

# Address uncertainty in your syllabus

There is too much confusion surrounding how we will run courses for Fall 2020. Students are ready to return to class, but do not know what that will look like. There are several ways you can inform and include students in your process.

## SURVEY

Consider creating a Google Form or survey to collect information about 1) their routine, internet access, class-related-experiences they attribute to COVID-19 and, 2) the concerns they have going into the fall semester. Be specific.

## TECHNICAL REQUIREMENTS

Update your technical requirements section to include:

- **IN CLASS\*** required technical abilities: mention routine Blackboard and daily internet access. If your class assignments cannot be completed on a smartphone specifically point that out.
- **ONLINE** required technical abilities: Include Blackboard, if they need to be able to watch video, and any applications they are required to use. For instance, in CS101: Computers & Society, I present my students with homework assignments which require converting from one number system to another. I do not accept handwritten work. They must be able to use Google Docs, Microsoft Word or a similar product that allows them to use subscripts and superscripts.

If online with required synchronous sessions, list the dates and times in your course schedule. Indicate if the student will need to use a specific product, like Zoom or Google Meet, to attend. Decide if you will record the meetings, and if so, how and when you will make those recordings available to students who miss the session.

## ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS

\*If a student feels uncomfortable being in the classroom, even with social distancing, how are you going to provide him or her with the instruction they need? Let them know.

- Inform your students you will be recording. They may turn off their cameras. Try asking someone in the class to record the lecture and send it to you as well as the student. This could be a shared task. Be sure to let the

students know you're willing to post the recordings for everyone's use. That's a great way for someone else to go back over the lecture and their notes.

- If this is not your style, ask for volunteer note-takers and post the notes inside of Blackboard or whichever product you are using. Don't use your time collating or editing; the richness of each students' notes taken together may paint a great picture.
- Another avenue is a shared Google Doc; ask each of your students with devices to pop into it and take notes during the class. If anyone does a recording, they can upload it to a shared drive folder and link to it from that day's notes. Do not create multiple Google docs. Date the entries instead.

## REINFORCE YOUR PLAN

Include a discussion thread in Blackboard, WordPress, or Slack. Give your students an outlet to share what matters most to them or what concerns them most. Open it with your expectations of how they will use the forum—for netiquette ideas, consult with UAF eCampus. Be present in the forum. Share part of your own story. When you read similar posts from students, summarize with thoughts you have about how you as a team can address changing needs that may impact their success in your course.

## EXTRA

Two other areas of your syllabus to update are your instructional methods and how students contact you. You want to be present for them. Consider building live chats or student conferences. Your syllabus is where you address the why and how that your adult learners need to know about your course.

## THE LAST GEM

Share items you may never have before in your syllabus. Copy and paste from [Support students' basic needs](#) Teaching Tip. You've built an amazing course; you are excited to teach it. The syllabus you present should be an amazing abstract, an excellent description, a fantastic roadmap—and in times of trouble—a lifeline.