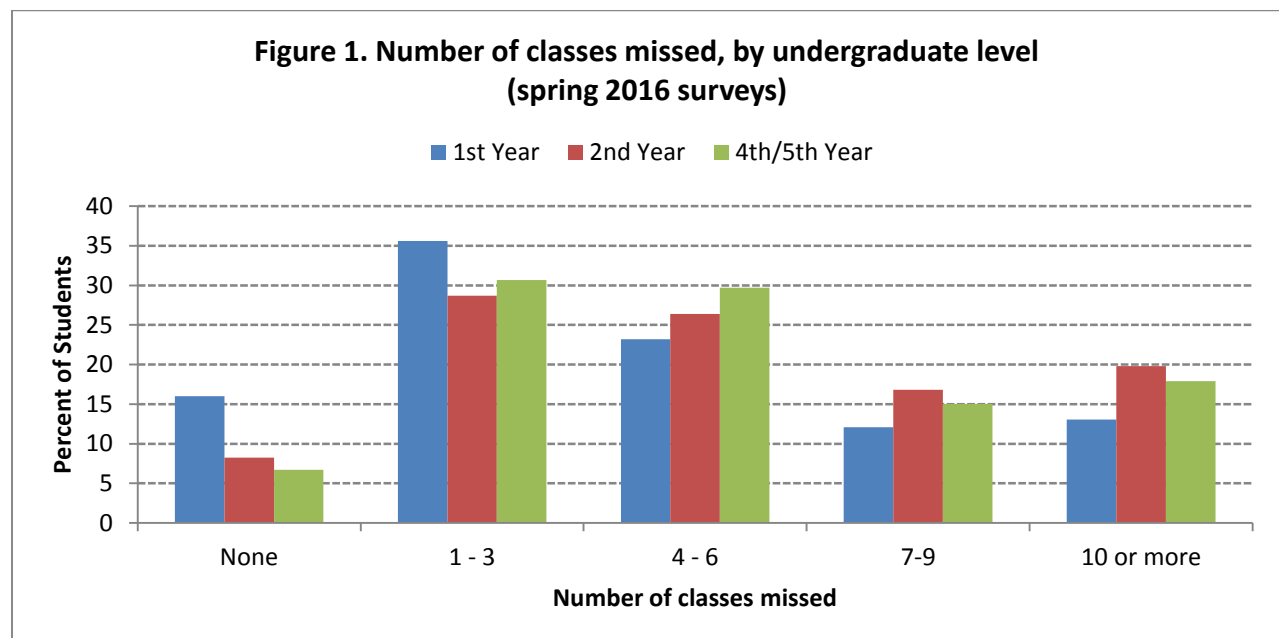


Class Absenteeism among NU Undergraduate Students: Prevalence and Reasons

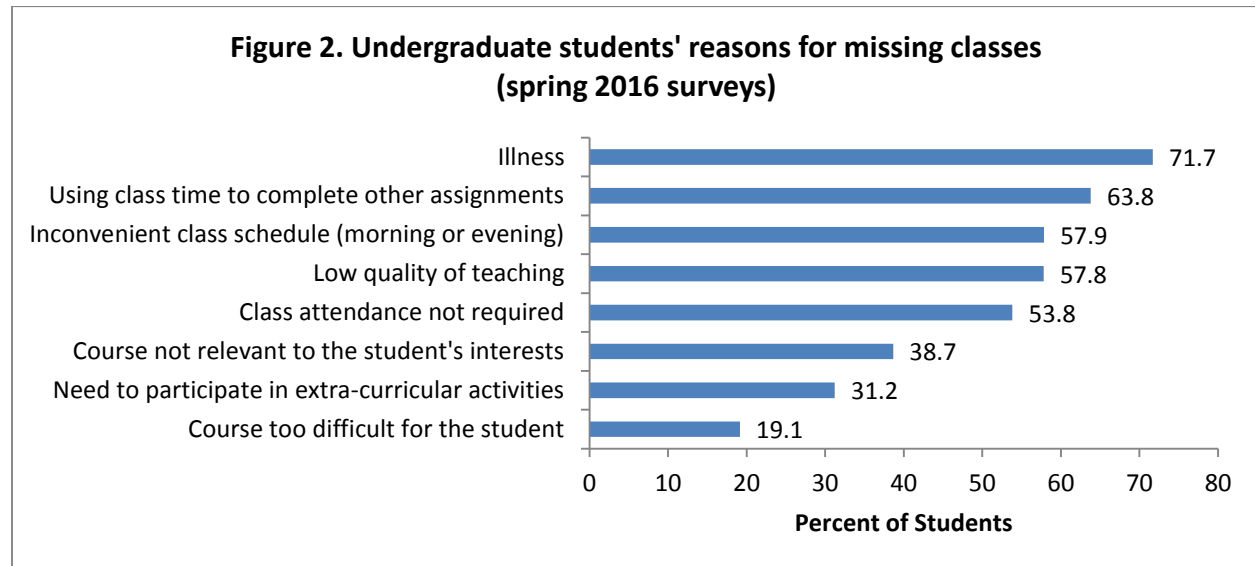
Class attendance/absenteeism is a topic of significant academic/policy interest. Empirical studies have found that attendance is one of the key predictors of academic performance. Whether or not this relationship is causal in nature, however, remains an open question. In the present analysis, we attempt to estimate the prevalence of class absenteeism by using data on first-year (N=339), second-year (N=332) and fourth/fifth-year undergraduate students (N=340) who participated in Student Experience and Undergraduate Exit Surveys in spring 2016.

Overall, 90% of the students indicated that they missed at least one class during spring semester 2016. On average, first-year students reported missing around four classes and second- and fourth/fifth-year students around five classes. Figure 1 shows the distribution of the number of classes missed by undergraduate level.



It is important to note that according to survey research, people tend to under-report “socially undesirable” behaviors. Therefore, the actual absenteeism prevalence could be substantially higher than self-reported survey data suggest. Administrative data from the School of Engineering (SEng) seem to confirm this fact. Attendance records collected in spring 2015 suggest that first-, second-, and fourth-year SEng undergraduate students missed an average of 11.5 classes (or 23% of all classes). Survey data from spring 2016, however, indicate that the equivalent student group reported missing only 4.8 classes.

Reasons for missing classes, as Figure 2 suggest, were predominantly related to health, time management, class scheduling, and instructional quality.



Attendance is an important issue that deserves attention. Recently, NU approved a university-wide attendance policy. This policy could be an important step towards addressing absenteeism. However, it is crucial to recognize that an attendance policy alone could have limited success in addressing the issue. It is critical for faculty, departments, schools and the institution to foster sound instructional practices and implement support mechanisms that motivate students and stimulate learning.

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We invite you to write to IR (ir@nu.edu.kz) and (1) share your thoughts and experiences relative to the topic under discussion in this **IR-MFF** issue and/or (2) suggest a question/topic that you would like us to address in a future issue of the **IR-MFF**.

The IR-MFF is published every last Friday of the month or, if the relevance and timeliness of the topic require, earlier (August through November and January through April). Analyses are *limited to 300 words or less (narrative text) and one or two graphs/tables*. If you need more detailed information (methodological or otherwise), please contact IR at ir@nu.edu.kz.