CENTRE FOR
TEACHING & LEARNING

Supporting Students Who Cannot Come to Class

As we return to in-person learning with enhanced screening in place, there are many public health guidelines that may prevent students from attending lectures and classes. Many faculty are searching for ways to effectively support these students. Below, we present some ideas that we hope will allow absent students to engage with class activities (and earn participation marks) while not adding significantly to faculty workloads.

Communicating with Students
- You may want to send an email to students with clear information about what you will do if you are unable to come to class, and what steps they should take if they are not able to come to lecture, labs, or seminars. Hopefully, sending this type of information to students now may save you a flood of emails later.
- Making weekly announcements on Blackboard to let students know what will be covered in class as well as upcoming assignments can help keep students who are isolating on track (and will benefit all students as well).
- Virtual office hours can provide isolating students with a forum to ask you questions about course content and assessments. This guide from the University of Waterloo provides helpful instructions for holding virtual office hours on Zoom and MS Teams.

For Students Who Miss Lectures
While faculty are not required to post or make available lecture notes, slides, or recordings, doing so can provide students unable to attend class with access to course content and encourage them to follow screening procedures. You may wish to remind students that Trent's Policy on the Sharing and Distribution of Course Content prohibits them from using any course materials (including slides and recordings) for reasons other than their personal studies; this includes posting any course material online or distributing course content to anyone other than students enrolled in the class.

- *Make Lecture Notes/Slides Available:* You can send students who cannot pass the screening these notes by request. However, you may want to consider posting lecture slides or outlines on Blackboard for all students as research suggests that doing so can benefit student performance.
- *Make Lecture Recordings Available.* In many Trent classrooms, you can use Yuja to easily record lectures and later embed them on Blackboard. Or, you can post recordings that you made in previous years; even if they are a little different from or are shorter than your in-person lectures, these recordings can give students access to key themes and ideas.
- *Create a Microsoft Teams Site:* Microsoft Teams allows students to post files and to chat with one another without exchanging private contact information and in a forum that faculty can monitor. You can create a Teams site that will allow students to post lecture notes for those unable to attend. IT offers a Microsoft Teams Quick Guide that shows how to set up and link a Teams site to your course.

For Seminars and Labs:

- Asynchronous online platforms, such as discussion boards, padlet, and voicethread can be used to provide students absent from class opportunities to provide their thoughts on readings or workshop problems.
- Students can be asked to record and post their thoughts on course readings. This guide from the University of Denver provides clear instructions on recording presentations.
- Ask students to annotate course readings by adding their thoughts, reactions, and links to complementary information. This helpful post from the University of California, Irvine provides guidance on how to do this easily using Google Docs.
- Some professors have found benefits from requiring students to keep a course journal in which they record their thoughts on key concepts and materials. Students who are absent could be asked to write additional journal entries for the days they miss class.

The Centre for Teaching and Learning and Trent Online are here to support you as an instructor. If you need help implementing one of the suggestions above, or if you would like to speak to an Educational Developer or ELearning Designer about specific challenges you are facing in your course, please do not hesitate to contact us at teaching@trentu.ca