

Managing Student Absences During the Pandemic

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Instructors are encouraged to handle student absences with flexibility. How instructors might provide make-up work to students who are unable to participate in class varies depending on the context (discipline, class size, lab/lecture) for each situation. [The TLC can meet with faculty individually to discuss their particular course](#) in order to help them devise an appropriate plan of action.

Note on Attendance Policies: We strongly advise against attendance policies that may unintentionally encourage students to come to class while sick or put additional burden on students who are required to isolate/quarantine. It is critical to our health and safety efforts that instructors encourage students in either case to take necessary precautions for the good of our community.

The following are some broad approaches and suggestions for managing student absences during the pandemic:

1. Be flexible.

It's important to remember that the pandemic continues to create uncertainty and complications that can be stressful for everyone. Consider providing flexible due dates to assignments, learning activities and exams. Clearly explain how students can make up missed assignments or exams. When possible, incorporate frequent, formative assessments with built-in options to drop one or two low scores.

2. Post frequent announcements.

Once or twice a week, send email announcements through Blackboard Learn that summarize class activities and remind students about upcoming homework, assignments, exams and other important course activities. This helps not only quarantined or isolated students stay on-track with classwork, but all students.

3. Create virtual opportunities to engage students.

Remind students who are unable to attend class that they should attend virtual office hours. Provide a space online for students to ask questions such as a Blackboard Learn discussion board, Microsoft Teams, or even email. You might consider assigning students to small, online study groups so that they can review material with one another, or exchange notes when they miss class.

4. Record class sessions.

Make a habit of recording class sessions. If students are unable to attend class, you can make recordings available in your Blackboard Learn course site. Class recordings are most effective when you provide resources to students such as [an advance organizer](#),

key questions, [skeleton notes](#), or other instructions to help students engage with the recorded video.

If you have recordings from a prior term which cover the same content, you may consider posting them to your Bb Learn course site. Before using previous recordings for your current class, you must de-identify prior students by blurring, cropping, or editing them out of the video. Learn more in the following guidelines on [Recording Class Under FERPA and PA Law \[PDF\]](#) from the Office of Compliance, Privacy and Internal Audit.

5. Ask for help.

Several groups are ready and available to help you manage student absences, including the following:

- **Instructional Technology Group** can provide resources and training for video editing, along with other tools and techniques involving instructional technology. Please reach out to them at itg@drexel.edu for assistance.
- **Instructional Media Services** is available to help you with in class implementation of remote instruction in our Hyflex-equipped classrooms. Please contact ims@drexel.edu for training and resources.
- **The [Teaching and Learning Center](#)** can provide individualized support and help you devise a plan of action for accommodating student absences.
- **The [Remote Course Facilitator \(RCF\) Program](#)** has graduate student RCFs “On Call” who may be able to report to the classroom to assist with recording class sessions, managing live, synchronous remote sessions, such as via Zoom, to engage remote learners, or assisting with a shift to fully remote synchronous class sessions for a period of time. Contact graduatecollege@drexel.edu for options.
- **Faculty colleagues** who have experience recording lectures and making them available to students can provide helpful feedback and suggestions. You may also reach out to Kevin Owens (owensk@drexel.edu), who has experience recording and sharing lectures and has done so successfully for many years.

As a reminder to all, Drexel’s [Employee Assistance Program](#) offers health and wellness support, including access to confidential, 24/7 counseling.