

Attendance Policy

What Is “Attendance” in an Online Class?

Regular attendance is an important contributor to student success in online courses. To comply with federal mandates for universities’ handling of student aid, certain kinds of student activity may or may not count as participation sufficient to qualify as “attendance” in online courses. For a copy of the latest version of these federal mandates, please see the [Federal Student Aid Handbook](#) (5-59 and 5-60). To ensure consistency in FAUO’s compliance with these mandates, instructors:

- Must **not** count students’ logging into a course’s learning management system (e.g., Blackboard, Google Apps Sites) as participation in that course.
- Must count **any** “academically related” activity in a given course as participation in that course. For online classes, the activities in the following categories are considered “academically related”:
 1. Participating in any assigned activity (e.g., attending a synchronous teleconference or video conference class session, submitting prepared material, taking examinations, engaging in an assigned study group, providing a self-introduction to the class in a discussion forum designated for this purpose);
 2. Completing interactive tutorials or interactive, computer-assisted instruction; or
 3. Discussing the course’s subject matter (e.g., online with other students, by email with the instructor)

For clarity’s sake with item 3, discussions of matters other than the course’s subject matter would not count as participation, even if the student contacts the instructor to discuss them. Examples of topics whose discussion would not qualify a student as participating in a given course include: plans about submitting assignments, requests for extensions on deadlines for assignments, notifications of illness, or inquiries about purchasing course materials.

What Students May Participate in an Online Class?

Students who have registered for an online class may *access* that class once it is made available at or before the beginning of the term in which it is offered. Only students “officially” enrolled in an online class, however, may *participate* in (i.e., attend) that class. A student may have access to an online class, but the student is not officially enrolled in that class until the student has a *signed payment agreement* on file with Student Accounts to cover that class. Consequently, any activities—even if “academically related” as defined above—by students not officially enrolled in a given class are not eligible to be counted as participation in or attendance of that class. Therefore, a student’s failure to provide a signed payment agreement by the time that student exceeds 14 days’ non-participation will result in that student’s withdrawal from that class as never having participated in it.¹

¹ All daily time frames in this policy refer to calendar days. Non-participation accrues toward these time frames and consequences when it occurs *for any reason*, even if an instructor allows a substantial amount of time before an initial assignment formally comes due, elects to wave additional penalties he or she might normally have imposed

Human interaction is required to process instances where students reach 14 days' non-participation, and processing will be prompt but may still take some time. If a student becomes academically active between the time that student reaches 14 days' non-participation and the time the instructor reports the student as having done so the next business day, the instructor may still report the student for appropriate action to be taken. Alternatively, the instructor may, in his or her sole discretion, regard that student's activity as participation in the course. In no case after an instructor has reported a student as having reached 14 days' non-participation may any activity by the student be regarded as participation in the course except in cases of reinstatement as described below.

How Is Non-participation Handled in an Online Class?

The instructor's prompt notification of FAUO or other appropriate reporting office for non-participation is ***vitaly important*** to ensure the University's compliance with federal guidelines for handling federal student aid. The following table identifies the relevant non-participation action items. Except for courses being offered under the University's traditional program, the "appropriate reporting office" is the director for the particular academic program offering a given course. This program's director is then responsible for communicating this information as necessary to FAUO and to the necessary supporting contacts.² For online courses offered in the University's traditional program, attendance should be entered into the university's attendance tracking system (i.e., Soar).

Non-participation timeline	7 days	14 days	21 days (≈ 25%) ³
Instructor action(s)	If the student reaches 7 days' non-participation <u>without participating in the course at all at the beginning of the term</u> , email the student and either 1) report non-participation in the university's attendance tracking system (Online 7 Day No-show Report) or 2) email the appropriate	If the student reaches 14 days' non-participation <u>without participating in the course at all at the beginning of the term</u> , email the student and either 1) report non-participation in the university's attendance tracking system that the student is a "no show" (Online 14 Day Admin Withdrawal Report) or 2)	If the student reaches 21 days' non-participation <u>with at least some participation</u> in the course: (1) Email the student and either 1) report non-participation in the university's attendance tracking system that the student has earned an "FA" and include the student's last date of participation in

for it on a student's grade calculation within the course, or otherwise grants extensions on stated deadlines for course assignments.

² For financial aid holds, the necessary supporting contacts are accessible at onlineholds@faulkner.edu. For administrative (i.e., "no show") withdrawals, the necessary supporting contacts include FAUO holds group and the Registrar's Office.

³ Because non-participation in online courses is not cumulative but is only counted when it occurs continuously, 21 days' non-participation is slightly less than 25% of the total days in the term for full-term classes (i.e., those running at least 14 weeks) and somewhat more than 25% of the total days in the term for modular or short-term classes. It is necessary, however, to use 21 days as an operational equivalent to "25% non-participation" to allow adequate processing time to meet mandated deadlines for handling federal student aid.

	reporting office the following business day.	email the appropriate reporting office the following business day.	the course ⁴ (Online 21 Day FA Report) or 2) email the appropriate reporting office the following business day. (2) Formally submit the "FA" with the appropriate last date of participation for the student with the course's other grades at the end of the term.
Student consequence(s)	If the student reaches 7 days' non-participation <u>without participating in the course at all at the beginning of the term</u> , (1) The student receives an email encouragement from the instructor and possible further follow up from FAUO or another appropriate reporting office. (2) If the student reaches 7 days' non-participation without participating in the course at all at the beginning of the term, the student will have a hold placed on any federal financial aid funds incoming to their account.	If the student reaches 14 days' non-participation <u>without participating in the course at all at the beginning of the term</u> : (1) The student will be administratively withdrawn from the course. (2) The student's charges for and enrollment in the course will be completely reversed. (3) The student's financial aid eligibility for the term may be recalculated and decreased.	If the student reaches 21 days' non-participation <u>with at least some participation</u> in the course: (1) The student receives a final grade of "FA" except in cases of reinstatement as described below. (2) The student's financial aid eligibility for the term may be recalculated and decreased. (3) The student may be required to return federal aid funds he or she has received.

The above noted communications to students are University best-practice requirements. In no case will

⁴ Optionally, the instructor may also go into the Blackboard shell for the course in which the "FA" has been earned > Control Panel > Users and Groups > Users > Dropdown menu by the name of the student who has earned an "FA" > Change User's Availability in Course > Available, and set that student's availability to "No." Doing so will effectively lock the student who has earned the "FA" out of the course unless the availability is reversed to "Yes" (e.g., for a reinstatement) even though the student who has earned the "FA" will still be enrolled in the course in Regent. For courses offered in Google Apps, the instructor may go to the course group > Settings (gear button) > Members > All members > click the check box by the name of the student who has earned the "FA" > Actions > Remove from group.

an oversight in making any of these communications cancel students' responsibility for participating in their courses as this policy requires.

Because many online classes, even those with synchronous components, require substantial asynchronous interaction, non-participation may only be counted when it occurs *continuously*. For example, if a student does not participate *in one stretch* of 14 days, that student is at 14 days' non-participation, but if a student participates at any point in this 14-day period, then non-participation is only counted from the student's last date of participation.

In contacting a student about non-participation, the instructor should remind the student about (1) the deadline by which the student must begin participating in the course and (2) the fact that continued non-participation may result in significant academic or financial consequences. In addition to the above mentioned communications by the instructor and other offices, instructors are encouraged to follow up still further with students who may be at risk of failure because of absence. Sometimes, students may be more responsive to contacts from instructors or student support offices. So, if students have contacts about participation from multiple sources, they will have the greatest chance of beginning to participate in the course as they should.

Beyond these administrative and enrollment consequences, particular academic departments or programs or particular course syllabi may specify additional academic sanctions for student absence (e.g., a certain penalty on a student's grade for a given assignment or a course overall). Within this context, instructors also may impose whatever academic sanctions seem fitting for absence. In any case, the relevant sanctions for absence should be clearly communicated to a course's students.

Does Non-participation Accrue during Scheduled Breaks?

No, if a given course is scheduled on an academic calendar that allows break time to students (e.g., Labor Day, Thanksgiving Break, Memorial Day, Spring Break), a student may still participate in that course during the break. If a student does not do so, however, the scheduled break day(s) do not count toward the non-participation that student may be accruing in a given course. In addition to normal University business days, however, non-participation does accrue on regular weekend days that are not included in scheduled break time.

Does Non-participation Accrue during Temporary Military Duty?

Not if the temporary military duty is properly reported in advance to the University and the temporary military duty will not cause the student to exceed 21 days' non-participation. If a student is on temporary military duty, that student is eligible for a temporary leave of absence. When a student is notified of upcoming temporary military duty, the student should provide a copy of his or her orders to [Military and Veteran Services](#), FAUO, and (where relevant) the appropriate program director. Suitable arrangements can then be made to accommodate the student's non-participation in the affected class(es). If a student fails to provide advance notice to the University about assignment to temporary military duty, any non-participation will result in the consequences outlined above until the temporary military duty has been adequately reported. Students whose military duty will cause them to exceed 21

days' non-participation should consult with Military and Veteran Services for appropriate accommodations under the Higher Education Opportunity Act (HEOA).

Can Students Have Financial Aid Holds Removed?

Yes, if a student has a financial aid hold placed on his or her account for non-participation in a given course, that student is eligible to have the hold removed *after* he or she has participated in that course. To expedite the removal of a financial aid hold, a student under a hold should: (1) begin participating in the course that caused the hold and (2) ask the course's instructor to notify Financial Aid that the student has begun participating in the course.

Can Students Be Reinstated after Being Withdrawn or Failed for Absenteeism?

Yes, but the student's reinstatement may only occur with the approval and at the discretion of the relevant Department Chair.⁵ To request reinstatement, the student should email both the course instructor and the course's academic Department Chair. In this email, the student must: (1) explain why he or she may have a valid reason to be reinstated and (2) attach some assignment that the student is submitting. A student withdrawn, as described above, for failing to provide a signed payment agreement by the time that student has exceeded 14 days' non-participation must also ensure this agreement is in place in order to have a request for reinstatement considered.

According to an instructor's or a program's particular policy, email submission may or may not allow an attached assignment to count for credit in a course, even if the student is reinstated. Reinstated students whose instructors or programs require creditable assignments to be submitted in a given course's LMS will *also* need to submit this assignment in the LMS to receive credit for it in the course. In some cases, however, a student may have no outstanding assignments that can practically be submitted in an email attachment (e.g., the student has outstanding only examinations that must be completed in the LMS), or the student's attachable assignments in the course may only be due only well after the date of the student's reinstatement request. In such cases, the student may ask a question of the instructor about the course's subject matter, and the Chair may accept this question in lieu of an attached assignment in the student's request for reinstatement.⁶

Students' communication of plans to participate cannot itself count as participation. Therefore, reinstatement requests that do not contain actual participation *must* be rejected. In considering complete requests for reinstatement (i.e., those that include participation), the Chair should form a judgment about whether to grant the request in consultation with the course's instructor, Student Accounts, Financial Aid, and Military and Veteran Services.⁷

⁵ At the Chair's discretion, the director of the academic program in which a student is enrolled may be appointed to handle a student's reinstatement request. Programs where Department Chairs have appointed program directors to handle reinstatement requests in their stead are: BBA, BCJ, HRM, MJA, and MSM.

⁶ On questions related to courses' subject matter, please see the comments above under "What Is 'Attendance' in an Online Class?"

⁷ These offices can be reached by emailing onlineholds@faulkner.edu.

If the Chair decides to deny the student’s request for reinstatement, the Chair should communicate this decision to the student and the instructor. If the Chair decides to grant the student’s request for reinstatement, the Chair should communicate this decision to the student, the instructor, Student Accounts, Financial Aid, Military and Veteran Services, and the Registrar’s Office.⁸ If the student believes there are mitigating circumstances that merit an outcome other than what the Chair decides, the student may refer to the student complaint policy and file an academic complaint related to “University policies/procedures.”

⁸ These offices can be reached by emailing onlineholds@faulkner.edu and registrar@faulkner.edu.