

Handling Attendance

Many instructors already have formal policies as well as more tailored approaches to supporting students to continue learning when they need to miss class for a variety of reasons, and many instructors' existing attendance policies provide some flexibility for this (e.g. allowing for X number of absences within a quarter without a negative impact on a student's grade). Unplanned events that shift the teaching and learning landscape can amplify the need for a more formalized set of alternatives to attending class (whether class is held in person or virtually) so that students can continue to access and demonstrate learning in different formats.

Some examples of alternatives to attending class include:

- Watching or listening to a [webcast](#) or [Zoom recording](#) of a lecture or class session, and then completing a reflection or other assignment that allows the student to check their understanding and communicate their learning for themselves and for the instructor.
- Reviewing the materials used in class (such as lecture slides, readings, handouts, problem sets) and then seeing if they can answer a set of questions that allows them to check their understanding, such as questions listed in course slides or in an online survey or quiz.
- Participating in class discussion online, such as by using the Discussion feature in Canvas, in which students respond to a common prompt as well as to at least one post by a peer. For additional structure, instructors can provide a list of helpful ways to respond to a discussion post, such as by reflecting back for understanding; asking a follow-up question for clarification or extension; sharing additional information or resources that amplify, extend, or complicate the content of the post.
- Choosing from a pre-approved list of mini-assignments that align with the general learning goals of the course. The list can include accessing in-class materials and completing a task (as above) plus other forms of engagement, such as attending a talk or event related to the course goals and content and then completing a reflection; choosing from a set of external resources to engage with, such as recordings of talks, podcasts, or demos available online, and completing a relevant task to reflect on or apply one's learning; or taking a practice exam or completing a problem-set that shows one's learning of the pertinent material.

The flexibility of these options can also include deciding on a due date that responds to the needs of both instructors and students; for example, an expectation can be set that an alternative to attendance should be completed within a certain number of days after the missed class, depending on the situation.

More generally, when students have missed a greater number of classes (and alternatives to attendance) than an instructor's policy has allowed, due to unplanned events and other emergencies, an instructor can consider focusing on what they can reasonably expect students to have learned in the course, rather than focusing on how many classes have been missed, and ask students to demonstrate that learning for assessment.

Note that [campus policy](#) prohibits asking students for Doctors' notes in the event of an absence due to illness.