Attendance Policy Adjustments—Spring 2021

These changes to the attendance policy are applicable for the Spring 2021 semester only and only replace the existing attendance policy, available here, to the extent that they are in conflict with it. On all matters on which this memorandum policy is silent, the current attendance policy continues to apply.

Faculty Driven Process
Faculty will manage attendance and take note of when students fall below the 80% attendance mark for the year. The policy respecting how faculty maintain these records can largely be left to the faculty member to decide. So long as the method used is transparent (i.e. disclosed to the students in the syllabus) and reliable, then this is sufficient. Below are some methods that faculty members might consider that are not difficult to implement.

Asynchronous Recordings
The method for taking attendance for asynchronous recordings using Panopto, the University supported video recording platform, is simple. All that you need to do is require students to sign into their Pitt account to access the video, rather than make your video available to the public. To do this, simply use the “share” feature of the video and select the option “Anyone at your organization” as those with whom the video is shared. Detailed instructions are available here. Once this is done, it will be easy for you to see who viewed any given video.

Roll Call
Attendance may be recorded through a Roll Call managed on the Canvas Learning Management System. The Roll Call is extremely easy to use. From your course settings, select “navigation” and then enable the attendance feature, which is disabled by default. At that point, it will appear in the navigation sidebar. If you click on it, then you can, for each individual class, call out names and record who is present. Canvas will keep a record for you for how many classes each student attended, and it will be easy to see who has missed more than the minimum of 20% of classes permitted.

Faculty are free not to use Canvas and instead take attendance manually through a formal or informal oral roll call in which only the faculty member handles any paper related to the attendance taking. In such a case, the faculty member must maintain records of their own and report those who miss more than 20% of their classes to the Vice Dean.

TopHat
Attendance may be recorded using TopHat, a Pitt supported web application that is very simple to use by following these three simple steps.

- First, go to tophat.com, and click login. Search for the University of Pittsburgh.
- You will have two options. The first is to sign in as you would to my.pitt.edu generally, using the SSO. The second is to log in via Canvas. If you are using Canvas for your class, the latter might
be easier, because then you can sync your Canvas class page to TopHat. If you are not using Canvas, then the SSO works just as well. In that case, TopHat will effectively create a course for you for the purposes of attendance taking.

- Once you have synced your Canvas page to TopHat, or created your course, you can initiate attendance taking at any time by clicking on the blue “Create” button in TopHat and selecting “Take Attendance”. This will generate a 4 digit code. You can either orally announce that code to your students or share your screen, and the students will then use that code to record their presence.

Full instructions are available here. In addition, the 24/7 Pitt IT Help Desk is always available to answer questions on Pitt supported software such as Canvas and TopHat.

80% Attendance Rule

For purposes of our 80% attendance rule, the default is to treat each mandatory asynchronous recording and each mandatory synchronous or in person class session as a separate, single class attendance. Thus, for a class with 10 asynchronous recordings, 5 synchronous class sessions, and 5 in person class sessions (together, “mandatory class events”), a student must attend at least 16 total mandatory class events to reach the 80% threshold. Faculty may deviate from this approach to meeting the 80% attendance requirement in order to accomplish their pedagogical objectives. Faculty who do so should notify the dean’s office of their approach and include their approach in their syllabus. Professors should communicate to students that this attendance policy will be enforced the same way as physical sign in sheets. Any violation (giving out codes in TopHat etc.) will be treated the same way as signing a physical sheet for a classmate. Professors should also communicate clearly to students when particular asynchronous recordings or synchronous sessions are mandatory versus optional/review sessions, the latter of which would not count for attendance purposes.

Instructions to Students

Please note that class syllabi/instructions should be updated to reflect relevant changes in the attendance policy for this fall. If a student is ill or otherwise unable to attend class for health or other reasons in light of the extraordinary circumstances in which we find ourselves, they should be advised to contact the Assistant Dean for Student Affairs and/or Vice Dean.

The following modification of the attendance policy from the Faculty Handbook should be inserted into each syllabus, subject to any changes the faculty member is making as per above:

**Attendance Policy**
The American Bar Association and the School of Law require regular and punctual class attendance (see http://www.law.pitt.edu/students/policies/attendance). I will be taking attendance by [include your selected attendance method here]. **Under the attendance policy, if you do not [include instructions for students e.g. log in to TopHat etc], you will be marked absent even if you were actually present in class.**
In terms of punctuality, if, for whatever reason, you arrive at class more than ____ minutes late or leave class more than ___ minutes early, you will be marked absent even if you comply with the above method. Regular attendance is defined as attendance and preparation at not less than 80% of the classes for the semester. **To be clear, if you are unprepared for class, you will be marked absent even if you are physically present in class.** Failure to satisfy these attendance requirements will result in your being certified out of the course with a grade of “U” (Unsatisfactory).

[If applicable.] For the spring semester of 2021, I will treat each mandatory asynchronous recording and each mandatory synchronous or in person class session as a separate, single class attendance. Thus, you must attend 80% of these sessions per class in order to meet the 80% threshold.

*Any attempt to circumvent this policy (for example giving out codes to non-attending students in TopHat on another student’s behalf) will be treated the same way as signing a physical sign-in sheet for another student and will be regarded as a violation of the Pitt Law Standards of Academic Integrity by both you and the other student.