

Course Engagement Policy for 2020-2021

Belmont University is committed to the idea that regular student engagement is essential to successful scholastic achievement. Absence is permitted in cases of illness or other legitimate cause, as determined by the professor. Attendance and engagement are assessed from the first class meeting, whether in the traditional classroom setting, in an online classroom, or a hybrid of the two. Late registrants will automatically have accrued some absences prior to formal registration in the course. In the case of an excused absence from class, students have the right and responsibility to make up all class work missed.

- **Engagement Policies by Course Format**

- I. Asynchronous Online

- a. Asynchronous student engagement can be assessed through weekly checkpoints throughout the semester. Engagement checkpoint opportunities may include class activities, discussion board posts, quizzes/tests, assignments, or any combination, as defined by the professor.
- b. If there are three (3) total (as opposed to consecutive) weeks in which there is no evidence of engagement in any of the week's checkpoints, the faculty member may assign the grade "FN" (failure for non-engagement) to that student.

- II. Synchronous Online

- a. Faculty members will determine which class meetings will be conducted synchronously, and students will be expected to participate in such meetings unless otherwise excused.
- b. For synchronous sessions, students are expected to have their webcams on during Zoom meetings. There are a variety of ways for students to demonstrate engagement, including asking questions, contributing to the discussion through the chat feature, participating in breakout room activities, or giving student presentations.
- c. In cases where a student is unable to attend a synchronous session, an absence is permitted in cases of illness or other legitimate cause, as determined by the professor. The faculty member will honor absences that are properly documented and/or provide opportunities for students to make up missed coursework during or immediately following an excused absence period. Such engagement opportunities may include discussion board posts, journal entries, assigned readings, and/or writing projects, as determined by the professor.
- d. Some online courses may have a combination of synchronous and asynchronous components. In such cases, the faculty member will clarify the expected engagement parameters for the students.
- e. If a student demonstrates no engagement in more than 20% of synchronous and/or asynchronous sessions, the faculty member may assign the grade "FN" (failure for non-engagement) to that student.

- III. Belmont's Hyflex (In-person and Online components)

- a. Students are expected to attend their assigned in-person class sessions as they would in a typical semester. Faculty members will determine how course content will be delivered in the online setting and use the appropriate policies outlined above for asynchronous or synchronous engagement as appropriate.

- b. In cases where a student is unable to attend an in-person or synchronous session, an absence is permitted in cases of illness or other legitimate cause, as determined by the professor. The faculty member will honor absences that are properly documented and/or provide opportunities for students to make up missed coursework during or immediately following an excused absence period. Such engagement opportunities may include discussion board posts, journal entries, assigned readings, and/or writing projects, as determined by the professor.
- c. If a student demonstrates no engagement in more than 20% of in-person, synchronous, and/or asynchronous sessions, the faculty member may assign the grade "FN" (failure for non-engagement) to that student.

- **Provost's Excused Absences**

If a class absence is necessary because of an activity by another class or university organization, the sponsor of the activity will provide a detailed memorandum on the letterhead of the unit to the Provost at least two (2) weeks prior to the event. The memo will provide the names of students involved, the type of event, and the date range of the event. If approved, the Provost will countersign the memo, generating a Provost's Excuse, and copies will be provided by the sponsor to each student to present to the instructor as an excused absence with the allowance for the student to make up missed class work.

- **Student responsibilities**

Students are responsible for notifying faculty members if they miss class(es). They are to provide documentation in support of absenteeism for the faculty member to review and evaluate according to course engagement policies. Students with excused absences (as approved by the faculty or through the Provost's Excuse) are able to make up all classwork missed during the absenteeism period.

- **Faculty responsibilities**

Faculty members will provide a course engagement policy on each course syllabus and review and explain the policy to all students. Faculty members providing for excused absences will review requests for those not covered by the Provost's Excuse and communications relating to unexcused absences and approve them according to the course syllabus. They will honor absences that are properly documented and provide either the same or in-kind assignments and provide opportunities for students to make up missed coursework during or immediately following an excused absence period.

- **Appeal**

The first appeal on a disputed course engagement matter should be directly to the faculty member. Students may appeal a disputed course engagement matter to the chair of the faculty member's department (or to the appropriate dean's office should the faculty member be the department chair). The chair's decision will be final (or dean's decision, should the faculty member be the chair). Proper documentation must be provided in support of the appeal. If the appeal is approved, the chair or dean will communicate the reason for the approval and the remedy to the faculty member who will permit the student (s) to make up missed coursework in a timely manner.