishes to provide more than the minimum teaching hours for a subject, this should be set down within a local framework regulating the distribution of teaching hours per subject. In this case, the locally agreed figure for annual teaching hours will be used as the basis for the absence calculation.

The school owner/school may also give pupils additional teaching, such as intensive education, homework help, etc. Any such additional teaching will be in addition to the fixed number of teaching hours in the subject and will not be included in the absence percentage. The number of teaching hours used to calculate the absence limit should be the same for all students at a school. As such, voluntary offers of additional teaching in a subject will not result in any variation in the total number of teaching hours for the subject. It must be made clear to the pupils which lessons are ordinary lessons, and which are additional.

Special information for recording absence on preparatory days before exams and on exam day

We make reference to the interpretive statement from the Norwegian Directorate for Education and Training to the Trøndelag County Executive of 2 April 2019 (excerpt, our underlining):

Although § 1-4 of the regulations cite preparatory periods and exam periods as teaching periods, this does not mean that absence on one or both days will count towards the absence limit for any one subject. Absence on such days



shall only be recorded as part of total absence. It shall not count towards the absence limit for the subject that the preparatory day/exam relates to.

Pupils not receiving a half-year assessment grade

The absence limit applies to both the half-year assessment grade and to final grades. For half-year assessment grades falling in the middle of the school year, absence is calculated against the number of teaching hours in the subject for the half-year. For continuous subjects where a half-year assessment grade is also given in the second half of the year, absence is calculated for the whole year against the total number of teaching hours in the subject for that year. For subjects awarding final grades, absence is calculated against the number of teaching hours in the subject during the year in which the final grade is awarded. The number of teaching hours to which pupils are entitled is set down in the framework regulating the distribution of teaching hours per subject.

It follows from the above that a pupil who has a high rate of undocumented absence at the start of the school year may exceed the absence limit for the whole year, resulting in them receiving neither a half-year assessment grade nor a final grade.

Pupils who do not receive half-year assessment grades must be monitored particularly closely. They must be made aware that further absence could also lead to a final grade not being awarded.

Absence in general subjects

There are some subjects for which a final grade is not given every year, such as Norwegian and physical education.

Absence in these subjects should be measured against the number of lessons in each school year, not against the total number of lessons over two or three years.

The reasons are two-fold: to take account of pupils who change school, and of pupils who would be at risk of not receiving a final grade in stage Vg3 because of a high absence rate in Vg1.

Change of subject or school during the school year

School owners may allow pupils to change subjects during the teaching year. In such cases, the pupil's absence calculation in the new subject will be reset to zero. Any absence in the original subject will not count towards the absence limit.



Additionally, absence in a subject will not be carried over with a change in school during the teaching year.

Pupils who exceed the absence limit

Pupils will not lose their right to be assessed

All pupils have the right to assessment, regardless of whether they have lost the right to a half-year or final grade. This means they will be entitled to take part in lessons and to receive formative assessment in the subject.

Converting from pupil to external candidate

If a pupil wishes to take a subject as an external candidate, he or she may not be a pupil in that subject at the same time (cf. § 3-27 of the regulations, third paragraph). If a pupil wishes to take a subject as an external candidate, he or she must become a part-time pupil, which requires a decision from the county council/school. It is a condition for converting from full-time to part-time pupil that there be compelling reasons (cf. § 6-5 of the regulations, third paragraph). Exceeding the absence limit in one or more subjects should be one such reason.

There is no need for a conversion decision to be made for pupils who are accepted into upper secondary education as part-time pupils. It is sufficient for the pupil to relinquish their pupil status in the subject in which he or she wishes to register as an external candidate. The deadlines for registering as an external candidate are 1 February for an examination in spring and 15 September for an examination in autumn.

The county council can choose to allow those who are no longer pupils in a subject to attend teaching as a guest pupil. These individuals have no rights or obligations under the Education Act or its regulations. As such, they have neither an entitlement to formative assessment nor to a final grade in the subject.

Admission to Vg2 or Vg3

As a starting point, pupils must have passed all subjects at the relevant stage in order to be admitted to Vg2 and Vg3, (cf regulations to the Education Act, [§ 6-28](#)). This means that a pupil must, as a rule, have achieved at least grade 2 in all subjects in order to begin the next stage.



However, an exception to this is provided in [§ 6-37](#) for pupils who have not passed all subjects (e.g. received grade 1, had no basis for assessment or exceeded the absence limit).

The county council must then carry out a thorough assessment as to whether it is justifiable for the pupil to move up to the next stage. The pupil must still pass the subject to receive the leaving certificate.

First diploma

In order to be entitled to a first diploma, the pupil must have completed upper secondary education providing general study skills within the normal timescale.

Pupils who do not receive a final grade in one or more subjects due to the absence limit must take the missing subjects as an external candidate.

If they take the examination within the normal timescale and, in addition, satisfy the leaving certificate requirements pursuant to *the regulations to the Education Act*, [§ 3-43](#), they will receive a first diploma.

If they do not take the subjects within the normal timescale, they are not entitled to a first diploma.

What is the difference between the absence limit and other regulations?

Difference between the rules on the absence limit and the recording of absence on the leaving certificate

The absence limit uses the same grounds for exemption as those in [§ 3-47](#) relating to the recording of absence on the leaving certificate and certificate of competence. They are, however, two different things.

The table below shows some of the differences.

Differences between the rules on the absence limit and on the recording of absence on the leaving certificate	
Absence limit	Recording of absence on leaving certificate
For individual subjects; can affect grades	Totalled for all subjects; no connection to subject grades



Exemptions apply to lessons	Exemptions apply to days, not lessons
There is no limit for the number of days or lessons exempted	Exemptions are limited to 10 days per school year
All documented illness can be exempted from the first day	Absence due to illnesses other than chronic cannot be exempted for at least the first three days
Absence connected to treatment from a dentist or community mental health service or <i>visits to the school health service</i> etc. can be exempted	Absence connected to treatment from a dentist or community mental health service or <i>visits to the school health service</i> ⁶ etc. cannot be exempted
Absence on health grounds must be documented with a doctor's certificate or documentation from another health professional, either alone or in combination with self-certification	Absence on health grounds must be documented with a doctor's certificate
Parts of the driving instruction course may be exempt from the maximum absence limit	None of the driving instruction course may be omitted from the upper secondary school leaving certificate
<i>There is no requirement to document absence until the 10 per cent limit is exceeded, however, pupils may choose to present documentation before the limit is reached.</i>	<i>Application is made on a separate application form, together with relevant documentation, towards the end of the school year and within the deadline set by the school</i>

Difference between exceeded absence limit and missing basis for assessment

The consequences of the teacher not having a basis for assessment and the pupil exceeding the absence limit are the same. In both cases, the pupil will not receive a half-year assessment or final grade in the subject.

It is, however, important to clarify that these are two different things.

The basis for assessment will still be the curriculum's competence objectives in the subject.

Thus, an absence limit will not lead to a teacher having no basis for assessment, but it will affect whether the teacher, independently of the basis for assessment, can give a half-year assessment and/or final grade.

⁶ Clarified by the Norwegian Directorate for Education and Training to the County Governor of Trøndelag in April 2018



On the other hand, a teacher may have no basis for assessment even if a pupil has not exceeded the absence limit, for example, where there is a high rate of documented sickness absence.

What must the school do?

The pupil and parents must be notified

A pupil may not be denied a half-year or final grade in a subject unless they have received advance warning.

The pupil and parents must be notified in writing if there is any doubt concerning whether the pupil will receive a half-year or final grade in one or more subjects. This follows the regulations to the Education Act, [§ 3-7](#). Parents will not be notified once a pupil turns 18.

The notification shall be sent "without undue delay". This means that it must be sent when the pupil is at risk of exceeding the absence limit. Even if a notification has been given with respect to the half-year grade, a new notification must be given regarding the final grade. *It is recommended that the limit for when the warning should be sent be set at 5% absence in a subject.*

Separate notifications shall be sent if there is doubt concerning (1) whether the pupil can receive a grade due to the absence limit and (2) whether the pupil can receive a grade due to the teacher having no basis for assessment. There will often be two different causal relationships involved and, therefore, even if both could lead to the pupil not receiving an assessment in a subject, they are treated as separate sets of circumstances.

Individual decisions and appeals

The decision not to give a final grade in a subject is an individual decision which the principal is responsible for making (cf. *regulations to the Education Act, § 3-18*). *Individual decisions are made as soon as the pupil has exceeded the absence limit and has been given reasonable time to provide relevant documentation⁷*

There is a right of appeal against decisions not to award a final grade (cf. [regulations to the Education Act, § 5-1](#)). There is a ten-day deadline for appeals. *The county council is the administrative appeals body. Appeals are sent to the school, which will handle further proceedings with the appeals body.* There will not be an individual decision if the pupil does not receive a half-year assessment grade.

⁷ Omitted: "These individual decisions should not be made until the pupil has had an opportunity to submit relevant documentation."



Students must initially report to the exam. A pupil who has taken an exam in a subject for which he or she will not receive a final grade will have the exam annulled. This is stipulated in [the regulations to the Education Act, § 3-37, second paragraph](#). If the right of appeal expires before the exam and the pupil has not appealed, they should not report for the exam.

Missing grades are recorded on the certificate of competence

If, following a warning, a pupil does not receive a grade in a subject, this shall be recorded on the certificate of competence.

An exceeded absence limit shall be recorded with IV, followed by FAM51 Exceeded Absence Limit. In the usage field, the school shall enter: *"Used for those pupils who have exceeded the absence limit in the subject (cf. § 3-3 of the regulations, fourth paragraph)."*

It should be noted that school owners should have a proper system for recording absence (cf. [regulations to the Education Act, § 3-39](#)). This provision also stipulates that absence should be documented every half-year.

In relation to the absence limit, the system must be able to handle absence measured in both days/lessons for recording on the certificate of competence, and absence in lessons for individual subjects.⁸

⁸ Omitted separate paragraph on the school rules, with the following text: "All schools should have a set of school rules. They should contain rules on what pupils should expect, what pupils can and cannot do at school, and what happens when the rules are broken. They should set clear rules on absence and whether absence will result in reduced grades for orderliness and conduct. The school rules may contain sanctions for absence. Refer to our directive on school rules."



How should schools inform and monitor pupils?

Schools must keep pupils and parents informed

It is important for pupils and parents to be informed about the absence limit and what it means. In other words:

- that the absence limit could result in a half-year assessment or final grade not being awarded in a subject
- the exemptions that apply and acceptable documentation
- the right of advance warning and the right of appeal
- the continued right to receive formative assessment
- the consequences of not receiving grades

It is also important for the school to provide information on:

- what is considered as absence from a lesson (*over 15 minutes late*) and what is considered as lateness (*less than 15 minutes late*)
- which subjects the pupil has during which teaching hours (including interdisciplinary lessons, subject days etc.)
- how many lessons they will have in the subject before the half-year assessment and final grades are given, seen against both the framework regulating the distribution of teaching hours per subject, and the length of the teaching hours

The County Executive has drawn up a separate information sheet for pupils and guardians, of which schools should make use. Upper secondary schools are responsible for assisting with guidance to primary and lower secondary schools on matters relating to the absence limit.

Schools should follow up absence

Schools have a duty to monitor and take care of pupils. Dropout prevention and absenteeism are related. Research shows that where schools use timely intervention to capture and follow up on pupils who are frequently missing, it can lead to fewer pupils dropping out later on.

There can be many reasons behind a pupil missing school on a frequent basis. It is important to deal with it at an early stage, and well before a pupil exceeds the absence limit. Schools and school owners should work together to find effective measures for following up absence and catching problems early on. Measures should be adapted to the individual pupil.



Schools should also make use of other resources as required. Examples of such resources are the educational and psychological counselling services (PPT), the Follow-up Service, the Norwegian Labour and Welfare Administration, and child welfare services. For some pupils, follow up could amount to a single conversation. For other pupils, there may be a need for more comprehensive monitoring, such as using an interdisciplinary team.

School owners are responsible for making sure that necessary advice is provided. Pupils should receive the information, guidance, follow-up and help they need to settle in. This is stipulated in the *regulations to the Education Act, § 22-1*. Advice to pupils should possess a holistic perspective and should contribute to dropout prevention, among other things.

Parents of pupils under the legal age are entitled to receive notification of a pupil's absence. This is stipulated in the regulations to [the Education Act, § 20-4, fourth paragraph, item \(a\)](#).