

ONLINE CLASSES – COURSE START, INITIAL CHECK-IN, AND ATTENDANCE POLICIES

Course Start-Up:

Instructors are strongly encouraged to open their online course at least two weeks before the official start date and to send students a welcome message with a link to the course site. Your message should also include, at a minimum, the list of the books or resources they may need to purchase or download by the first day of class, since one function of early course access is to give them time to be prepared for the first day. Your message should also state the expectation of how much time students will need to devote to the course to be successful and should include the check-in assignment activity they need to complete and its due date (see below). While students may be given pre-work to complete prior to the first official day the course opens, it is not encouraged, and if assigned, it is recommended that students are notified at least two weeks prior; that the work be reasonable and tied to the introductory aspects of the course; and that it take into account students' access to materials.

Initial Check-In:

The check-in requirement ensures that students have logged in to the LMS and completed some kind of activity or assignment within the first 24 hours of the first day of an online course. The check-in activity and due date should be clearly stated on the syllabus and also within the welcome email you send to the students. Students who do not complete the check-in activity will be considered absent and must confirm they are part of the course.

Attendance:

An attendance policy ensures that students are actively engaged in the course by requiring some kind of work to be completed on a regular basis. This helps keep students on track with course material and also documents facts needed to process refunds when a student withdraws from a course or to settle certain kinds of attendance/grade disputes. While this is helpful for any course, whether online or face-to-face, federal regulations require that online courses demonstrate that a student has participated in class by doing more than logging into the LMS. Federal policy states, "In a distance education context, documenting that a student has logged into an online class is not sufficient, by itself, to demonstrate academic attendance by the student." Active participation is required, which may be demonstrated by (1) submitting an academic assignment; (2) submitting a quiz or exam, or; (3) participating in a posted online academic discussion.

Your attendance policy should be clearly explained in the syllabus. Because of the need to demonstrate attendance, instructors are strongly encouraged to tie attendance to course activity/assignments. For example, an Interim course might say if a student does not respond to a post within two days they will be considered absent, or a summer course might say an activity not responded to within 4 days of posting will be considered absent.