

## **Attendance and Grading for In-Person Instruction**

Faculty Handbook section 9.6.1: Syllabus and Performance Expectations requires faculty to provide clear expectations for all elements of a course through the syllabus, including attendance and assignment of grades. Information about class attendance is further detailed in section 9.6.2. This expectation is particularly important as Virginia Tech continues to navigate the COVID-19 pandemic while maintaining public safety and simultaneously ensuring students meet learning outcomes for in-person instruction, especially laboratory courses.

Students who register for coursework with an in-person learning component (hybrid or face-to-face) are expected to be residing in the Blacksburg area and to attend in-person instruction unless they need to self-isolate or quarantine as described below. This expectation should be clearly articulated in the syllabus and in communications with the student (e.g. through Canvas) prior to the start of the semester.

Classroom expectations and course policies for in-person instruction must be adapted to the health and safety measures needed to mitigate transmission of COVID-19. A core element of this is the requirement that individuals self-isolate when exhibiting any symptoms of illness. In addition, individuals who may have been exposed to COVID-19 may be directed to self-quarantine for a period of time. Thus, it is crucial that faculty communicate to students that they should not attend an in-person class if they answer yes to any of the questions in the Hokie Health survey in Hokie Ready, and also take no action that could encourage class attendance by those whose attendance might endanger public health.

Asking for verification of student illness by Schiffert Health Center or another medical professional is not appropriate in light of public health guidance to self-isolate and HIPAA regulations. To the extent possible, faculty members should accept a student's notification of illness. For Spring 2021, faculty members may ask for absence verification from the Dean of Students office for in-person classes as well as for exams, major deadlines, or other situations (in any modality) in which a student's absence due to health status or some other situation may impact their grade.

A verified absence does not excuse a student from making up the work or from minimum expectations for completion of the course. The course syllabus should specify expectations for illness notification from the student (e.g., email) and expectations for communicating about missed work and its submission. Opportunities to make up missed work or participation due to an excused absence, including absence required to uphold health and safety protocols, should be clearly described in the course syllabus.

For hands-on learning experiences, such as laboratories, there may be key learning experiences or a threshold number of laboratory exercises that must be completed in person to ensure that students have met the minimum learning outcomes for the course. These expectations should be clearly articulated in the syllabus. Offering make-up opportunities for students who are unable to attend critical hands-on experience is encouraged when feasible. However, students should understand that they might not earn credit for the course if they do not complete key in-person activities as indicated in the syllabus.

Should a student become seriously ill for an extended period of time or other extenuating circumstances, the student should work with the Dean of Students and the associate dean of their major college to provide notification and support under the university's regular processes. Faculty have the option of assigning an incomplete in

appropriate circumstances, but are not obligated to do so given resource limitations.

Sample syllabus statements are available as models below. Faculty members may include additional expectations appropriate to their course and classroom space.

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Sample Syllabus

Statements:

### **Basic Syllabus Statement on Public Health Expectations**

**By participating in this class, all students agree to abide by the Virginia Tech Wellness principles: <https://ready.vt.edu/well.html>.**

If you answer yes to any questions in the Hokie Health survey (questions can be posted in the syllabus), you **must** not attend class in person. Notify me by email and follow the instructions posted at <https://vt.edu/ready/health>.

### **Expanded Syllabus Statement on Public Health Expectations**

Virginia Tech is committed to protecting the health and safety of all members of its community. **By participating in this class, all students agree to abide by the Virginia Tech Wellness principles:**

- Wear a face covering during class, including as you enter and exit the classroom.
- Maintain the designated distancing guidelines of the classroom.
- Enter and exit the classroom according to posted signage.
- Participate in COVID-19 testing as requested and required by the University.

If you answer yes to any questions in the Hokie Health survey (again, post those questions in the syllabus), you must not attend an in-person class. Notify me by email and follow the instructions posted at <https://vt.edu/ready/health>.

### **Example Syllabus Statement on Welcoming Students to Face-to-Face Classes**

(in response to faculty concerns based on student feedback that they felt unwelcome, likely due to the strict distancing protocols)

Students, we are so excited to spend time with you in person this semester. As you may have experienced last semester, we have strict safety protocols in place to minimize the spread of infection and keep all of us and our community as safe as possible. While we may not be huddling together over our data or high-fiving after a long afternoon in the lab, we are still a learning community and learning together how to laugh through our masks and collaborate across a room. Thanks for being a part of this course, and please let us know how we can make you feel most comfortable.

(Just example language and admittedly corny - faculty would adapt to their own style and relationship with students.)

### **Example Syllabus Statement on Expectations for Attendance for Laboratories**

This is a hands-on laboratory course with the expectation that you will be living in the Blacksburg area and attending class in-person every session unless you need to self-isolate or quarantine. If you are not planning or able to attend in-person, then you should not take this lab this semester and should work with your advisor on an alternative plan.

Given the need to minimize the spread of COVID-19, it is understood and required that students should not attend lab if they need to self-isolate or quarantine. If you must miss a lab, then please inform your instructor by email prior to the beginning of the lab session. You will be able to earn credit for the missed lab by (fill in alternative activity or make-up lab option). Acquiring and demonstrating proficiency in lab skills (might use more specific language) is an essential learning outcome for this course. If a student is not able to complete XX% or more of labs in-person, they will not have reached the minimal proficiency to earn credit for the course and may need to withdraw and take the course at a later time. Please contact me as soon as possible if you feel you are in danger of not completing this many labs.