

Canvas Course Conclusion Policy – 4/1/2025, updated 10/21/2025

As of April 1, 2025, GSE utilizes a widely used Canvas feature that changes degree program course sites to a *read-only* status for staff and students at the end of the academic year. This process is called "course conclusion".

What has not changed:

- Students are able to access their course Canvas sites indefinitely, including after graduation.
- Staff are able to export course content to other sites including sandboxes and future iterations of the course, and then amend that content on the new site.
- Per the university's [Panopto course content retention policy](#), videos in Panopto on Canvas (including classroom recordings) are archived two years after creation and deleted four years after creation, unless owners request videos to be exempted from this process.
- Students lose access to copyrighted reading materials on the site after the academic year.

What has changed:

- After conclusion, students are unable to (re)submit assignments, contribute to discussions, or view or message other students on the course site.
- Staff are unable to alter the content of concluded course sites.

Canvas dashboards do not display concluded courses. They remain available via one's "All Courses" page.

Why are we doing this?

Doing this brings us into line with the policies and processes of other schools at Harvard. By concluding course sites, we:

- Protect course integrity by:
 - Preventing unauthorized activity after the course is over.
 - Preserving a snapshot of the state of the course site at the end of the course.
- More efficiently prevent access to copyrighted materials.
- Remove the need to bring old courses into (or maintain) compliance with digital accessibility requirements.
- Protect the privacy of graduated students.
- Clean up users' dashboards.

When are we doing this?

Courses ending before or within the 2023-24 academic year have been concluded as of **April 1, 2025**.

Subsequent academic years will be concluded one year after the end of that year. For example, the 2024-25 academic year's conclusion date is Monday, June 1, 2026.

Does this apply to all Canvas sites?

Conclusion automatically applies to degree program course sites.

Sandboxes and other learning environments like program/concentration sites are concluded as appropriate.

Other questions

1. What about a student who needs to submit an assignment for a course as part of an approved extension after the academic year is over?

Conclusion can be reverted (or prevented) for individual users and so with approval, course staff and the relevant student(s) can be temporarily excluded from conclusion, permitting assignment submission and staff grading for an appropriate time period.

2. What about a course's Slack workspace?

No change. Access to course Slack workspaces ends at graduation for students. Staff can request *earlier* conclusion of Slack workspaces but they cannot be maintained for students after the academic year is complete.

3. I need to review students' old assignments for recommendation letters. How do I do that if the course is concluded?

Any course can be unconcluded – please email canvas@gse.harvard.edu and conclusion can be temporarily reverted allowing access to student submissions, grades, and so on.

4. It looks like no-one is enrolled in my concluded courses! Have students lost their access and have we lost all their submissions and grades?

No! Everyone who was there is still there and all work and records are retained indefinitely. An email to canvas@gse.harvard.edu asking for the course to be unconcluded will reveal what is hidden when the course is in its concluded state.

Students have read-only access to everything they would have if the course was unconcluded, that is, they can see the materials, their submissions, their grades, and so on. They just cannot submit anything new.

5. I see some courses from 2013-2016 that are unconcluded. What is going on?

This is a technical issue that HUIT is working through relating to the different way that courses were created back then.