

Attendance Policy (Spring 2021 Only)

<https://www.stmarytx.edu/policies/academic-affairs/attendance-policy-spring-2021-only/>

Approver(s):	Academic Council
Authorizes Release:	Provost and Vice President for Academic Affairs
Responsible Area:	Academic Affairs
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Monitoring attendance, whether students are in-class or online, is critical for the early identification of at-risk students, helps our students with satisfactory academic progression, and can impact federal student aid dollars.

Given the variety of teaching modalities that will be used this spring, it is necessary to define attendance and absences. Agreement on these terms is essential for consistent application of the proposed attendance policy. Edits to the policy result from our experiences in Fall 2020.

A link to this policy must be included in course syllabi.

I. Attendance

Attendance in a live classroom remains unchanged.

Attendance in synchronous online classes.

Attendance depends on the active participation of students. Students are expected to attend online sessions just as they would in a face-to-face classroom, by avoiding non-course related activities. Appropriate lighting promotes better engagement when the video feature of Zoom is in use.

The syllabus must include the method(s) for determining attendance and participation of students in synchronous online courses. These may (but need not) include participation using the Zoom video feature for the length of the class time or may require a student to activate the video feature when called upon. Attendance may contribute to a student's final grade as long the syllabus describes specific ways in which students may earn this credit for excused absences and absences caused by technology limitations and failures.

Because students have access to diverse quality in bandwidth, uneven access to appropriate technology, and unique home situations, the syllabus should include a process by which students may contact the instructor to discuss difficulties that might occur with the Zoom video, whether those difficulties occur on an ad hoc basis or may be routinely anticipated.

Attendance in asynchronous online classes

Asynchronous courses provide students the flexibility to complete coursework at their own pace but within the parameters set by the course syllabus. A course instructor cannot require students to participate in *any* live, virtual, or face-to-face activity. The syllabus may require students to complete assignments on a particular date but may not require a specific time on that date. If changes to the syllabus or course assignment schedule are required, instructors should provide at least one week's notice to students.

A course instructor must require students to complete asynchronous work according to the course assignment schedule. Failure to complete assignments according to the course assignment schedule may constitute non-attendance. The syllabus should define the method(s) of tracking attendance.

Examples of ensuring attendance include weekly asynchronous assignments equivalent to in-class experience, e.g., watch a taped lecture followed by a brief essay or quiz; weekly posts to discussion boards in response to other students' posts or in response to a prompt; student participation in an interactive tutorial or computer-assisted instruction; weekly quizzes, etc.

II. Absences

If a student must be absent from a class for one of the reasons listed below, the student is required to communicate with the faculty member to provide information on the reason for the absence. Untruthful student claims about absences are considered a violation of the Code of Student Conduct:

<https://www.stmarytx.edu/policies/student-development/code-of-student-conduct/>.

Students will be given the opportunity to make up any missed assignments or their equivalents when their absence is the result of one of the following situations.

- **University-related activities:** Students who are absent from class while participating in a University-sponsored event or who are absent from the campus because they officially represent the University in such sponsored activities as intercollegiate athletics, debate tournaments, and tours will be excused from classes.
- **Legitimate health concerns:** No student will be required to attend in-person classes if doing so endangers their health or the health of someone in their household. Students must be granted the

freedom to learn in a manner that protects their safety and that of their family.

- **Illness:** For the duration of the pandemic, students who are ill should not attend class and should self-report if symptoms are consistent with COVID-19. In cases of severe illness, students may also be excused from synchronous online classes and asynchronous online classes. For all situations, we recommend the following procedures:
 - Students with COVID-19 symptoms must adhere to University health and wellness procedures for self-evaluation, reporting, follow-up, and quarantine as necessary.
<https://gateway.stmarytx.edu/group/mycampus/illness-reporting>
 - Students who experience a family illness-related emergency that interferes with academic performance are expected to contact the Office of the Dean of Students (deanofstudents@stmarytx.edu).
- **Technology issues:** Given the technology gap facing some students, instructors must make allowances (e.g., flexible time limits and due dates) for inevitable technology difficulties that may impact students' ability to do their online coursework. A student who is unable to complete a synchronous or asynchronous assignment in a timely manner as a result of technology-related issues should be considered excused for submitting the assignment late and the assignment should not be penalized so long as the student makes clear efforts to communicate with the instructor and to submit assignments on time.
- **Home environments and obligations:** Faculty should understand that students may be living in a home environment that can interfere with participating in synchronous online classes as they would in on-campus classes. Instructors should make allowances and not penalize students for non-participation in synchronous online classes that is the result of a difficult home environment.

Failure to attend classes for reasons other than those listed above are considered unexcused absences unless the faculty member, in consultation with the student, approves an absence as excused.

Additional Policy Notes

- Faculty members cannot withdraw a student from a class for excessive absences or excessive late assignments. Requests may be made to the appropriate academic Dean's Office to withdraw a student from a class. If the Dean determines that a student should remain in the class, the final grade for the class will be based upon a student's performance on the requirements specified in the course syllabus.
- It is the responsibility of the student to communicate with the instructor about any absence in order to receive opportunities to complete course work that was missed as a result of an absence.

- Faculty members will track student attendance on a regular basis in all classes using the recommended definitions that have been provided.
- Faculty members will report through Rattler Navigate and to the appropriate academic Dean's Office if a student has missed more than the equivalent of two weeks of classes.
- The attendance policy must be clearly stated in the course syllabus and include details on how attendance will be monitored for all modalities.