

**IF YOU TEACH IT, WILL THEY COME? LAW STUDENTS, CLASS
ATTENDANCE, AND STUDENT ENGAGEMENT**

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ABSTRACT

Why are there empty seats in my lecture theatre? Are we driving our students away? Do work or family commitments prevent them from attending? Or, on a more positive note, have we designed our courses in such a way that we have provided all the tools necessary for them to learn independently? The latter is a very comforting thought, although we suspect that only a small percentage of students are self-learners — those who are able to achieve good results by engaging fully with the material, if this is carefully and adequately provided.

This paper reports on a study that examined student attendance across a law degree — what motivated student attendance; why students did not take the opportunities provided to them to facilitate their learning; and what methods they used to learn. Our study involved courses (subjects) which required students to physically attend classes — it did not consider courses which were off-campus or primarily electronically delivered.

We do not suggest that attendance alone results in student learning. However, we argue that there is evidence to show that it is an important ingredient of student engagement, particularly when the learning opportunities are predicated on physical student presence in classes.