Instruction Ideas for In-Person Classes with Remote Students

Take-aways from the Fall 2020 Student Learning Experiences Survey

In November 2020, the Office of the Vice Provost for Undergraduate Education asked undergraduate, graduate, and professional students to provide feedback about the teaching strategies instructors used in their Fall 2020 simultaneous online and in-person courses. Derived from the most consistent and salient survey responses and supported by evidence-based teaching practices, we offer these instruction ideas and resources for faculty consideration, recognizing that you may have employed some of these practices as well as other strategies not included below. Join the Faculty Online Community for Teaching facilitated by the Center for Teaching Innovation to share additional ideas and/or questions (if you have already signed up, click here to go to the community).

Explore the results from the Fall 2020 Student Learning Experiences Survey.

Provide opportunities for students to interact with you and each other

When students are comfortable with you, they are more comfortable learning, participating, and sharing in the learning environment.

- During class, employ methods that enable you to interact with students such as polls, breakout rooms, class discussions, and case studies
- Offer many opportunities for students to ask questions of faculty and other instructional staff outside of class (e.g., hold ample office hours and offer times that work for students in all time zones – see Instructor Presence and Interaction and Setting Expectations & Connecting with Students for more information)
- Foster student-to-student interactions across online and in-person instruction modes via discussion tools, group projects, and study groups (See also the Learning Strategies Center's Study Group matching service)
- When possible, create a class view that allows online students to see in-person students and vice versa

Help online students keep up with course materials and engage in the course

In the online environment you will find that students attend and engage in the class with a variety of different skills and comfort levels (see Facilitating Student Engagement Online).

- Encourage online students to stay current with course materials and actively participate in class by regularly checking in with them and seeking their contributions in class (see Communication Tips)
- Work to ensure that online students are treated equitably when compared with students participating in person in regard to both instruction and assessment
- For students living in time zones that require them to participate asynchronously, provide alternative ways to earn their participation grade
- Be mindful that some students will have less time to complete assignments based on the timeliness of posting class recordings and assignment deadlines set to Eastern time
- Regularly check the Chat for online student questions

- Pay close attention to technical issues that may affect online student participation in class
- Slow down when teaching complicated concepts, as online students may find it more difficult to follow than in-person students

Post course materials, such as lectures (videos or PowerPoint presentations) online

- Record lectures and post them in a timely manner to allow for review when needed
- Post course materials online, ideally before class meets

Be flexible as students may have new or different needs related to remote learning in a pandemic

It is important to acknowledge the effects of the broader social climate and physical environment on students' lives and education (see Inclusion and Accommodation resources).

- Acknowledge the current challenges caused by the pandemic and show compassion
- Demonstrate your empathy and, to the extent you are comfortable, check-in with your class to see how everyone is doing personally
- Use assessments that offer some flexibility regarding due dates and participation expectations, and that remove means for students to violate academic integrity (e.g., open book exams, group projects)
- Provide a short break during longer classes (but remind students to maintain safe distancing)
- Do not increase the workload beyond what you would require if the course were solely in person and refrain from posting extra videos and assignments and exceeding the scheduled class time

Use Zoom features and other instructional technologies

- See Zoom features for more information on ways to incorporate them into your teaching
- Encourage cameras to be on to increase engagement, create a sense of community, and help students stay focused (but be understanding of students who cannot)
- Use Ed Discussion, Cornell's new discussion platform, to answer student questions
- Rely on TAs to moderate chats, provide technical assistance, and lead discussion sections. In courses without TAs, Classroom Assistants can help moderate Zoom chats and provide technical assistance (see TA Resources).