

Dear Colleagues:

Those of us teaching in-person classes this coming fall will soon have access to updated classroom capacity/assignment information. The Registrar's Office will provide guidance when that information is available.

Here are some things to consider, in addition to the recommendations below, in anticipation of the face-to-face class planning that information will begin enable:

- Classroom capacity calculations are based on the furniture arrangement in modular classes that maximizes capacity while adhering to social distancing guidelines. In most cases, that means lecture/theatre-style furniture arrangements: rows of desks and seats facing the front of the classroom.
- For almost every class, capacity will be reduced by half to two-thirds, depending on how often the class is scheduled to meet and the availability of classrooms. Labs and performance classes may see even deeper reductions in capacity.
- Currently, nearly 95 students university-wide have indicated that they will not attend classes face-to-face. Thus, many instructors will need to provide a fully virtual experience to those students, one that includes a blend of synchronous and asynchronous learning opportunities. These students—even those who live many time-zones away—will be informed that they are expected to virtually attend the synchronous sessions available to them, whatever time of day or night they occur. (Please be sure to indicate the time zone for all due dates and class meetings and encourage students to set up automated reminders of due dates and times).
- Students who are exposed to Covid-19 and/or report symptoms will be asked to attend all their classes virtually for a period of time.
- We have asked students to finalize their decisions about whether they will attend in-person or remotely by August 1st. However, we can expect some students to wait even longer to make their decision.

So, even with somewhat more information than we had available even a week ago, our planning for the face-to-face components of fall courses will still necessarily be preliminary.

Here is some advice as you think about balancing face-to-face with virtual components of your class:

- As you strive to ensure that every student has real-time engagement with their classmates and instructor *at least once a week* and experiences in-person teaching *as frequently as possible*, consider ways of dividing your classes into sub-groups who will rotate through the different modalities and synchronicities we can make available over a period of one to perhaps three weeks (which is what the recommendations below explain in further detail). Some possibilities include:
 - If you have traditionally counted on class-time to “cover” information, consider ways of providing that coverage outside of real-time classes: relying more heavily on the textbook, web-resources, pre-recorded lecture. In cases where you do decide to move coverage to asynchronous formats such as these, also provide

discussion questions, practice problem sets, self-assessment quizzes, or other resources to guide student engagement.

- Providing additional contact-equivalent activities for all students to do outside of class to account for the reduced real-time engagement they'll have. Please see the guide below for suggestions.
- Dividing your class into halves or thirds (depending on classroom capacity) and plan to meet with each group face-to-face twice every three weeks (for classes that meet three times a week), once every two weeks (for classes that meet twice a week), or once every week (for classes that meet once a week). Again, please see the guide below for more detail.
- Planning to hold one virtual, real-time session each week to engage with students who are not scheduled to meet in person with you that week or who are enrolled virtually.
- Deciding which of the following approaches you wish to take and sticking with it throughout the semester:
 - Repeat the same class twice or three times a week for a different group each time and provide the same contact-equivalent activity for all students to complete outside of class time. This is the model that the guidance below is based on.
 - Conduct a different class meeting from one meeting time to the next, providing notes, transcripts, video recording, or summary information of what took place in that class to students who were not included in each meeting.
 - Require all students in the class to attend one real-time virtual session each week and only a portion to attend the face-to-face session(s) each week, providing notes or summaries of that face-to-face session or equivalent additional engagement activities to students who could not attend.
- Consider using the same approach to all your classes, if possible, for the sake of your own sanity.
- In any case, you will be better served by modularizing your courses into multi-week units and by planning week by week, rather than day by day.
- This final reminder: Please **do not plan to work with in-person and virtually present students in real time at the same time (i.e., Hybrid or Hy-Flex) unless you have been provided one of the few classrooms, the technical equipment, and the additional personnel and support necessary to do so effectively.** If you are considering a hybrid or hy-flex approach, and are confident in your ability and the availability of the technology to do so, start by reading [this account](#).

The primary goal of the guide below is to maximize the effectiveness of increasingly precious in-person engagement by advocating for high-impact learning activities (i.e., collaboration, problem solving, dialogue, etc.) during face-to-face sessions and contact-equivalent activities for asynchronous engagement.

All best,

Craig

Effective Use of Limited Class Time in a Blended-Learning Format

Center for Teaching Excellence
Drake University

July 2020

If you are scheduled to teach blended courses, where some of the teaching and learning take place in person and some virtually, the following comes as guidance on how to *maximize the in-person time you have with all students in your classes* while, at the same time, *providing equivalent synchronous instruction to students who are enrolled virtually*.

It also provides suggestions for using the necessarily more limited face-to-face class time effectively.

The following are guidelines. Use or modify them—or create alternatives—in ways that best serve the learning outcomes of your courses. Please consult Faculty Senate’s [policies on alternatives](#) to seat-time as you do so. If you are unsure whether an alternative you’re considering is permitted or feasible under current conditions, please consult your local dean’s office; please also remember to keep your department chairs and program directors in the loop as you finalize your plans.

This guidance is based on several assumptions:

- Your assigned learning space will likely not accommodate more than 50% of your enrolled students face-to-face at the same time (and possibly no more than 34% of students for 3x/week classes). Note, also, that capacity will require us to maintain a standard configuration in each classroom.
- At least a few of your students will be enrolled as fully virtual attendees and will not attend any face-to-face meetings. You’ll have a better idea of how many such students are enrolled in your classes by mid-August.
- At some point in the term, some of your students may need to quarantine for from several days to two weeks or even longer because of Covid-19 exposure. For that time period, they will need to be treated in the same way as students enrolled fully virtually.
- You will likely need to repeat some in-person lessons/activities for each group you meet with separately.
- Some of your students will transition permanently from face-to-face to fully virtual enrollment.
- You have already planned your semester on a week-by-week, rather than meeting-by-meeting schedule.
- You have already completed the planning for the fully virtual version of your courses in case at some point in the semester in-person meetings are suspended.

For classes that meet once a week

1. Divide the class into three groups:
 - a. Group A: Half of your in-person students
 - b. Group B: The other half of your in-person students
 - c. Group C: Students enrolled fully virtually
2. Devote the first half of each class period to meeting in person with Group A or B, on alternating weeks.
3. Devote the second half of each class period to meeting virtually with Group B or A, on alternating weeks, plus group C every week.
4. Assign additional contact-equivalent learning opportunities (see below) to all students to allow them guided pathways through material or learning activities to make up for the 50% reduction in synchronous class time.

We cannot meet in person with two different groups of students in two halves of a single day's meeting because rooms must be cleaned between groups, and cleanings are scheduled to take place between regularly scheduled class sessions.

For classes that meet twice a week:

Scenario Alpha:

1. Divide the class into three groups:
 - a. Group A: Half of your in-person students
 - b. Group B: The other half of your in-person students
 - c. Group C: Students enrolled fully virtually or in quarantine
2. Devote the first class period each week to meeting in person with Group A or B, on alternating weeks.
3. Devote the second class period each week to meeting virtually with Group B or A, on alternating weeks, plus group C every week.
4. Assign additional contact-equivalent learning opportunities (see below) to all students to allow them guided pathways through material or learning activities to make up for the 50% reduction in synchronous class time.

Scenario Beta:

1. Divide the class into three groups:
 - a. Group A: Half of your in-person students
 - b. Group B: The other half of your in-person students
 - c. Group C: Students enrolled fully virtually or in quarantine
2. Devote the first two-thirds of the first class period each week to meeting in person with Group A, and the final third to meeting with Group C virtually.
3. Devote the first two-thirds of the second class period each week to meeting in person with Group A, and the final third to meeting with Group C virtually.
4. Assign additional contact-equivalent learning opportunities (see below) to all students to allow them guided pathways through material or learning activities to make up for the 50% reduction in synchronous class time.

For classes that meet three times each week

Note: For 3x/week classes, classroom assignments will be made based on 1/3 total enrollment's capacity.

Scenario Alpha

1. Divide the class into four groups:
 - a. Group A: One third of your in-person students
 - b. Group B: One third of your in-person students
 - c. Group C: One third of your in-person students
 - d. Group D: Students enrolled fully virtually or in quarantine
2. Devote the first class period each week to meeting in person with Group A, B or C, rotating groups each week.
3. Devote the second class period each week to meeting in person with Group B, C, or A, rotating groups each week.
4. Devote the third period each week to meeting virtually with Group C, B, or A, rotating groups each week, along with Group D

Scenario Beta (*If at least 1/3 of your students are enrolled fully virtually*)

1. Divide the class in to three groups:
 - a. Group A: One half of your in-person students (not to exceed 1/3 of the total enrollment in your course).
 - b. Group B: The other half of your in-person students (not to exceed 1/3 of the total enrollment in your course).
 - c. Group C: Students enrolled fully virtually (at least 1/3 of the total enrollment in your course) + quarantined students
2. Devote the first class period each week to meeting in person with Group A.
3. Devote the second class period each week to meeting in person with Group B.
4. Devote the third class period each week to meeting virtually with Group C.

Contact-Equivalent Activities

Those who adopt one of the approaches above will be meeting for less total time synchronously with all students, and even less total time face-to-face. So, we need to find ways of providing Contact-Equivalent Activities (CEAs) to our students for when they're not meeting with us.

CEAs are activities that require (a) a degree of active engagement with the material, with you, and/or with classmates, or (b) require continuous engagement with instructional materials provided by you, or (c), some combination of both. They are not the same as an additional hour or two of regular homework: problem sets, additional reading, more writing, etc.

While CEAs may well expose the learner to *more* content than they would be able to encounter during limited class time, their purpose is primarily to help foster a *deeper, more authentic* engagement with that material.

Some **examples** of Contact-Equivalent Activities, listed generally from lowest- to highest-impact, include:

- Instructor-created video lectures and demonstration (10-to-15 minute segments)
- Self-Assessments, such as review questions and quizzes, keyed to video lectures and demonstrations.
- Engaging with instructor feedback on assignments/revision.
- Discussion questions and pre-writing using discussion forums and journals.
- Creating, updating, and revising learning portfolios.
- Instructor meetings with individuals and small groups.
- Student-led virtual discussions (small- and large-group).
- Student-led review sessions/collaborative problem-solving.
- Instructor-led disciplinary research assistance.
- Community-engaged learning activities, service projects, fieldwork, site visits and internships.

Effective CEAs are distinguished by one or more of the **following features**:

- They allow the learner to assess their own performance as they're doing it, providing immediate feedback on their success (or failure).
- They provide the learner a means for identifying their strengths—and, more importantly, shortcomings—as they perform assigned tasks.
- They give the learner opportunities to revisit, reflect on, and revise their work.
- They give the learner opportunities to learn from their classmates.
- They allow the learner to engage in authentic exploration and inquiry in real-world contexts.
- They prepare the learner to more effectively engage in and learn from future in-class activities (prospective) instead of reviewing, applying, or testing lessons learned from previous in-class activities (retrospective).

Effective CEAs, in turn, allow for more **effective, efficient use of class time to**:

- Pose and answer questions that arise from learners' encounters with the CEAs.
- Case studies and applications.
- Simulations and games.
- Role play (appropriately distanced).
- Coach "hands-on" skills.
- Complicate, deepen, or reinforce learning.
- Above all, to discover and immediately reinforce student achievement¹ and intervene in student error. (This may come as a surprise to students who expect that class is meant to validate what they already know, allow them to demonstrate mastery, or provide knowledge)

¹ The statement included in the original email attachment of July 10, 2020, omitted "student achievement."

In addition to these suggestions, the Poorvu Center for Teaching and Learning at Yale provides a more [comprehensive resource here](#).

Generally, under the current circumstances, it is best to avoid asking students to do during class-time something they could just as well do alone (i.e., individual writing, completion of problem sets).

One final note: These recommendations offer ways of contending with abbreviated real-time and face-to-face encounters with learners. However, these practices will increase teaching effectiveness even during “normal” semesters. So, plan to institute pandemic-resilient activities that you can also continue to use even when we have returned to a fully in-person modality in future semesters.