

September 17, 2021

Managing Course Absences

Instructors should design their course, including course policies (e.g., allowable absences), expecting that live, in-person participation might not be possible at all times during the quarter, by either students or members of the teaching team.

It is also possible that a course may have to move to an online/remote format, either temporarily (e.g., classroom cleaning is required due to a positive case), or permanently (e.g. campus in-person activities are restricted), although we expect that the latter is unlikely. Every effort is being made to schedule classroom cleaning due to a positive case at times when the classroom is not being used.

Managing Instructor Absence due to isolation or quarantine

If an instructor feels able to teach, but is unable to teach in person because of a COVID positive test or a quarantine requirement then:

- Any class with significant undergraduate enrollment should, if at all possible, still allow for students to participate from the classroom. This is because many of our undergraduates are sharing rooms, and so they are not guaranteed to be able to find a suitable place from which to join by zoom.
- Large classes should have another member of the teaching team on hand to facilitate classroom participation.
- Having students in the classroom join the zoom session will allow the instructor to hear students and to see questions in chat.

If an instructor is unable to teach due to COVID symptoms, that should be handled like any other instructor absence due to illness.

Managing Student Absence due to isolation or quarantine

Guidelines and suggestions for instructors include:

- Talk to your class on the first day and remind them how important it is to not come to class if they are not feeling well; this is not specific to COVID. Explain how they can make up class work if they have to miss class, particularly if they have a positive COVID diagnosis and need to be isolated. Reassure students that you are available to discuss options if they miss a significant number of class meetings.
- Students may ask you to have a zoom link available if they are sick so that they can continue to come to class. We are not requiring instructors to do, for reasons given below, but if you wish to provide a link, here are some suggestions and guidelines:
 - Successful hybrid classes (in which some students join by zoom) require classrooms with specialized equipment so that high quality video and audio of the classroom can be captured for the remote student. We have a large and varied classroom stock at Stanford, with only a small number of rooms set up for hybrid learning. **However**, if you have a small discussion-based class, you may

be able to use zoom on your laptop to enable students in isolation or quarantine to participate

- Instructors running hybrid classes should be aware of the need for some training in managing the class so that it is pedagogically successful for the remote students. [CTL is available for consultation](#).
- Provide essential course content in an asynchronous format on the course Canvas site. This could include notes, pre-recorded lectures, videos, or readings. Or, identify an alternate mechanism by which students can obtain missed content such as:
 - Assign a student on a rotating basis as a note-taker and post those class notes to Canvas. We recommend making this assignment a credited component of coursework, or recognizing the student in some other meaningful way.
 - Create a “buddy system” among students in your course: organize students into groups of 3-5, and clarify that the purpose is for students to support one another in course learning, especially in the event of a disruption (e.g., to share notes and important course announcements).
 - Students may ask you to record live lectures, and it is up to you if you wish to do so. However, be aware that the audio-visual requirements for recorded lectures are similar to those needed for hybrid classes and are only available in limited classrooms. Instructors with small classes may be able to make recordings from their laptop, or may wish to consider audio recordings if the class is discussion-based.
- Share with students how assessments (e.g. quizzes, problem-sets, papers, projects, and exams) will be handled and what flexibility is available. Recommendations:
 - Design your course with assignments and activities that do not require an in-person format and that could be done in an online/remote format if needed, e.g., discussion prompts, group tasks that can be done online, writing assignments, problem sets, virtual labs, or virtual visits from course guests.
 - Policies such as dropping the lowest exam or problem set grade can also be used for flexibility.
- If your course has a required in-person participation element, find creative ways for students to earn those points. For example, instructors could audio record a discussion section or have a student note-taker share class content with the absent student. The student could then be asked to send two additional questions that they would have asked had they been present in class.
- Connect students to campus learning resources, such as CTL’s [subject peer tutors and language practice partners](#), Hume’s [writing and speaking tutors](#), CTL’s [remote learning resources](#), Vaden’s [well-being resources](#), and other [units offering support](#).
- Familiarize yourself with [signs of student distress and steps you can take to help](#).

Sarah Church, Vice Provost for Undergraduate Education

Mary Beth Mudgett, Senior Associate Dean for Undergraduate Educational Initiatives, H&S