

A person in a white lab coat and mask is working in a laboratory, looking through a microscope. The background is a blurred laboratory setting with various equipment and glassware.

Preparing for Alternative Online Instruction

A Guide for Faculty

Inform Students

Inform students about alternative instruction methods you'll be using.
Consider these communication tools:



Online Course Inbox – Many online course platforms (such as Blackboard or Canvas) have a messenger or inbox tool that can be used to contact students. This is a very convenient communication tool because student emails are already included, and you can email the whole class at once.

Class Roster – Many colleges have an online class roster that is linked to student emails.

College Email – The college's webmail (often through Outlook or Gmail) can also be used to send messages; however, you'll have to type each student's email address.

Course Announcement – Post an announcement inside the online course. Announcements stay at the top or front of the course, and, if students have their notifications on, the announcement will get forwarded to their email.

What to Include in the Email

Communications to students should include information about how the online course will proceed.

Where students can access instructional materials in the online class.

All course content for this week can be found in Module 3.

A List of Assignments and Due Dates.

For this week, read Chap. 7, and complete the Chap. 7 online discussion and online quiz by Friday at midnight. You can also use a bulleted list. (When creating assignments, be sure to add due dates so it can be added to the online calendar and student's "to do" list.)

How students can contact you.

The best way to contact me during this time is through the course inbox.

Any additional resources your college is providing.

I have created a "Resources" module that includes instructions on submitting online assignments, links to online tutoring, and contact information for the college's IT Help Desk. Also remember the 24/7 online support through Blackboard or Canvas.

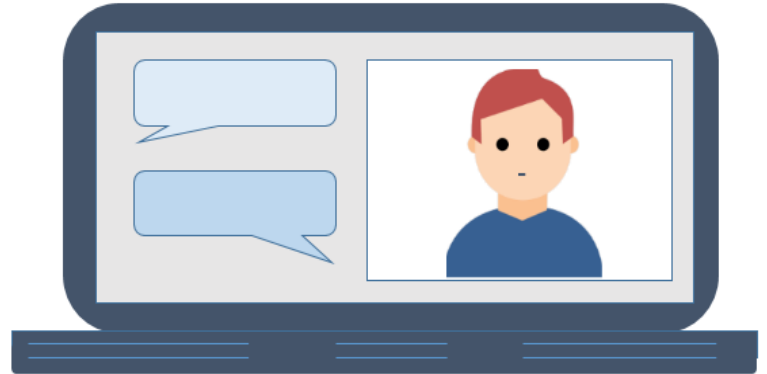
Special Instructions

Include special instructions about science labs, clinical sections, oral presentations, and group projects.

Special Note for “Live” Web Conferences

If you will be using a “live” video conference, clearly indicate the expectation for students to participate in the “live” session. In your email, also include the following information:

- date and time of the meeting
- link to join the meeting and call-in number (if available)
- instructions on how to join
- list of video conferencing equipment (internet, webcam, speakers, microphone, device with a keyboard)
- netiquette guidelines for effective online conferencing (mute microphone upon entering, type questions in the chat box, don’t multitask)
- any readings or assignments to complete before the class session



For suggestions about virtual class sessions, see the information below.

Post Instructional Content

Students in online courses need facilitated instruction just as students in face-to-face courses do. As you move to the online platform, find ways to provide students with instructional content, which may include the following:

- PowerPoints or Narrated PowerPoints
- Lecture Notes (either as PDF files or as content pages)
- Lecture Videos and Screen Capture
- Suggestions for practice activities
- Additional Reading Material
- Links to Videos

Module 3	Module 3
	Unit 3 Overview
	Unit 3 Lecture Notes
	Unit 3 PowerPoint
	Unit 3 Discussion
	Unit 3 Assignment

The most organized way to share instructional content is to create a learning module and to link all content to the module.

Create Activities and Assignments


Class activities (such as discussions and end-of-chapter homework) and assessments (such as written assignments, exams, projects, and presentations) can be moved online as well.

Discussions

If you use discussions in your face-to-face class, post a question in the Discussion area and link it to a module. Students will respond to your question and to each other.

Effective discussion questions should be open-ended (ask students to make a claim and use supporting evidence). Typically, students are required to answer the discussion question by mid week and to respond to two students, and to anyone who responds to them, by the end of the week. Discussions can be graded, and you can select availability and due dates.

As the instructor, you can increase your online presence by responding to students. Your responses can comment on ideas, ask for additional clarification or supporting evidence, or include additional questions. At the end of each week, it is useful to write a summary of the major talking points from the discussion and to post it on the learning module.



Create meaningful discussions online.

Assignments

The Assignment area allows students to submit documents, such as essays, PowerPoints, images, and even multimedia for recorded speeches. Assignments can be used to collect both daily homework activities and major assignments if you are not in a face-to-face class.



When creating an assignment, include assignment requirements on the online assignment page itself and use a grading rubric to provide feedback. Also, link assignments to a learning module, and add due dates to make the assignment appear on the student's Calendar and To Do List. You can grade assignments online, or download them and add marginal comments.

Quizzes and Exams

Quizzes and exams can be moved online as well. Exams can be timed, and they can include a variety of question types, such as multiple choice, true-false, fill-in-the-blank, matching, and short answer or paragraph format. You'll have to grade essay-style questions manually, but objective-style questions get graded automatically.



The online platform also provides analytics such as the class average and the percent correct for each question. Online exams require some up-front work to create questions, but many platforms allow you to upload questions in bulk or to download question sets from a textbook publisher. Many publishers also provide online exam platforms that can integrate with your online course.

Host a Virtual Class or Office Hour “Live”

In addition to posting instructional content and assignments online, you may want to consider hosting a “live” (synchronous) class session or office hour through video conferencing software.

Students in video conferences can communicate directly with you and with each other, and they can type questions in a chat box. You can speak directly into the camera, or you can open a PowerPoint (or other document) and share your screen.

Many online platforms have their own video conferencing feature, but many schools offer a number of other options as well, such as Zoom, Skype, or Google Hangouts (depending on your school’s technology platform).

You’ll have to setup the conference date/time and share the link with students via email, inbox, announcement, or content page. Many of these conferencing options allow you to record the session and share with others through a video link.

Conferencing tools can be used for live classes, one-to-one meetings during office hours, and small group tutorials. On some platforms, you can also make a student a host, and the student can share a PowerPoint for a “live” individual or group presentation.



Keep Accessibility in Mind

As you move to an online environment, keep accessibility in mind, and help students find instructional content and assignments. Linking all content to a learning module is one way to promote accessibility. Here are other accessibility issues to consider:

- Not all students may have an internet connection or a computer at home. If they have a computer, they may not have access to specialized software that is available on campus.
- Not all students may have equipment for video conferences (such as a webcam or microphone). If they use a cellphone to join a video conference, they may not be able to type comments or read material on a shared PowerPoint. They may also have limited data plans on their phone.
- Follow accessibility standards for images, videos, and web links. For example, images should include descriptions and alternative text, videos should have captions and transcripts, links should function and open within the LMS if possible.

You may need to allow extra time in the first week for students to locate resources before they can complete online material. During this time, students may also be distracted by a number of other problems. They may have to take care of children who also are not attending school, they may have elderly family to care for, they themselves may become sick, the computer may be a shared resource with other siblings who also have online classes, the computer may be located in a distraction-filled family room, students may become lonely and demotivated to continue.

This resource has been provided courtesy of
Lirim Neziroski, Ph.D., MBA

For more resources for effective online teaching,
subscribe to Lirim's Blog at

LirimNez.WordPress.com