ONLINE TEACHING

TRANSITIONING FROM F2F

CONTENTS

GOING VIRTUAL

SHIFTING FROM F2F TO ONLINE CLASSROOMS

Hi everyone,

I have been fielding a range of questions and concerns over the past few weeks in relation to shifting courses from face-to-face (f2f) to online classrooms. I have prepared this document in an attempt to address some of the key issues you might face as you move your courses to the online environment. This is by no means an exhaustive list of ideas or considerations, nor will it be possible to integrate **all** of these ideas (there are a lot). This resource is based on my own experience and is intended to get your wheels turning (there are more resources linked within and at the end of this document).

I will be available via email, phone, or videoconferencing to discuss teaching, so please do not hesitate to reach out any time!

Zara

LEARNING OUTCOMES

In all likelihood, you will need to drop or change some elements of your course to be able to launch it online this Spring. When making decisions about how to shift or adjust your content, begin by consulting your **intended learning outcomes**.

Regardless of the changes you make to course delivery, it is essential that students still gain key **knowledge, skills, and values** through the course.

If you need a refresher on writing intended learning outcomes, please see this resource from CTE.

Some of the approaches you opt to use in the online world may not feel as dynamic or engaging as approaches in f2f environments—if needed, this is something we can continue to work on in future terms.

What we should be striving for now is **course alignment**, which begins with strong learning outcomes.

ALIGNMENT

Course alignment refers to a course where assessments and instructional strategies align with the intended learning outcomes.

In order to help ensure your course is aligned, ask yourself:

- ✓ What **specific** things should students learn in this course (i.e., your intended learning outcomes)?
- ✓ What **methods** will I use to convey these learnings (i.e., what are your instructional strategies)?
- ✓ How will I **measure** whether or not each learning outcome has been fulfilled (i.e., what assessments will you use in this course?).

EXAMPLE

Learning outcome:

By the end of the course, students will develop a leisure program that addresses the needs of individuals with a specific disability.

Instructional strategies:

- Prepare short video lectures on etiology of disabilities commonly encountered in TR practice
- Assign course readings on adapted and inclusive leisure programming
- Collaboratively develop a sample leisure plan in Bongo chat

Assessment:

- Students will work in self-selected groups of three or four to create a month-long leisure program for a population of their choosing (e.g., play skills for children with autism)
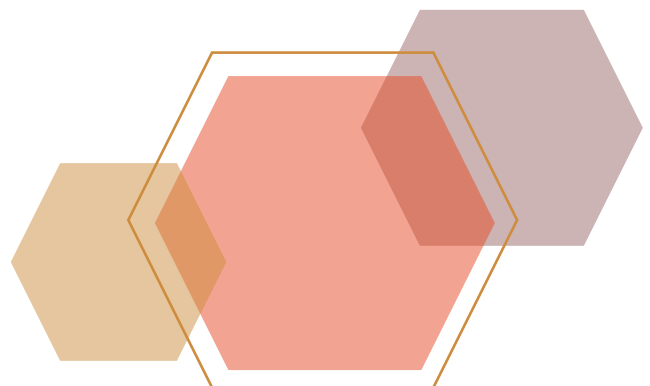
ACCESSIBILITY

When it comes to designing an online course, it is important to consider accessibility on several fronts. We will look at tips for three aspects of accessibility here: disability, mental health, and economic needs.

It is also a great time to explore Universal Design for Learning (UDL) to make your course as accessible and flexible as possible for all learners.

DISABILITY

AccessAbility Services continues to support student accommodation related to disability. In addition to following their guidelines as usual, you can:

- ✓ Use clear, consistent layouts and course organization to make it easy to follow online lectures and locate course information
- ✓ Use built-in style features (e.g., headings in Word and layouts in PowerPoint) as they are typically accessible
- ✓ Add video captions or include a written transcript for any videos or audio that you post
- ✓ Remember that images of text (e.g., a screenshot or a scanned page from a textbook or article) cannot be read by a screenreader and are thus inaccessible
- ✓ Make sure your PDFS are accessible (the easiest way to do this is to start with an accessible document)
- ✓ Include text descriptions for any images that you add to Learn (the system prompts you to do this as either a caption or alt-text whenever you post an image) or documents
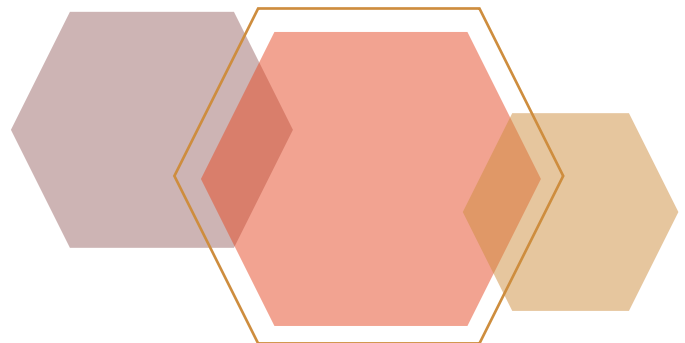
MENTAL HEALTH

Following the principles of UDL will help make your course more flexible, which can greatly assist in reducing student stress and anxiety. Some specific tips include:

Hi, everyone, and welcome to Week 3

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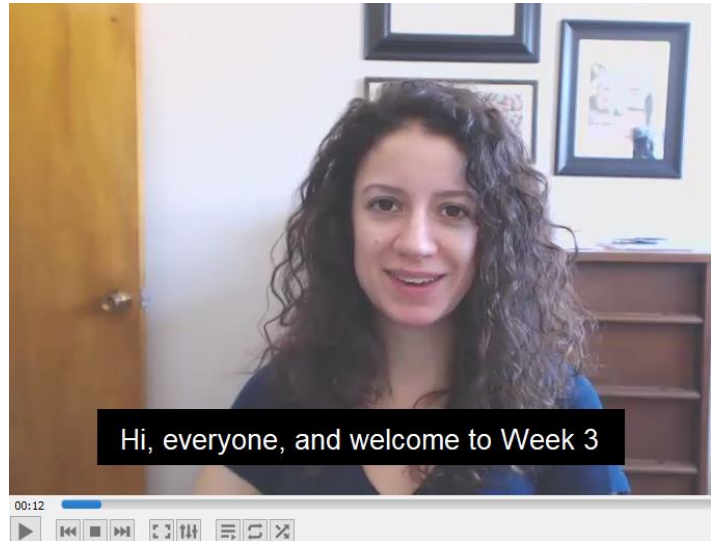
MENTAL HEALTH TIPS CONTINUED…

- ✓ Use Learn Announcements and Discussion boards for all communication so that it is contained within your course and easy for students to locate
- ✓ Establish clear guidelines for respectful, appropriate communication in the online world
- ✓ Add the RLS-created mental health resources widget to your Learn homepage (Jordan Rettinger or I can help with this)
- ✓ Create several opportunities for students to demonstrate learning (i.e., do not rely on the same type of assessment style throughout the entire course)
- ✓ Base the course grade on several lower-stakes assignments rather than one or two high-stakes assignments
- ✓ Provide clear assignment evaluation criteria and detailed, timely feedback so that students can continually improve their work

- ✓ Ensure that instructions and expectations are clearly articulated and provide discussion boards where students may ask clarifying questions
- ✓ Build in flexibility (e.g., if you have a weekly quiz, automatically drop the two lowest marks or provide a penalty-free late day that students may apply)
- ✓ Make high-stakes aspects of the course asynchronous
- ✓ Record and post any synchronous components of the course (e.g., live video office hours for test preparation or a guest lecturer) to ensure people can catch up on missed content
- ✓ If your lecture is audio-only or does not include slides, provide students with a lecture outline that they can use to make meaningful notes as they listen
- ✓ Decide which tasks are **essential competencies** for the course and which ones allow for more flexibility. It is easy to get stuck on your idea of how things **should** go; instead, consider how things **could** go
- ✓ Do not require your students to participate in the class using video, unless absolutely necessary (e.g., to demonstrate a skill)
- ✓ Consider take-home exams instead of live testing

ECONOMIC

Students and their families may be experiencing new economic stressors related to COVID-19, or may have pre-existing hardships exacerbated without access to on-campus resources, such as reliable computers, a strong Internet signal, and the campus libraries. Here are some things you can do to minimize the impact in your course:

- ✓ Recognize that students have a wide range of technology skills—don't assume that everyone is tech-savvy, and provide support on tech tools to ensure equitable participation
- ✓ Do not assume that students have mobile phones, home computers, or reliable home Internet and be prepared to make accommodations, as needed

- ✓ Consider using eReserves, podcast episodes, TED Talks, or other freely accessible preparatory work, where possible
- ✓ If a textbook is required for your course, explore whether the campus library can add an e-copy (or multiples) to their course reserves for free student use. The UW Bookstore or the publisher may also be able to help grant access to students in need (it's worth an ask!)
- ✓ Do not prohibit students from using creative backgrounds in their video chats (they may help students conceal home situations that they want to keep private)
- ✓ Students without a reliable home Internet plan may have connectivity issues or be relying solely on their mobile phone data plan which can quickly become expensive. Students may also be sharing bandwidth with other household members who are working and learning from home. Some helpful actions to mitigate connectivity issues include:
  - − Create a written transcript for any videos or other media that require students to use a lot of data (i.e., allow them to read rather than download or stream media).
  - − Limit the length of course videos to 5-15 minute segments (this is good pedagogical practice, too) and a file size of less than 500 MB
  - − Consider alternatives to assignments that require students to upload large files to an online dropbox
  - − Where possible, be open to a phone call in lieu of a video chat for meetings
  - − Post low-data file alternatives, such as lecture slides with all of the images removed, for faster downloading
  - − Make sure that all tools used in the course are mobile-friendly (Learn Help can help clarify that for you)
  - − Consider that students might use free wifi hotspots outside of their homes. Does your course make it possible for students to download a week's materials at once?

COMMUNITY

STAYING CONNECTED IN THE ONLINE CLASSROOM

One of the biggest concerns that I have heard from colleagues is the fact that online classrooms significantly change social relationships with and between students.

As I outlined in an email earlier in the month, not only will it be challenging to build a strong sense of classroom community, but it may also be difficult to recognize warning signs of students in crisis.

I recommend starting the term with an optional survey to understand your students' lives as they are now. This might include questions about:

- Their experience taking online courses
- Their technology, connectivity, and any other issues that might impact access to the course
- Their roles and responsibilities outside of the classroom (e.g., working, caregiving, etc.)
- Any information they are willing to share about their current well-being
- An open-ended prompt such as, "One thing I would like my course instructor to know is…"

Here are some other strategies for building a sense of support and community in our online courses:

- ✓ Hold video office hours and one-to-one meetings with students throughout the term. Open office hours, tutorials, or study sessions can be run on Learn via Bongo and individual meetings can be set up via Microsoft Teams (both UW-supported)
- ✓ Create a "Getting To Know You" discussion board where students can introduce themselves to you and one another (I like asking students to share a photo of a pet or of themselves engaging in leisure, if they are willing)
- ✓ Post a weekly video or audio clip in Learn Announcements that highlights important announcements, addresses common questions, and generally checks in. Mentioning topical items, like the weather or the news, is a good way to show students you are there in "real-ish time"

- ✓ Use PEAR, Google docs, or other tools that allow students to engage in peer review
- ✓ Use Perusall to create collaborative reading activities for students based on your course textbook or any other PDF or EPUB document
- ✓ Use Kahoot, Menti, or some other free, accessible polling tool to prompt student reflection, check comprehension, or gamify your course (Kahoot has a guide for online courses and Menti has tools for remote working)
- ✓ Create a social media assignment where students can communicate and collaborate through Twitter, Instagram, TikTok, etc.
- ✓ If you do not use Instagram or Twitter, consider creating an account and engaging with our department and faculty accounts (many students follow)
- ✓ If you implement discussion boards, be thoughtful and intentional about how they are used and monitored to ensure they are meaningful to student learning and connectedness
- ✓ Provide timely and useful feedback on all assignments
- ✓ Remind students that they are a part of large campus culture. Post announcements about virtual campus events. Assign attendance at webinars and live-streaming events for course credit or bonus marks. Encourage students to access supports and resources that are designed for virtual learners (Source)

RESOURCES

UW PEOPLE/OFFICES

- RLS Teaching Mentor and faculty Teaching Fellow (ahem)
- Centre for Teaching Excellence Faculty Liaison
- UW Library Liaison
- Learn Help (reach technical support directly via learnhelp@uwaterloo.ca)
- Centre for Extended Learning (primarily for fully online courses. Get connected by emailing extendedlearning@uwaterloo.ca)
- AccessAbility Services (if you have questions about a specific request for accommodation or how it can be implemented in your course, contact access@uwaterloo.ca to speak directly to the student's Accommodation Consultant)
- Counselling Services (the AHS counselling liaison is Gursharan Kahlon who can be reached at gkahlon@uwaterloo.ca)

UW RESOURCES

- Keep Learning: CTE resource for teaching remotely
- Centre for Teaching Excellence Teaching Tips
- Transitioning to Online Lectures
- UW accessible course design, teaching practices, and learning resources

OTHER RESOURCES

- Brightspace Community (this is the community for users of D2L, a.k.a, UW Learn)
- Stanford University Teach Anywhere
- Stanford University Teaching Effectively During Times of Disruption
- Universal Design for Learning guidelines
- Student Engagement Strategies for the Online Learning Environment

- Tips for Moving to Online Teaching During a Pandemic
- You Have To Put Your Class Online: Simple Things to Think About
- Explore free resources available from the public library, such as Curio
- Explore free resources available from publishing companies, such as question banks and study guides
- If you are a Twitter user, tune into relevant hashtags such as #CovidCampus, #PandemicPedagogy, and #HigherEd to follow relevant discussions and resources.

LAST WORD

This is a Twitter thread that I think contains sound wisdom for this shift, here is an excerpt:

Online doesn't mean you need to change how you teach. You are still just as human, and so are the students on the other side of your screen. Email, text messages, phone calls—these are all ways to sustain a human connection.

Be honest about what this transition means for you and for students. The rest of the school year will not be the same. You will need to improvise and be patient. Students will need to improvise and be patient.

Rethink grading. Normal rules of rigor, attendance, participation need to be revisited. Asynchronous work is harder than synchronous work (most people find working remotely difficult). Assessment should reflect that.

Human connection will always work better than technological connection. Don't rely on tools as a substitute for what you already do well. Edtech doesn't teach, you do.

Look for simple solutions. Don't complicate distant learning suddenly with unnecessary tools or expectations. Use reliable, familiar tools (email, text messages, Zoom, etc.) so that teaching can remain the core of your work.

Good luck and stay well, everyone!