

Troubleshooting Course Challenges: Missing a Midterm

In this video, we meet Jack, who recently experienced some health issues, and inadvertently missed one of their midterms this semester.

Overview

This video will share what Jack's situation is, who can advise Jack in order to find out their options, and what important dates or timelines they should keep in mind when considering when they should take action. We will also talk about why Jack should take steps to explore the best possible outcome for their success in this situation.

What is the situation?

Jack says, I'm a third-year science student and I recently experienced a challenge with my health. With all the medical appointments and times of illness, I lost track of my course dates of my course dates. I suddenly realized that I completely missed a midterm.

Who Should Jack Speak to?

Jack asks, who should I talk to, as they look for advice on this situation? First, it is important that they check the course outline to see if the instructor has already anticipated this situation and has discussed how missed assignments or exams will be addressed. Then based on that information, Jack should contact the course instructor.

When Should Jack Take Action?

It is important that Jack contact the instructor as soon as possible. Jack can speak with the instructor during office hours, through email or after class to see if there is a way to make up the grade.

How Might the Instructor Respond?

The instructor might permit Jack to write the midterm late, but often this is not practical given exam security, test room availability, and issues of fairness to other students. Some courses allow the final grade to be re-weighted to include the midterm grade, so in this case, Jack could write the final, and then the zero for the midterm would be discounted.

How Might the Instructor Respond (con't)?

Depending on the course, it may be possible to do an additional assignment for credit. However, there are always cases where the grade cannot be made up and the student must then decide whether or not success in the course is still possible. Jack finds that this last option is true in this case. The zero he received for the midterm cannot be changed. What are their options now?

What Can Jack do About their Situation?

Jack should first determine the course grade as it now stands without the midterm grade and see if it makes sense to stay in the course or to withdraw. Jack could also talk to the head of the department. The department is for the subject area of the course. They could explain their situation and see if there might be a possibility for an exception. In this case, it would be helpful for Jack to have documentation to support their request for consideration. If Jack does consider withdrawing from the course, they should speak to their program advisor to learn about any implications withdrawing might have to their degree or student status.

Where Else Can Jack Seek Support?

If Jack's health issues are ongoing, they might benefit from accommodations to support their health. Students can register with Student Accessibility Services for both short and long-term accommodations. These will require documentation to support the request. It is possible to meet with an access advisor to discuss whether or not accommodations are possible and what might best meet the student's needs. For example, exams can be written in the exam centre, where some students benefit from extra time, writing in isolation, and being allowed breaks. There is assistive technology, such as voice-to-text or text-to-speech, and classroom accommodations, such as recording lectures, may also be possible. Students with diagnosed learning disabilities or chronic health issues are often registered with SAS already, but students with an unexpected health challenge during the semester are also eligible for supports.

A Word about Documentation

In circumstances where an exceptional request is being considered, students may be asked for supporting documentation. This refers to documents such as medical documents, a reference from a relevant party or a statutory declaration. Students cannot be required to submit a specific form of documentation. Instead, Students are encouraged to submit documentation that supports the circumstances of their request. More details on documentation are provided in the resources section alongside this video.

Why Should Jack Take Action?

Various circumstances can impact your ability to succeed, or, as in Jack's case, complete every course with a satisfactory grade. If you have an unanticipated challenge arise, like Jack did, the university has student services and processes in place to support you. Accessing help is an

important step to support your ongoing learning and academic success. We encourage you to reach out to one of the many resources on campus for support. If you are not sure where to start, drop by the Student Success Center in the Taylor Family Digital Library, book an appointment at elevate.ucalgary.ca, or email us at success@ucalgary.ca.