



Help Articles (/hc/en-us)

> [Technical Questions & Course Production \(/hc/en-us/categories/200165289-Technical-Questions-Course-Production\)](/hc/en-us/categories/200165289-Technical-Questions-Course-Production)

> [Coursera Basics \(/hc/en-us/sections/201817163-Coursera-Basics\)](/hc/en-us/sections/201817163-Coursera-Basics)

Course Sessions (Cohorts)

Most courses on Coursera are offered in a session (cohort) format. Each session has a start and end date, and learners in the same session work through the course together according to a weekly schedule of suggested deadlines. Sessions are scheduled on a regular cadence (e.g., one start date per month).

Sessions on Coursera's new platform are fully automated and do not require any additional work from the course team. Coursera will automatically set session start dates and open and close enrollment for each session.

Enrollment and Access

Courses on Coursera's new platform always have one active or upcoming session open for enrollment.

Sessions are scheduled frequently, so that learners never need to wait more than a few weeks to get started after they enroll. More popular courses may have one session starting every 1-2 weeks, while courses with a smaller audience will generally run at least 4-6 times per year.

Enrollment remains open through the first 5 days of each session; 5 days after the session start date, enrollment for the active session closes, and enrollment for the next upcoming session opens.

If a learner joins a session before its start date, they will be able to preview the first week of content in the course. Once the session officially begins, they will be able to access the full course, and they can work through the material at their own pace provided that they complete the course within one week of the official session end date.

Learners can submit assignments as late as one week (seven days) after the official session end date. After this date, access to the session will close, and learners who have not completed the course will need to switch to the next session if they wish to earn a Certificate. If a learner switches to a later session, any work they've completed will transfer with them.

Communication

Discussion forums

Although learners will see the same discussion forum structure across all sessions, threads within each forum are session-specific, i.e., learners in one session cannot see threads and posts created by learners in another session.

Instructors and course staff (including Community Mentors) can easily see all threads across all sessions. Course staff can also pin a thread to make it visible to learners in all sessions.

Announcements

When sending announcements, instructors can choose to email all learners across all sessions, or select specific sessions to receive the announcement.

Deadlines

All learners in a session work through the course on the same suggested weekly deadline schedule. By default, this schedule is arranged based on the course module structure, with one module (including all assessments within the module) due each week. Instructors who wish to customize this schedule to include multiple modules in one week should contact Coursera ([/hc/requests/new](https://partner.coursera.help/hc/requests/new)) to make changes.

There are no grade penalties for missing a deadline. If a learner falls misses two consecutive deadlines (falls behind by two or more weeks), they have the option to switch to the next session, and their completed work will transfer with them. Learners can also work ahead of the suggested deadline schedule, as they have access to all course content once the session begins.

Learners have a grace period of one week following the final deadline to complete the course in their session current session. If a learner fails to complete the course in the session they joined, they can easily transfer to the next session.

Grading

When a learner completes all required coursework, he or she will immediately receive a final grade and a Course Certificate. Because learners can move at their own pace once the session begins, some learners will earn their Certificate quickly - within a few days of enrolling - while others may work at a slower pace and earn their Certificate on or shortly after the official session end date.

On-Demand (Self-Paced) Courses

Courses that do not offer sessions are self-paced. Learners can begin self-paced courses at any time, and have access to all content as soon as they enroll.

Learners in self-paced courses are provided with a schedule of suggested weekly deadlines based on their enrollment date. There are no penalties for missed deadlines, and the learner can adjust their deadlines if they fall behind.

In comparing session-based and on-demand courses, Coursera's analytics and teaching and learning teams have found that session-based courses generally see better learner retention and completion, and higher engagement in community activities such as forum discussions and peer review. Unless there is a compelling reason to prefer an on-demand format, we highly recommend that all courses launch in the session-based format.

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