Instructor Recommendations for Fall 2020

From the Faculty Senate COVID-19 Academic Policy Ad Hoc Committee. Updated 2020-08-18

The Faculty Senate COVID-19 Academic Policy Ad Hoc Committee has been working through the summer to establish academic policies and guidelines for the fall 2020 semester. Courses this semester will be offered in a **variety** of ways, including face-to-face, a combination of face-to-face and distance, synchronous distance using technologies such as Zoom, and asynchronous distance. Many courses that would be offered face-to-face have moved to some form of distance or hybrid delivery. To make this semester go more smoothly we suggest these three general strategies.

- First, more specific and frequent **communication** with students about policies and expectations will help faculty and students stay on the same page and manage the expected and unexpected difficulties related to changes in course delivery models and the heightened possibility that faculty or students may experience COVID related disruptions in their lives.
- Second, acknowledge and plan for a more **flexible** approach to teaching and assessment where possible. We all hope that the pandemic situation improves, but if the overall situation requires that the university revert to all distance teaching or you or your students need to change direction individually, starting out with a culture of flexibility will help more of us complete the semester successfully. This will not be a "set it and forget it" kind of year.
- Third, recognize that many aspects of teaching will take **more time** and plan accordingly. Taking roll and monitoring seating arrangements, setting up audio/visual equipment, managing audio/visual classroom communications – many of the new and additional actions we will need to do will take away from instructional time and/or add time to what we normally spend on our classes. We recommend you work with your department and college to ensure that this time is accounted for in your workload.

Our greatest resource is our fellow **faculty** members. Reach out to other faculty who have experience teaching in different modalities or who share similar challenges. Work with your departments to establish consistent department policies, if appropriate. This semester will be challenging for faculty and students, but we hope that we can help to both lessen those challenges and find ways to use our experiences to improve our pedagogy and course delivery into the future.

Because policies can change rapidly, the Faculty Senate Administrative Committee approved a new required statement for your **syllabus**:

> Students should keep up-to-date on the university's policies, practices, and mandates related to COVID-19 by regularly checking this website: https://sites.google.com/alaska.edu/coronavirus/uaf/uaf-students?authuser=0
> Further, students are expected to adhere to the university's policies, practices, and mandates and are subject to disciplinary actions if they do not comply.

In addition, the COVID-19 Ad Hoc Committee and Faculty Senate worked with Administration and Staff to resolve a number of issues, including the decision to 1) follow regular academic policies for CR/NC, Deferred, and Incomplete Grades, 2) revise the finals schedule to provide 3 hour blocks for finals to allow for increased transition times between classrooms and for setting up online proctoring where

necessary, 3) provide masks and/or shields for faculty teaching face-to-face classes, and 4) create an online resources for faculty, staff, and students regarding UAF COVID-19 policies.

Below are suggestions for course policies. This is by no means complete.

Course Policy and Practices Recommendations

For Face-to-Face Courses Specifically

Teaching face-to-face today does entail some **risk** for everyone--while this risk may be smaller for young and healthy students, it is higher for older faculty, immunocompromised students, or their friends and family. If we take sensible precautions as we teach, we can save substantial human suffering, while still giving students the education that UAF is famous for delivering.

The most important aspect of this semester's changes: **communicate** them clearly to students. You should explain to them exactly how your class will work before the first meeting, so students know what to expect and can correctly prepare.

1. Social Distancing/Safety in the Classroom:
   Everyone is required to wear a face covering in the classroom at UAF and Facilities Services has arranged each teaching space to ensure that students remain 6 feet apart. However, you may also want to:
   a. Direct how the classroom **fills and exits**. For example, asking students to fill from "front to back" and directing which sections exit first ("back row exits first, then next" and etc.).
   b. Direct students to **sanitize** their spaces in the classroom (and sanitize your own).
   c. Remind students that if they have any symptoms, they should self-quarantine.
   d. Make sure everyone wears **masks** or face coverings.
      i. If people have problems with masks **fogging up** around the nose, this indicates the mask does not fit well: modifying the mask with even a paper clip, or "wardrobe tape" is skin-compatible and can help hold the mask down around the nose. A surfactant like detergent can reduce fogging as well.
      ii. It's not possible to eat **food** while wearing a mask effectively. A drink may be feasible with a straw. Faculty may set an eating/drinking policy for their class.
   e. Make sure everyone stays at least 6 feet apart, particularly for extended periods.
   f. Establish policies on assignments/materials to avoid passing out or collecting paper:
      i. Require students to **print** out or have digital copies (e.g., on a tablet) of necessary course materials prior to each class. Keep in mind that printer access on campus is challenging, and many students don't have printers.
      ii. Require that assignments be submitted via email, Blackboard or other **electronic** means.
2. Contact Tracing:
   To facilitate contact tracing if one of your students falls ill, we recommend that you maintain some sort of **record of seating**. Facilities services is working to number each table in most of the classrooms and common-use spaces. You may:
   a. Take **roll**, and record which desk students are sitting in.
   b. Use **assigned seats**, such as a fixed seating chart matching students to desks, and ask students to note the desk number or take a picture of the desk and space they will use.

(You cannot rely on students' records alone as some students may not keep a record or may be unavailable to provide that record.)

    c. Take a **photograph** of all students each class. (A clear policy about photo sharing and time until deletion may help reduce student objections to this.)

For Mixed Face-to-Face/Distance or Synchronous Distance Classes

Distance classes using audio or video and mixed distance and face-to-face classes require more explicit policies, particularly around communication. Below are some suggestions on **distance etiquette**.

1. Establish policies on **audio/video** such as:
   a. Direct students to **mute their audio** when they are not speaking so that background noise does not disrupt the class.
   b. Direct students to **turn off their video** when they are not speaking (if it slows down the connection).
   c. Ask students to post a clear headshot of themselves to their Zoom profile, so that their instructor and classmates can see who they're interacting with.
   d. Remind students in the classroom that they will need to **speak loudly** in order to be heard by distance students – "Feel free to use your 'outdoor' voice," or "We need to be able to hear you from across the internet."
2. Establish policies on **participation** so that students know how and when to interact, such as:
   a. Ask them to use the Zoom/Collaborate/Other system "**raise hand**" feature to ask questions. (You can demonstrate the user interface via your shared screen.)
   b. On Zoom, encourage students to use Zoom reactions as quick check-ins. Note that upgrading to the latest version of Zoom gives a wider variety of possible reactions.
   c. Set a policy that you will **stop for questions** at X intervals (and then make sure you do it). Tell students to take note of their questions and wait until then to ask them.
   d. Set parameters for when and how students can "interrupt" you during lecture.
   e. Set up a policy for how you will ensure all students get a chance to **participate**. This isn't that different from what happens in a face-to-face class, but you may need to develop some scheme of alternating between face-to-face and distance students, for example.
   f. Structure your class time so that there are clear periods set aside for **discussion** and let students know what times are listening times, discussion times, group work times, etc.
   g. Move some of your interactions to online discussions (text chat, Blackboard Groups, Discord, etc.)

Flexibility and Continuity for All Class Types

Students and faculty may need to **stay home** if they have any symptoms or if they are required to quarantine. In addition, even with courses scheduled for distance only, faculty or students may fall ill or need to take care of family members. To mitigate this, faculty will need to have plans in place (within reason) that will allow the course to go on and the student to continue to access course content and materials. Faculty should

1. Establish policies on what will happen if students or faculty are **quarantined** or otherwise cannot attend in person. For example:

a. Automatically **record** and post all lectures so that if a student misses class because they are ill they can access the lecture. We don't want students coming to an in-person class if they are unwell (fever, cough, sniffle). Students do not need to sign a waiver to be recorded in class, but you should let students know. Consider placing a reminder in your syllabus that classes will be recorded and shared with other enrolled students.

b. Have a plan ready if you or your students are placed under quarantine/can't come to class (ice storm, or if the whole university has to go to distance teaching). *Students arriving from out-of-state will be automatically quarantined while waiting for two test results. We anticipate that the first two weeks of class will be particularly disruptive for this reason and students will need some kind of accommodation.*

c. Exams
   i. Where possible, use more **flexible assessments** and avoid proctored exams.
   ii. Where proctored exams are unavoidable, provide multiple proctoring options, including ones that are accessible for students in quarantine (e.g., zoom proctoring), and clearly communicate these options before the exam.
   iii. Limit the number of proctored assessments as much as possible.

2. Establish **policies** on what will happen if students cannot keep up with coursework or develop scheduling issues. Of course, we already have policies (such as the option to Withdraw or an Incomplete) that already deal with unexpected life circumstances. However, given the situation additional flexibility may be helpful and enable students to keep on track.
   a. Develop more flexible policies on **late/missing** assignments and quizzes.
   b. Expand **options** for engagement/participation in the course.

3. In any semester, there is some chance an **instructor** will unexpectedly be unable to finish the semester. Planning an approach beforehand for continuing instruction and assigning consistent grades will help students continue. It may be worth discussing this with your department, for example by adding a "backup instructor" to Blackboard where possible.

Support Resources
- The UAF COVID-19 Information page is the definitive index.
- The Provost's August 11 message to faculty has the latest news.
- The Provost's July 30th message has information on alternate ways of testing
- The Provost's July 14 message to faculty has many useful facts and links.
- eCampus has a variety of instructional support resources for faculty.
- OIT's best practices for Zoom.

COVID-19 Academic Policy Ad Hoc Committee

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