



WNMU Dress Guidelines 2022-2023

Introduction

Western New Mexico University is an institution that is in support of free-thinking, free thought and freedom of expression. With proper guidance and fostering the nature of professionalism we can promote these aspects of higher learning. In doing so, we seek to set guidelines for the University to set a standard of conduct and presentation conducive to the prestigious nature of a University.

As Faculty and Staff, we have a profound impact on students' perception of our knowledge and credibility, rapport, and fairness (Slabert, 2019). In addition, "research indicates that both dress and students' attitude are the important factors to increase weight on students' learning" (Kasheml 2019). This could ultimately transcend to job placement and confidence in the workplace for current and future students. Ultimately, we can increase one's opinion of their experience in the University setting improving our reputation and perceived quality of education (Carr, D. L., Davies, T. L., & Lavin, A. M., 2010); something we are well aware we already provide.

Whether on the job, in the classroom, on a ZOOM meeting or attending a formal University event, always remember, you are representing WNMU. We hope to inspire you in joining us on this adventure in redefining the Western Way!

Definitions

- **Business Professional**- generally conservative clothing to portray yourself in a professional manner
- **Business/Smart Casual**- relating to or denoting a style of clothing that is less formal than traditional business wear, but is still intended to give a professional and businesslike impression.
- **Mustang Fridays**- a time to show your University spirit, relaxed wear expressing mustang labeled clothing or school colors. Athletic shoes are permissible to wear but must be neat in appearance.

Standards/Examples

Business & casual wear encompasses many looks, but it really means clothing that is appropriate for a professional office environment - neither of these examples equate to sloppiness. It is clothing that allows you to be comfortable at work, yet always look neat and professional. Employees should consider each day's activities when determining what to wear.

All employees are expected to present themselves in a neat and well-kept manner. Clothing is expected to fit appropriately, be neat, clean, in good shape and free from visible rips, tears, holes or other heavy wear. Appropriate footwear should be worn at all times.

Examples of appropriate attire include, but are not limited to, the following:

- Dress/khaki pants, or jeans, skirts, dresses w/modest hemlines,
- Dress tops, button-up shirts, collared shirts, or collarless polo shirt
- Loafers, mules, dressy clogs, boots, flats, dress heels, dress sandals, leather deck-type shoes, conservative athletic or walking shoes, and office sneakers.

Examples of inappropriate attire include, but are not limited to, the following:

- Jeans that are excessively worn, faded or have rips/holes
- Items bearing controversial or offensive graphics or slogans
- Overalls, sweats, workout clothes or jogging suits
- Baggy, form fitting or revealing clothes unless covered with an appropriate top or bottom
- Pajamas and other casual home attire
- Flip-flops and slippers; shoes that could pose a safety hazard

Considerations

Jeans are permitted if they are clean and in good shape without rips/holes or visible wear and have a fit similar to slacks or dress pants.

T-shirts are acceptable in the office setting as part of an outfit with a covering top, jacket, or dress. T-Shirts/Sweatshirts can be worn during Mustang Fridays and should have a WNMU Logo or be of team colors.

Please use perfumes, colognes, and other scents with restraint to reduce allergic reactions of your coworkers. Minimize distractions from unpleasant body odors and disheveled appearance.

Commencements and Formal University Events

During Commencement, when participating in the events, staff and faculty shall wear matching regalia, dark pants, and preferably dress shoes.

Examples of formal University events are, but not limited to, Staff/Faculty Senate meetings, honor breakfasts, division quarterlies, one-on-one supervisory meetings, Spring and Fall Convocations, and Regents meetings.

Online Zoom/Teams Courses/Classes/Meetings

WNMU is sympathetic to the lives we carry on in the community. We adhere to the life work balance, and we are aware some of us have children and animals we care for and love. During official school business (e.g. online class, meetings, etc.) attempt to keep all distractions to a minimum giving your attendees your undivided attention and service of care.

Backgrounds should be clean in appearance with no offensive items showing. A blurred background and any digital background with WNMU photos, insignia, logos, etc. is acceptable. Personal backdrops are acceptable as long as they are not offensive in nature. An employee should meet the same standards as a physical classroom and/or office.

Exemptions

Supervisory discretion/implementation of these guidelines shall be based on professional judgment. Things to consider are environment, time of year, and location. During retreats or team building exercises directors and supervisors may decide to incorporate temporary exemptions.

Facilities and Applied Science Welding/Electrical have safety standards in which these guidelines may not have a practical and reasonable application. These guidelines default to the departments to make the proper decisions in ensuring their employees are safe.

Athletics also falls under safety regulations with regards to competition and practice. This guideline defers to any dress code or standard they have incorporated in their policies.

Final Note

Clothing that you would wear to go exercising, lounging at home, going to the beach, or going to a club isn't suitable for the workplace. While keeping these standards in mind, employees can still look well-groomed and feel comfortable when following a business/casual dress code.

Photo examples are available in APPENDIX A.

University Commitments - RECOMMENDATIONS

Option 1

The University commits to participate in a fringe benefit reimbursement program designed to target entry level and new employees up two years. The goal of this program is to help employees meet the guidelines set forth in this document. No more than \$100 per fiscal year will be given to employees after proof of purchase.

Option 2

The Employee Sponsorship Program is a volunteer designed approach to helping new employees bolster their wardrobe. A new employee will select a tenure volunteer to guide and donate clothing, ultimately bringing them up to standard.

Option 3

At the discretion of the department heads, they will provide gear to their employees to establish a standard polo wardrobe. Proper fit to promote professional appearance shall be communicated between employee and department.

Citations:

Kasheml, M. A. (2019, December 26). The Effect of Teachers' Dress on Students' Attitude and Students' Learning: Higher Education View. In Hindawi Education Research International. Retrieved from <https://doi.org/10.1155/2019/9010589>

Carr, D. L., Davies, T. L., & Lavin, A. M. (2010). The impact of instructor attire on college student satisfaction. *College Student Journal*, 44(1), 101+. https://link.gale.com/apps/doc/A221092142/AONE?u=nm_a_wnmu&sid=bookmark-AONE&xid=0e78bfd6

Slabbert, A. (2019). Lecturer dress code and student perceptions of lecturer professional attributes. *Journal of Psychology in Africa*, 29(2), 176–181. <https://doi.org/10.1080/14330237.2019.160334>

Heathfield, S. (2021) Photos of Attire for a Workplace With a Casual Dress Code. Photos Help You Understand Proper Work Attire for a Casual Setting (Appendix A.) Retrieved from <https://www.thebalancecareers.com/casual-dress-code-4051114>

Appendix A

Photo Examples & Descriptions of Standard Business/Smart Casual

The following photos give you the opportunity to see what is appropriate to wear to work in an environment that allows employees to dress casually for work. While some work environments require formal dress attire and others, business casual, more and more organizations are offering employees the work incentive of casual dress for work. Employees rightly view more casual dress codes as an incentive and as a perk. Employees are attracted to organizations that allow employees to dress comfortably for work.



EXAMPLE 1: You can definitely sport your denim while still looking professional, as long as you steer clear of the t-shirt. A simple patterned or solid color top is all it takes. Additionally, a look that could be considered slightly more business than casual would be a silky top tucked into a solid color pencil skirt, or a summer dress paired with a blazer.

As for footwear, choose something along the lines of a sensible flat or a simple ankle boot. Sneakers aren't completely out of the question as long as they're presentable and don't have that dirty, worn-in look.



EXAMPLE 2: The images featured are great examples of appropriate clothing for a casual work environment. Other dress codes exist that are more appropriate for formal, business casual, and smart casual workplaces.

A casual dress code means that employees can dress in comfortable, informal clothing. Although the employees' comfort is a priority, certain standards are required—clothing must be appropriate and still professional.



EXAMPLE 3: These employees are dressed well, in comfortable and relaxed clothing, but they still maintain a professional image. Also, keep in mind that modesty in dress is not only important but so is modesty in accessories.

Although the degree of informality may vary from more casual to a little dressier in some cases, it is important to remember that employee comfort is the main priority, as long as the employees still look professional and are dressed appropriately for the workplace.