

Online Contingency Options in the Event of Cancellation of In-Person Classes

In the event that in-person classes are cancelled, instructors may choose one of the following options.

Instructor Options

1. No class is held. Instructors must communicate expectations regarding course content or syllabus modifications (e.g., due date changes) promptly (if possible, before the scheduled meeting time) via Canvas Announcements.
2. Instructor adapts class session to online, asynchronous coverage.
 - As part of asynchronous coverage, an instructor may record a synchronous class session during the regularly scheduled class time, which is optional for students (since, for example, students home with children home from school for the day may need to view the class content at a later time).
 - Instructors should allow students two days to view any new online content (e.g., video, discussion board, etc.) and sufficient time to complete any assignments.

Note that synchronous and asynchronous online classes are not affected by this policy; in the event of class cancellation, they continue to be held. However, instructors are encouraged to offer some deadline flexibility and, in the case of synchronous online classes, attendance flexibility (since, for example, area schools and daycares may also be closed, or due to weather students may be unable to get to campus to use a campus computer for an online class or assignment).

Communication to students:

- If instructors adapt in-person class sessions to an (optional) synchronous online meeting, they must communicate to students (via Canvas Announcements) as early as possible beforehand.
- Instructors are encouraged to include a syllabus statement on options and communication methods in the event of a UWM class cancellation. For example, “In the event of UWM class cancellation, due to inclement weather or other situation, I will send a Canvas Announcement with information on any online activities intended to make up the planned class activities. This announcement will be sent prior to the class period with directions for how to make up the coursework through Canvas Announcements.”
- The university should include a reference to this policy in UWM class cancellation communications sent to students and instructors.

Considerations:

- Instructors of multi-section courses that have a common syllabus should work with the department chair or their course coordinator on implementing a common strategy in response to course cancellation across all sections based on the above policy.
- To the extent possible, supervisors are encouraged to discuss this policy and plans for in-person class cancellation days with instructors to set parameters in advance, as there may be insufficient time for supervisors to approve plans made by instructors after a cancellation announcement is made.
- Instructors whose class is cancelled on an exam day may wish to reschedule the exam for a later date rather than holding an online asynchronous exam or quiz.

Rationale:

Recommendation of the Academic Policy Committee to Create the Policy on Online Contingency Options in the Event of Cancellation of In-Person Classes

Per UWS Administrative Policy 1235, the Chancellor has the authority to cancel classes, close all or part of the institution to the public, or completely close all or part of an institution to the public and employees. In past weather emergency and other in-person class-cancellation situations, there has been a wide array of instructor responses, ranging from no class being held to moving online asynchronously or synchronously. These inconsistent, class-by-class responses have been confusing for students and for instructors.

Multi-section courses can lose their common timeline if classes are cancelled. For example, a Math course with 60 sections, some on Monday/Wednesday and others on Tuesday/Thursday, would no longer be on a single timeline if a Tuesday session is cancelled. This is particularly problematic in courses that are highly scaffolded.

Having a policy that specifies options for online class coverage, if in-person classes are cancelled, has the following benefits:

- It gives instructors time to prepare online content.
- It provides greater consistency and certainty to students and instructors.

Note that cancellation of a day of in-person final exams is not addressed here, as the final exam schedule already includes an “Official Emergency Date”.