

Academic Preparation for Fall 2020

Background. This document is intended to help instructors and administrators devise creative ways to meet our students' needs, fulfill their courses' learning objectives, and cope with the unusual constraints we face in the coming year.

When we enforce the necessary 6-foot physical distancing guidelines in our classes, we lose 60-85% of each classroom's capacity.

From student and parent feedback this spring, we know that our students value in-person interaction with instructors and other students. They are excited about the classroom, laboratory, clinic, and performance space.

Other students will be unable or unwilling to attend in-person classes in the coming year, and they will need online courses. Conversely, our international students already in residence in the United States are sharply limited in the number of online courses they may take. (This restriction was relaxed in Spring 2020 and as of now we have no guidance for Fall 2020.) Given these limitations, we will need to rethink our course formats and schedules.

We will need to shift about half of the currently scheduled undergraduate in-person courses to an online format and about a quarter of the currently scheduled courses to hybrid modes of instruction that meet in person either less frequently or with a smaller number of students. Most of the remaining in-person classes will have to be moved to larger rooms to accommodate the 6-foot physical distancing guidelines. Depending on size, some graduate courses may have to change location or time.

The changes that we will have to make to almost every course currently scheduled for the fall semester will compel students to make changes to their course schedules. Undergraduate New Student Orientation begins June 15 and runs for seven weeks. During this time, returning students will have very limited access to the scheduling system. All of this means that the sooner that we are able to post an accurate revised schedule of Fall courses, the better. So, please work closely with your unit's leaders to make the necessary changes to your courses' modes of instruction as quickly as possible.

Principles for courses. Two principles guide course modalities:

- the need for physical distancing in courses on campus to preserve the health and wellness of the MSU community
- the need to migrate a substantial number of currently scheduled in-person courses to online and hybrid course modes of instruction

The first principle reflects the concern of public health professionals that physical distancing be maintained to reduce the spread of the virus.

The second principle reflects concern that both international students still abroad and domestic students be able to continue their educations, even if they are prevented from attending in person

by travel issues, personal health issues, or visa limitations. Some instructors also wish for health or other reasons to teach online.

Modes of Instruction. The Registrar's Office has created four codes so that students will know whether their course is in-person, hybrid, online synchronous, or online asynchronous. For some international students, this information is especially important.

In-person. This modality includes performance courses (such as theatre, studio art, music), some clinical courses, many laboratories, and some smaller seminars and discussion-based courses. Because of the difficulty of achieving proper physical distancing in most classrooms, these courses will enroll relatively few students in a section. Additional sections might be needed. Some in-person courses will be held in rooms that have not typically been used as classrooms; some courses might be held in outdoors venues as weather permits. Faculty creativity is needed to find ways to meet with students, because we know that many students returning to campus are looking forward to this option, as long as it can be done safely. *Interaction with instructors is one of the things students reported missing the most.*

Even for an in-person course, however, the final ten class days (November 30-December 11) would be online and the final exam, if any, would be given remotely.

Hybrid. In a hybrid course, part of the course is conducted online and part of the course is conducted in-person. Here are some examples of how a hybrid course might work.

- Online lecture (either synchronous or asynchronous), with in-person discussion or recitation sections.
- Rotating work or lab groups: one student is in the classroom or laboratory with other students watching online. Students take turns being present in the classroom.
- Student cohort rotations. For example, for a Tuesday-Thursday course, half of the students would attend in person on Tuesdays and half on Thursdays; when not in person, they would view the class remotely. For a course that meets three times a week, one-third of the students would attend in person.
- Small group work. Mix of full-class work that is online complemented by students working in small groups in person (instructor facilitated and not).
- Instructor rotation. In a course with three sections, the instructor would attend each section once a week, while the other two sections would participate online. (The other two sections would have a TA, ULA, or room host available.)
- A course that is offered in person could have one section online (either synchronous or asynchronous) for students who could not attend in person. The asynchronous solution requires that each in-person class session be recorded.

Online-synchronous. In the online-synchronous type, both students and instructor would be participating online in the course at the same scheduled day and time. Most courses in Spring 2020 took this form after we switched to emergency remote teaching. An important consideration for this course is the time zones in which the students are located because students and faculty will be expected to meet at the same time. Students will make sure that the class meeting times fit their schedules.

Online-asynchronous. This instructional mode allows students to engage in the class at any time of day so long as certain deadlines for the completion of work are met. Asynchronous online courses typically rely on tools such as pre-recorded lectures and discussion forums. It is especially appropriate for students who are in different time zones from the instructor, such as international students who cannot obtain visas to attend in person, and students who need increased flexibility with their schedules. Interaction within the class can be accomplished through chat-rooms, discussion threads, and other means. An asynchronous class can be self-paced, but can also have weekly deadlines.

Course Locations and Times

As part of the massive transformation we will have to make to the coming year's course schedule, we will have to carefully relocate the in-person and hybrid courses to provide for appropriate physical distancing in the classrooms. This may necessitate scheduling your course to a room that is not familiar to you or as conveniently located you prefer. It is important that instructors do not move their course location or time to anything from the scheduled place and time.

Considerations for Your Syllabi

The Code of Teaching Responsibility requires that instructors distribute a course syllabus (either in person or in electronic form) at the beginning of the semester. This checklist is intended to serve as a guide for instructors developing syllabi at Michigan State University. The items marked with an asterisk are required elements of the syllabus according to MSU's Code of Teaching Responsibility. Other items are suggested based upon the nature of the course and the situation that instructors and students may confront in the 2020-2021 academic year. A well-designed course syllabus has multiple uses, for both students and instructors as it:

- Allows students to plan their time with regard to attendance, homework assignments, readings, examinations, and papers.
- Informs students about how they will be evaluated and how grades will be determined.
- May be an important document for the instructor's teaching portfolio, promotion and tenure application, annual review, etc.
- Provides a mechanism for clearly outlining expectations for students in your class, which may prevent classroom disruptions, late submissions, confusion, and student grievances.

General Information that Should be Included in Your Syllabi

A. Course Information

- Course Title
- Course Number
- Credit Credits
- Course Hours and Meeting Days: Is the online (or portion of the online) course synchronous with set times or asynchronous with no set times? Or is it a hybrid with some asynchronous elements and some required meeting times? Specify all times (indicate Eastern Time) students are expected to be present. *If students must be present at particular times, the times must not be different from what is in the Schedule of Courses. Note that the course must be held for the entirety of the semester and cannot end early unless designated as a special session course.*
- Course Location: Specify the platform the online version or portion of the course will take place on. Examples would include Zoom, Teams, and D2L.
- Course website address
- Course modality: In-person, hybrid, synchronous online, or asynchronous online
- Term and Year
- Course Prerequisite(s) and Co-requisite(s)

B. Contact Information

- Instructor Name(s)/ Graduate Teaching Assistant Name(s)
- Instructor's(s') and Graduate Teaching Assistant's(s') Pronouns
- *Office Location and Office Hours: With any of these course types, and as provided in the Code of Teaching Responsibility (section 2b), the instructor is expected to maintain office hours. These hours may be in person in the instructor's office (assuming sufficient space for physical distancing), by telephone, or online. Students need clear instructions to know how and when they may contact the instructor. For example, if there are students in other time zones the office hours should specify the time zone – e.g., “3-5 p.m. Eastern Time Zone (GMT -5). Daylight Savings Time ends on November 1, 2020, so there will be a one-hour shift at that time.”
- *Phone Number(s) and Email Address(s): Specify if the office phone will be forwarded to the instructor's personal phone or if some other means of communication is to be used.
- Instructor's(s') Website

C. Course Description: Instructors are responsible for ensuring that the content of the courses they teach remains consistent with the course descriptions approved by the University Committee on Curriculum and the University Council. Instructors shall direct class activities toward the fulfillment of course objectives and shall evaluate student performance in a manner consistent with these objectives. Instructors should construct online and hybrid courses or portions of courses to meet learning objectives and specify how they will evaluate student performance when not meeting face-to-face in a classroom.

D. Course Overview: This is an opportunity to expand on the course description and give students details about how the online version will differ from the in-person version and meet

course objectives. You may discuss course format (recorded lectures, live lectures, a mix of recorded sessions and live discussions, etc.), relevance to students' academic and professional goals, and now major deliverables will be different in the online version (final paper, project, exam, etc.).

E. *Required Textbooks and Course Materials: List required course textbooks here. Include details such as full name of textbook, author, edition, ISBN, description (if desired), and where it can be purchased. If a required text is available online, indicate where it can be accessed. Specify any additional materials, including software and hardware, that students must purchase for the course. State if any hardware is required for assessment (e.g. a webcam). In selecting/preparing materials abide by the MSU Accessibility Policies. The MSU Libraries can be helpful for locating open source materials that will reduce the financial burden on students.

F. *Recommended Texts and Other Readings: How and where to expect access to these materials, especially for online courses.

G. Information helpful for the use of required software, including D2L: Include information on how to navigate necessary software, expectations, instructions on how to access course material, and where to find technical assistance. For example: If you need technical assistance at any time during the course or to report a problem you can:

- Visit the Distance Learning Services Support Site
- Visit the Desire2Learn Help Site
- Or call Distance Learning Services: 1-800-500-1554 or 517-355-2345

H. *Instructional Objectives

- Objectives: Whether the course is online, hybrid, or in-person, these must align with the course description, though how you achieve the objectives may be adapted to the course modality. You should list your objectives.
- Assignment descriptions: Assignments in all course modalities should be aligned with course goals and the course description. The syllabus should include information on how assignments will be graded in all modalities including grading rubrics when applicable. Be clear about assignment and submission deadlines and methods, particularly in the online version or portion of the course.

I. *Course Schedule: This must include the date of the final examination and tentative dates of required assignments, quizzes, and tests if applicable. This should be arranged in a list by date or week.

J. *Grading Policy: The syllabus must make clear how students will be evaluated, and specifically how final grades will be determined. This can be in the form of a rubric or chart. Grade percentages must be provided so that students may understand how their final grade will be calculated. If a grading curve is used, this must be shared, and instructors must let students know how the curve will be calculated. Include any information about required proctoring, and particularly in an online course; this

includes proctoring sites, lockdown browsers, and software requirements necessary for proctored exams or assignments.

K. Course Policies, Syllabus Statements, and Resources for Students

- *Attendance Policy, if different from the university attendance policy and especially when that attendance policy affects student grades. Specify what attendance means in an online course. Indicate if students are expected to be present at particular online sessions.
- Spartan Code of Honor
- Academic Integrity: Include information about how you will design online exams, tests, quizzes, etc. to minimize the possibility of academic dishonesty. Assessment mechanisms appropriate for an in-person modality may not be appropriate for an online modality.
- RVSM Limits to Confidentiality
- RCPD Disability Accommodations Statement
- Mental Health
- Tolerance and civility
- Religious Observance Policy
- Student-Athletes
- Use of Technology in the Classroom: For example, do you allow the use of laptops and other electronic devices in the classroom?
- MSU Final Exam Policy: Essential to include in syllabus if you will enforce this policy.
- Internet Access: Not all students have access to reliable internet. Specify your expectations if students encounter difficulties—including outages—during synchronous sessions, exams, etc.
- Statement on ADA Compliance: This is your opportunity to describe what efforts you have made to ensure compliance with the Americans with Disabilities Act for the online version or portion of the course and how people with disabilities can contact you and RCPD if aspects of the course are not accessible due to a disability.
- Commercialized Lecture Notes: Commercialization of lecture notes and university-provided course materials is [permitted or not permitted] in this course. Note: The Code of Teaching Responsibility requires instructors who permit students to commercialize their class lecture notes to include a statement in their course syllabi that gives such permission. Absent such permission, students may not do so.
- Other classroom expectations: Can include policies around tardiness, late submissions, cell phones, language around syllabus changes.

Thinking about your students

If you are teaching students who are new to the University, you will need to offer greater information concerning such MSU resources as D2L, the Libraries, and the Writing Center. Many of our students are first-generation or from minority communities, and almost none of them has ever been at an educational institution as large as MSU. Please remember that MSU can feel overwhelming and isolating.

Internet accessibility will remain an important issue. Students who do not live in residence halls may need to know where to find available wi-fi; it should be available at a number of places on campus.

For students who are taking online classes only, there might be greater availability of online resources in public libraries and coffeeshops than we saw in Spring 2020, when those alternatives were closed. All students will need some form of connectivity for the last two weeks of classes. In the United States, hotspots are available for a low price and often carry one month of free internet connection. Some assistance might be available through the Office of Financial Aid or Student Services, because connectivity will effectively become a requirement for the course. A map of free hotspots in Michigan is available here:

<http://cngis.maps.arcgis.com/apps/webappviewer/index.html?id=0d69accbb5ff422a82eccc2c9101b69d>

We will be following the best public-health guidance for keeping everyone on campus safe. Besides physical distancing, there will be an expectation of facial coverings for everyone. More details will be coming about availability of masks for students and instructors.

Online instructors should consider the accessibility of their online materials to students with disabilities. Information on accessibility is available from many sources such as <https://webaccess.msu.edu/Tutorials/d21-special-access.html>.

Questions?

Instructors with issues and questions should contact their unit head first. Information is being updated on a frequent basis at <https://msu.edu/coronavirus/reopening-campus/>.