

Guide for Alternative Instruction Methods

In the event of an emergency situation, such as severe weather, natural disaster, or widespread illness as the result of a pandemic, instructors may be able to continue teaching their courses if they have taken steps to prepare for this possibility. This guide offers suggestions and resources to help instructors to be prepared.¹

Planning for the semester

1. Develop a contingency plan as early in the semester as possible. In planning, consider both the possibilities of substantial absenteeism and of class cancellation.
2. Evaluate alternative instructional methods and assignments which will achieve your course's educational goals and which will allow students to continue work even if they cannot attend class, lab, or studio in person even if students continue work.
3. Your plan should also address grades, extensions, and making up work. There may be many student requests for special accommodations, and your plan should treat students equitably and be feasible even if there are large numbers of requests.
4. As you make your plans, coordinate with your dean to ensure that your plan can be supported, meets applicable educational standards, and does not conflict with others' plans. If you plan to rely on other administrative staff, consult with them to ensure that the plan is feasible. Also, consider that they, too, may be absent due to illness.
5. Make sure your students know what to expect, including how you will communicate with them if your class does not meet. When you have determined your alternative plans, add them to your syllabus; if you have already developed a syllabus, communicate them separately to your students early in the semester. If possible, discuss them briefly in class to answer questions and allay concerns. Even if you don't specify plans, explain how you will inform students of changes on the syllabus or another location which students can easily access for later reference.

For example, a syllabus or separate message for a traditional lecture course might include the following language:

As you have probably heard, there is a possibility that instruction in this class will be interrupted by an outbreak of the H1N1 ("swine") flu, either because a large number of class members are ill and unable to attend class, or because I am ill and unable to attend class.

The most important thing is that, if you begin to have flu-like symptoms, follow the advice of physicians and health officials – if it means staying home and missing class, that is what you should do until you have recovered.

If the class is interrupted, here is what will happen: (1) I will contact you via e-mail directly and an announcement on the class Oncourse website. (2) I will continue to work through the syllabus as planned, but instead of holding class, I will post short writing assignments on Oncourse. You will have one week to respond to each assignment, unless you

¹ Thanks to the IUPUI Center for Teaching and Learning and the IUB Teaching and Learning Technologies Centers; the University of West Florida Center for University Teaching, Learning, and Assessment (http://uwf.edu/cutla/campus_planning-emergency.cfm); and the University of Michigan Center for Research on Learning and Teaching (<http://www.crlt.umich.edu/flu/index.php>); for materials from which this guide is adapted.

yourself are ill, in which case please tell me and I will grant an appropriate extension. (3) The "class participation" portion of your grade will be based on these writing assignments for the interrupted part of the course. A final examination is still planned.

6. Create your class listserv in advance of a flu outbreak, either as a separate Listserv² or using the Oncourse roster³.

7. Survey students to determine if they have internet access when not on campus and what type of connection they have. This may influence the online tools you choose to use during a campus closure. Collect alternate contact information you may need if campus is closed. For example, alternate email addresses and/or home, office, or cell phone numbers may be useful.

8. Familiarize yourself with any technologies that are part of your plan. In the first few weeks of the semester, conduct a test run of the technologies outlined in your plan to give students an opportunity to get used to them.

Providing emergency preparedness information in your syllabus

- Include information about the campus Emergency Preparedness website where students can get information in the event of an emergency.
- Recommend that students sign up for emergency notifications through IU Notify. Faculty, staff and students should sign up or review their IU Notify contact information for accuracy by logging into OneStart (<http://onestart.iu.edu>).
- Describe how your course would be continued or completed if an emergency were to close the university for an extended period of time. Include a list of tools you would use to continue class instruction electronically if face-to-face classroom instruction were suspended.
- List alternate communication methods that you may use should the campus be closed. This can include communicating through Oncourse; university or alternate email; office, home, or cell phone; or US Postal Service.

How to communicate with your class during a campus closure

- Use Oncourse Announcements and/or the Email Archive to communicate with your whole class
- Export the class roster and list of student emails from Oncourse, and keep an electronic backup in a place you'll be able to access
- Let your students know ahead of time how you will get in touch with them, and how they will be able to reach you

How to keep teaching from off-campus

- **Assignment submission:** use the Oncourse Assignments tool, email attachments, or Google Docs for electronic submission
- **Student discussion:** use Oncourse Forums, Oncourse Wiki, Oncourse Chat
- **Group work:** enable groups in Oncourse and set up the Forums tool, the Wiki tool, and/or a folder in Oncourse Resources for each group; or, use Google Docs
- **Assessments and evaluations:** postpone tests if possible, or prepare them with the structure of the Oncourse's Original Test and Survey tool in mind

² <http://kb.iu.edu/data/apfo.html>

³ <http://kb.iu.edu/data/augw.html>

- **Office hours:** set aside times you'll be available in Oncourse Chat, a chat pod in Adobe Connect, a Google Talk session, or Skype

Make sure you've backed up your course materials

- Use "Upload-download multiple resources" in Oncourse Resources to transfer files from Resources to your hard drive
- Save files in a place you'll be able to access if you cannot come to campus, such as your home hard drive, a portable thumbdrive, a CD or DVD, or on IU's web server, Webservice

Where to find IU information in the event of an emergency

- Visit the IU Emergency Preparedness website: <http://www.indianauniversity.info/> and IU East Emergency website: <http://www.iue.edu/emergency/>
- The university will communicate through *IU Notify*, which permits messages to be quickly sent as voice calls to cell, home and office phones, text messages to cell phones, and emails to university and non-university email accounts. Faculty, staff and students should sign up or review their IU Notify contact information for accuracy by logging into OneStart <http://onestart.iu.edu>.

Getting teaching support

- To learn more about technologies mentioned in this tip sheet, contact the IU East Center for Teaching and Learning: <http://www.iue.edu/ctl/>.