

# COVID Absence Statement – Fall 2020

## Rationale for Syllabus Statement

Gressman and Peck, in their recent paper "[Simulating COVID-19 in a University Environment](#)," suggest that “all instructors need to prepare for extended student absences due to quarantine. In our best-case scenario, classes spend an average of 1-2 weeks of the semester with at least 10% of the students absent due to quarantine.”

The academic instruction and continuity subcommittee of the Fall 2020 Task Force recommended that the university "adopt an attendance policy that does not penalize students who do not physically attend class due to illness, quarantine or personal concern."

The academic instruction and continuity subcommittee suggested four guiding principles for the creation of a COVID attendance policy:

1. The first priority of the institution is to protect the health and safety of students, faculty, and staff.
2. The institution has a responsibility to maintain the academic integrity of its instructional programs.
3. A student's active participation in coursework and classroom activities is essential to student learning and success.
4. Attendance is one among many ways to measure and track student engagement.

With this in mind, the Faculty Senate in June 2020 voted to create an ad hoc committee to draft a university-wide statement to address COVID absences in Fall 2020. The absence statement, if adopted, will apply to the Fall 2020 semester only. The Faculty Senate will review the absence statement in October or November 2020 to see if it is needed for the Spring 2021 semester and if revisions are needed.

It is understood that, in some cases, attendance is an inseparable function of course learning objectives (e.g., clinical labs, scientific labs, material demonstrations). In turn, these learning objectives are often tied to institutional and program accreditation. Accredited programs (in particular, clinical, lab, or studio-based programs) should seek guidance from their respective accrediting bodies in establishing appropriate attendance statements during the COVID-19 crisis, especially in cases of extended COVID-related absences.

This temporary campus-wide statement puts everyone on their honor. It requires that faculty and instructors trust the word of their students when they say they are ill, and it requires that students report the reason for their absence truthfully. All of this is to say that the usual codes of conduct and rules of academic integrity are still in place.

Faculty who become concerned about a student's health and well being are encouraged to complete a [Community Member of Concern form](#) with the Dean of Students Office.

## Syllabus Statement (for all Fall 2020 courses)

The statement is presented to in two versions, one in the second person and one in the third person. Faculty can select the version that best fits the style of their syllabi.

### COVID-19 Absences

Prior to arriving on campus each day or attending a face-to-face class, you are to complete the daily self-check through the university approved application. If you are instructed to stay home due to your responses, you are not to come to campus or attend face to face classes and instead follow up as directed through the self-check instructions.

You **must notify me of your absence by email within 48 hours, if possible**. You are not required to provide me with documentation of COVID-19 symptoms. You will not be penalized for absences or late course assessments unless you are unable to complete course learning outcomes. I will work with you to identify ways to complete course requirements.

You must, if you are asymptomatic or if your symptoms do not interfere with your ability to participate in the course, **continue to participate in the course using the online assets and tools that I make available through UTCLearn including:** (Instructors should add a list here. It is understood that, in some cases, attendance is an inseparable function of course learning objectives (e.g., clinical labs, scientific labs, material demonstrations). In turn, these learning objectives are often tied to institutional and program accreditation or outside partnerships. **Departments should insert a statement about if and how unique face-to-face learning experiences, like clinical experiences, laboratories, studio classes, internship experiences, can be handled** (online, alternative, make up experiences).)

If COVID-19 related illness results in any missed course work (face-to-face or online), you should **proactively work with me to plan make-up work**. It remains your responsibility to complete any missed work such as assignments, tests, quizzes, labs, or projects outside of scheduled class time. But please realize that class will continue, and you may find yourself in the situation where you are unable to complete all work by the end of the semester. In such a case, you should consider a late withdrawal or an incomplete grade. Please contact the Records Office (423-425-4416) to learn more about the late withdrawal process.

If you have COVID-19 disability related risk factors that may affect attendance, you are strongly encouraged to register with the Disability Resource Center (423-425-4006) in order to receive necessary accommodations.

If you believe I have not made reasonable and appropriate accommodations for absences, or makeup assignments, projects, labs, or exams due to COVID-19, you have the right to appeal according to UTC's [Policies and Procedures for Student Complaints](#) by filling out the [Student Complaint Form](#) and submitting to the Office of the Dean of Students.

## COVID Absences

Prior to arriving on campus each day or attending a face-to-face class, students are to complete the daily self-check through the university approved application. Students who are instructed to stay home due to their responses are not to come to campus or attend face to face classes and instead follow up as directed through the self-check instructions.

Students **must notify the instructor of their absence by email within 48 hours, if possible.** Students are not required to provide the instructor with documentation of COVID-19 symptoms. Students will not be penalized for absences or late course assessments unless they are unable to complete course learning outcomes. Faculty will work with students to identify ways to complete course requirements.

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