**Office of Undergraduate Education**

# Adapting your Course for Remote Teaching

## PRINCIPLES

### 1. Keep it simple

Moving a course online mid-semester is a challenge. There's little time for planning and learning new technologies, expectations and deadlines have already been set, and there's no time for pre-production. To make a success of it, keep it simple. Identify the key aspects of your course and then a small set of technologies and adaptations that will allow you and your students to meet the course goals. We'll provide advice and options for alternative class sessions and sections, both live and recorded, and for assignments.

### 2. Trust and collaborate with your students

Your students want the course to work as much as you do. Let them take a part in making the course succeed under difficult circumstances. It's important for you to give parameters for their help and participation, but they can be excellent resources for technical knowledge and peer support and they can adapt to changes in the mode of teaching and assessment. This could take the form of relying on the honor code for a closed-book test. Or it might mean engaging them in creating and moderating an online forum for class discussion in Canvas or with another tool with which they are familiar, or in arranging online study or discussion groups with peers to work through a case that would otherwise have been done in a large class setting.

### 3. Maintain academic course expectations

To the extent possible, maintain the academic expectations of the course and the main components of the course. The students still have the time and energy to devote to their work for your course, you've prepared to teach them, and for most teaching needs FAS has the support available to allow you to do it online. As you schedule your online class meetings, the expectation is that you should stay within your allotted schedule block and that other courses will do the same.

It may be the case that there are elements of your course that you feel you cannot adapt. It may be that you need to eliminate some content to make room for the time it takes for the group to become comfortable with other changes. This is OK too.

### 4.  Increase opportunities for communication and community

One of the really nice affordances of face-to-face classroom learning is the ease with which a class community can form. Students meet each other and have opportunities to ask you questions without any explicit set up from you. In an online context you will need to do more to ensure that your students still have sufficient access to you and to their peers. Since your class has already been together for a large part of the term, this won't be too hard. Make it clear to your students how you and your teaching staff will communicate announcements, make it clear where and how you want students to ask questions, and provide some more casual mechanism for students to interact with each other. There are lots of options for each of these things, which we outline below.

### 5.  Practice with new technologies

If you've decided to use a technology that is new to you in your teaching, take the time to practice and get trained in advance. It's hard to teach when you don't feel in control of your environment. If you'll be leading class sessions or even office hours in Zoom, for instance, do a practice run with a TF, colleague, or a FAS technical support staff member. Make sure you know how to manage the microphones, share your screen, perhaps create small groups. The environments may also be new to your students. Set aside some time in class to go over classroom norms, such as how you want students to ask questions, whether you expect students to turn on their cameras and/or mute their microphones, etc. It will get easier quickly, but it is important to allow you and your students some leeway for learning.

### 6.  Talk to your students about the course adaptation

In the week prior to spring break, while we're all still on campus, use time in one of your class sessions to speak with your students about how you're planning to adapt the course and to discuss their questions and concerns. Make sure that they know how you'll be communicating with them, how you want them to communicate with you and the TFs, and how they can communicate with each other.

## PRACTICALITIES, TECHNIQUES, TECHNOLOGIES, AND SUPPORT

Below are some options and techniques for adapting some of the most common course elements. More in-depth instructions and support on implementing these or related strategies are available from ATG (https://atg.fas.harvard.edu/contingency-planning) and the Bok Center (https://bokcenter.harvard.edu/teaching-remotely), though individual support may not be possible given the scale of need.

## 1. Class Meetings

### Lectures

For many faculty, pre-recording lectures feels awkward and difficult because it lacks the feedback and interactivity of a live classroom and the greater forgiveness of a live performance. Holding your class meetings live in Zoom provides a live setting as well as a recording of your lecture. It's easy to use and available to you and your students from your Canvas site. Zoom is also the technology you'll be likely to use for sections and office hours, so using it for lectures limits how many new technologies you and your students need to learn. For these reasons, it is a preferred option for holding your class meetings.

If your class is large, it can be challenging to manage in Zoom. If you have TFs available, have them present in the Zoom session to help manage questions in the text chat. Another effective strategy is to rotate attendance at each Zoom session between smaller segments of the class so that you have at most 25-30 students attending each session live with the rest watching the recorded video.

If you prefer to pre-record lecture content or use previously-recorded lectures, ATG has many resources to help you do that as well.

### Interactive lectures, case-based discussions, Socratic method, seminars, student presentations and other interactive formats

If your class sessions are highly-interactive, Zoom is your best option for holding class. If your class is large, it will be challenging to manage in Zoom, even with TFs, unless you've had prior experience. We recommend that you consider holding the live sessions with smaller groups of students (say 12-20 per class meeting) and having other students watch the recording. This will allow you to continue with your interactive pedagogy while also limiting the difficulty of using the online environment. Students who don't attend a session live can be asked to engage in a peer discussion, to write an individual response, or simply to watch the recording.

For a discussion it is very helpful if you and your students switch Zoom into "Gallery View" so that everyone in the class is visible to everyone else.

Students can share their screens and present easily in Zoom, should you want to hold student presentations.

If maintenance of the interactive pedagogy feels daunting, it is also an option to elect a less interactive teaching methodology for now.

### Problem-based, hands-on, or lab classes

There are some classroom activities that may not be adaptable to the online environment. Others may be doable but require more training and/or creativity in design. Zoom supports "breakout rooms" that allow you to divide students into small working groups. Some courses use shared documents, like Google Docs, to have students work collaboratively in class. If you want to try to preserve an element of your course, such as a field trip, library work, a lab demonstration, problem-solving normally done on a whiteboard, etc., the Bok Center or ATG may be able to help.

## 2. Sections and Office Hours

Sections and office hours should be held in Zoom. You and your TFs can use your main Zoom room (accessed through the Zoom navigation item on your Canvas site) for office hours and sections. It is very helpful if you and your students switch Zoom into "Gallery View" so that everyone in the class is visible to everyone else.

## 3. Class Communication

We recommend using Canvas Announcements for official communications to your students. It is also a good idea to set up an open channel for communication among you, your students, and your TFs so that students can ask questions and stay connected as a group. You can do this with a Canvas Discussion or other tools with which you or your course staff are familiar. The students can also use Zoom to meet for group work outside of class time.

To maintain connection with your students you may want to add additional office hours and to more strongly encourage students to make use of your office hours. This is especially important if you will no longer be holding live class sessions.

## 4. Assignments

As a technical matter, Canvas easily supports distributing, collecting, and grading assignments. If you need help setting up your assignments in Canvas, support is available from ATG.

The content of some assignments may need to be adapted to allow students to complete them from an off-campus location. If you need help adapting the content of an assignment, support is available from the Bok Center.

## 5. Exams

Because exams are already stressful for students and using technology to proctor closed-book, timed exams adds additional stress, we advise that you modify your exams to allow them to be taken without proctoring. Canvas enables you to set timed exams. Alternatively you can replace your exams with an alternative assessment like a final paper or project. Support is available from the Bok Center.

If you feel the integrity of your course depends on a closed-book exam, keep the technology as simple as possible. Our recommendations for how to do so are available from the Bok Center.