



Cornell University

Fall 2020

Student Learning Experiences Survey

Office of the Vice Provost for Undergraduate Education
Institutional Research and Planning



What is one change the university could make that would most improve the student experience in the spring?

ACADEMIC CHANGES

Address excessive and overwhelming workload

- Create policy about lectures not running over time; keep pre-recorded videos short
- Standardize policies about max allowable homework, projects, exams
- Stick to the assignments in the syllabus

Urge faculty to be more flexible and compassionate

- Be flexible with deadlines; Believe students who say they are struggling
- Allow students to miss/drop one assignment or test
- Emphasize self-care

More days off; no weekend deadlines or exams

- Do not give tests or make graded work due on weekends and days off
- Give more days off

Greater sensitivity to time zone challenges

- Provide alternative ways to participate for grade (re: international students don't have to attend class outside 8am – 10:30pm local time)
- International students have less time to complete assignments (delay in access to lectures, need to submit hours before deadline if going to sleep)



What is one change the university could make that would most improve the student experience in the spring?

OPPORTUNITIES FOR CONNECTION

In classes

- More in-person instruction
- More group projects to promote interactions among students
- More synchronous engagement in class (i.e., not just lecture)
- More in-person office hours
- Require videos to be on to make students more accountable for paying attention and engaging with each other
- Opportunities to hang back to talk to faculty

Social opportunities

- Allow in-person events earlier in the semester
- Create more ways to find out about clubs
- Better promote virtual events
- Allow access to recreational facilities
- Provide and advertise more activities that get students outside
- Clearer guidelines for allowable social activities



What is one change the university could make that would most improve the student experience in the spring?

CAMPUS LIFE

Dining

- Quality and variety of food served
- Vegan options
- More options on weekends, especially on central campus

Study spaces and libraries

- More private spaces from which students can participate in class
- More spaces where students can study without reservations
- Library - evening and weekend hours



What should instructors CONTINUE doing?

In-person courses

- Hold class meetings outside
- Have flexible attendance policies
- Ensure safety protocols (e.g., cleaning) are followed

Synchronous online

- Encourage students to keep videos on

Hybrid

- Make sure online students keep up, feel included, can see instructors' screens

Asynchronous

- Regular synchronous office hours
- Regular forums for discussion and Q&A
- Ungraded quizzes to check student understanding



What should instructors START doing?

Common across instruction modes

- Provide clarity about what is required vs optional
- Make clearer, more frequent class announcements in Canvas

In-person courses

- Adjust expectations based on restricted access to studios and other specialty spaces
- Change seating periodically so students can meet other students
- Acknowledge challenges of masked/distanced group work

Synchronous online

- Provide short breaks
- Upload recordings more quickly

Hybrid

- Train faculty on how to use technology
- Have technology ready before start of class

Asynchronous

- Help students form study groups
- Show instructor's face in videos (difficult to connect otherwise)



What should instructors STOP doing?

In-person courses

- Counting absences against students who are sick
- Assigning pre-recorded lectures that are redundant with in-class content

Synchronous online

- Giving overly difficult exams
- Exceeding class time

Hybrid

- Ignoring OL students; offering activities in which OL students can't participate

Asynchronous

- Requiring students to watch videos that are longer than regular class meetings
- Packing so much content into each video
- Adding extra videos and requiring students to watch them



Sharing Student Feedback With Faculty

- New CTI “What Works” Workshops
<https://teaching.cornell.edu/workshops-events/workshops-webinars#SP21>
- Summary of “Instruction Ideas” for Spring 2021 based on survey takeaways
<https://teaching.cornell.edu/spring-21-instruction-ideas#OLSync>
- “Faculty Online Learning Community” through Canvas
 - Ed Discussion replacing Piazza
 - To join: <https://canvas.cornell.edu/enroll/AGPKDF>.



Quantitative results



How often have you participated asynchronously in your synchronous online courses?

Location/Level	NEVER	RARELY	SOMETIMES	ALWAYS/ ALMOST ALWAYS
Ithaca	32.7%	28.1%	28.6%	10.6%
Elsewhere in US	33.4%	25.2%	27.4%	14.1%
Outside the US	19.8%	24.6%	34.7%	21.0%
Undergraduate	29.4%	27.4%	30.5%	12.7%
Grad/Prof	42.8%	26.5%	21.5%	9.2%


Why? (Check all that apply)

- Time zone: 13%
- Enrolled in another course that meets at same time: 5%
- More convenient: 62%
- Other: 30% (to focus on other deadlines, prefer self-paced learning, lack of motivation, early morning)



How challenging has it been for you to keep up with the workload in your [instruction mode] courses?

Course Type	Very or Extremely Challenging (to keep up with workload)
Synchronous Online	39%
Asynchronous	35%
Hyflex ,Online	35%
Hyflex, In Person	24%
In Person	16%

A large red arrow pointing upwards, positioned to the right of the table, indicating an increasing trend in workload challenge from In Person to Synchronous Online courses.

*Hyflex = In-Person + “Online Mirror”

Positive relationship exists between workload challenge and:

- Number of online courses in which a student is enrolled
- Frequency of participating asynchronously in synchronous courses
- How often students return to recorded lectures



On average, how often have you returned to recorded lectures for reference (i.e., after you participate in live portion of class, or if you are participating asynchronously, after you initial viewing of the recorded lecture)?


Course Type	Never, Once/twice over semester, once/twice a month	Weekly	Daily or almost daily
Synchronous Online	61%	30%	9%
Hyflex, Online	63%	28%	9%
Hyflex, In Person	78%	17%	5%





How important have in-class polls been for promoting your learning and engagement?

	Very or somewhat important
Synchronous Online	57%
Hyflex, Online	48%
Hyflex, In Person	42%
In-person only	30%

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In any of your asynchronous courses, has the instructor regularly scheduled time to meet with students synchronously via Zoom?

	NO	YES
All respondents	33%	67%
Undergraduate	34%	66%
Graduate/professional	25%	75%



How important have regularly scheduled synchronous meetings been for...

	Not important	Somewhat or Very important
Understanding course material	24%	76%
Keeping up with course material	29%	71%
Feeling connected to the instructor	20%	80%
Feeling connected to other students	42%	58%



In any of your asynchronous distance learning courses, has there been a forum where students can post questions and receive answers?

	NO	YES
All respondents	23%	77%



How important has the availability of a Q&A forum been for...

	Not important	Somewhat or Very important
Understanding course material	13%	87%
Keeping up with course material	21%	79%
Feeling connected to the instructor	30%	70%
Feeling connected to other students	34%	66%



What advice would you offer to students enrolling in asynchronous courses?

Impose structure/discipline

- Do NOT fall behind! (*"I was three lectures behind once and it was an absolute nightmare."*)
- Set 2-3 fixed times a week to watch videos
- Take good notes the *first* time you watch the lectures – don't tell yourself you'll go back and watch the videos again because that will eat up all your time (reason why some students feel overwhelmed, perhaps?)

Use opportunities to check comprehension

- Take advantage of any practice and review that is offered because it is more difficult to gauge how well you are understanding the material
- Check the online forum regularly; other students ask questions that you didn't even know you had

Create or join study group

- Reach out to people any way you can

Beware

- If you're not genuinely interested in the course, drop it because it will be impossible to stay motivated and keep up



Tell us a story about how fall 2020 impacted you in a positive way

Ripple Effect Mapping Exercise

- **Growth arose out of discomfort and difficulty**
 - Overcame lack of confidence and feelings of intimidation and anxiety.
“Without the difficulty that was presented, I wouldn’t have pushed myself to overcome it.”
- **Technology facilitated...**
 - New ways to connect with new people and old friends
 - Enrolled in challenging courses because they were online and more accessible – took courses wouldn’t have taken in person because didn’t feel as exposed
- **Developed self-compassion**
 - Gave permission to make changes and forgive personal shortcomings
“This year is bad for everyone, we are all in the same boat, and I don’t need to be perfect because no one is perfect right now.”
“The pandemic has really helped me push away from my perfectionist tendencies.”
- **Discovered empathy, which transcends many mediums**
 - Empathy and support from professors reflected in changes in assignments and more office hours; compassion for students led to mutual respect
- **Explored purpose and values**
 - An uncovering occurred through reflection
“This sort of solitude or being in your own space makes you question things like: is this really what I want? And creating space for that change to occur.”