

## The Effect of Class Attendance on Student Performance

It seems like common sense to assume that regular class attendance will improve course grades. Unsurprisingly, most studies that test for a positive correlation between class attendance and course grades find one, often a statistically significant one, and sometimes it's the strongest factor amongst others that are tested, including High School GPA, gender, socioeconomic status, motivation, and conscientiousness (Credé *et al.*).

However, study results were not uniform, and under some circumstances, class attendance did not improve course grades. Considering the details of the studies provides some insight into factors that make class attendance have a positive impact on grades.

### Summary of Findings

Significant positive correlation was found between attendance and course grades in a large enrolment 1<sup>st</sup> year courses in Economics and Business Administration. The correlation was stronger between high school grade and course grade, though. And, students from lower socioeconomic backgrounds were less likely to attend lectures (Hoffman and Lerche).

A significant negative correlation between absences and course grades were found in a large enrolment senior year undergraduate course in Financial Management (Senior).

A weak correlation between absences and course grades in 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> year courses on Engineering Economy and Construction Management until threshold of 30% absences was met. Then the correlation was strong (Guleker & Keci).

A high correlation between attendance and course marks was found in undergraduate program courses in Computer Science, but for technical and practical courses only—the more theoretical and conceptual, the correlation was lower and often nonexistent (Pudaruth *et al.*).

Each 10% absence level decreased the course mark by 10% in a large enrolment second year undergraduate Macroeconomics course (Teixiera).

Another study in a 2<sup>nd</sup> year large enrolment Economics course showed that lack of attendance negatively effects performance especially for more able students. The level of effect varied by whether absences are for reasons beyond the student's control or whether they choose not to attend and their ability: if beyond one's control, the effect on marks was less than if it were in one's control and a matter of choice. The negative effect on marks was worse in each case if the student was generally lower achieving. Females were more highly impacted by absences beyond their control than males, but females had better attendance overall (Arulampalam *et al.*).

A study in a large enrolment 2<sup>nd</sup>-year Organic Chemistry course showed that class attendance had a significant positive effect on exam scores. It also found that gender had no significant effect on class attendance or exam scores (Olufunmilayo).

Class attendance did not significantly affect student performance in three 1<sup>st</sup>-year Engineering courses where the other option was to watch the lectures in video online. Study habits affected marks more than attendance in this case (Elmore & Gieskes).

### Factors that Make Regular Class Attendance Improve Grades

In general, regular class attendance has the strongest positive correlation with course grade, stronger than motivation, high school GPA and conscientiousness.

Class attendance is especially important in courses with technical and practical subject matter. Many students are able to learn theoretical and conceptual content by other means than in class.

Classes that expose students to additional information they do not get from other sources (textbook, online, from other students) are classes that improve student performance if attended regularly (Credé *et al.*, 286).

Having lecture videos available online can be a substitute for attendance in class for lectures that are mostly information presentation.

Choosing to miss class has a higher impact on grades than missing a class due to circumstances beyond a student's control.

First generation university students are at greater risk of skipping classes and thus not performing as well as they could.

Hoffman and Lerche speculate from their research that class attendance will improve student performance when the class time is interactive, and students are encouraged to discuss and develop their own solutions (p. 20).

Class attendance is likely influenced by institutional attendance norms, perceived difficulty of the course, characteristics of the instructor (level of expertise, effectiveness as a teacher), and availability of lecture content online (Credé *et al.* 288).

These insights may not be earth shattering, but they are informative.

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