

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR REMOTE INSTRUCTION

This document contains recommended practices for remote instruction based on student feedback received in the 2020 UC Undergraduate Experience Survey (UCUES) administered in Spring 2020. While not every suggestion will be possible for every course, we encourage instructors to read the student experiences expressed below and consider how to best accommodate student learning during periods of remote instruction.

KEEP WORKLOADS MANAGEABLE

Students feel their workloads have increased due to the perception of having “extra time,” but point out that many of them have increased family responsibilities and work obligations, are still participating in extracurriculars (and are working to move those extracurriculars online), and struggle with overall stress and mental health.

- “Two of my three professors are assigning more reading than they normally would for an in-person class. Their justification is that we all have ‘all of this extra time.’ **I'm an essential worker and I now actually have less time.** This assumption is really hurting me in the long run.”
- “I’ve been anxious the entire time and the course work is not helping. Professors are assigning double the amount of work because they’re thinking we have more time when in reality it’s more difficult to work from home. Exams are more difficult and it’s extremely inconvenient for me to take exams from home. I am unable to study nearly as effectively as I would have on campus.”
- “Although some professors are trying their best to be accommodating during this pandemic, I believe that other professors see this as an opportunity to give students more work than we would have received normally. In addition, expecting students to continue to participate in group work is ridiculous given our different time zones. My lab still requires us to work on lab assignments as a group during the lab we enrolled in, but I think this is slightly unfair given the circumstances. Students are still taking part in extracurricular activities, and some students, like myself, are also helping out with chores. It feels like some professors are not mindful of this.”

CONSIDER EXAM FORMATS AND TIMING

Students ask for more time for online exams, given the difficulty of reviewing or changing responses in an online format compared to a pencil-and-paper test. For many students, the inability to secure a quiet space to study or take exams exacerbates their frustrations.

- “Those timed online exams have especially got on my nerves these days since there has been a lot of miscommunication from the professors and technical difficulties which makes it harder for students to accommodate some professor's strict time policy (i.e. if your submission is 1 minute late, they will not grade it). I do agree that late tests should not be accepted, but considering this special situation, they have to provide some flexibility. **For example, changing one simple answer on a PDF file would take additional time than changing it on a physical paper since you have to re-upload your test.**”
- “The switch to online classes has caused teachers to make tests harder, since we will have our notes during tests. The result has been tests that contain information not covered in the class, tests where you cannot go back to a question after you’ve answered it, or tests with very short time limits where notes are difficult to even utilize.”

PREPARE FOR TECHNOLOGICAL DIFFICULTIES AND INTERRUPTIONS

Many students deal with technical frustrations outside of their control. When possible, keep the likelihood of technical difficulties in mind when planning activities or assignments.

- “My internet is not always reliable so **I have to travel to relatives’ homes and connect to their internet through the backyard** to properly practice social distancing.”
- “It’s been a very difficult transition to online classes, I don’t have internet back home so it’s hard keeping up with school work. I think this is experienced a lot with first gen students.”
- “I don’t have access to reliable WiFi because my dad is out of work and my mom’s work was cut in half. I have to steal my neighbor’s WiFi now and then to do work.”

POST LECTURE VIDEOS

Overwhelmingly, students appreciate having access to recorded lectures. Many attend class asynchronously due to differences in time zones or family obligations and scheduling. Even those who attend lecture at the designated time feel that accessing the lectures online facilitates learning.

- “I think that having recorded lectures with manuscripts attached has made it a whole lot easier to go back and review concepts that I could have potentially missed.”
- “Remote instruction **allows me to take care of my younger sister.**”
- “Since sometimes the professor speaks at a high speed, with the class recorded now, **I can replay what I did not understand in the first place and take notes carefully.**”

PROVIDE ADDITIONAL (OPTIONAL) MATERIALS IF POSSIBLE

When possible, instructors are encouraged to post past lectures or other *optional* supplemental materials, such as lists of scholarly or professional resources in their field of study. Departments can also facilitate collaboration between faculty to provide additional materials to students.

- “Professors in my math class have been collaborating to give us more material.”
- “Many professors are posting past lectures along with new videos, although there is more pressure to get through 2-3 times as much work, there is a benefit to having more access, and more references.”

BUILD IN TIME TO CONNECT AND ANSWER QUESTIONS

Students welcome additional time for questions during class, not only for knowledge checking, but for a chance to interact with their professors.

- “One professor spends the last 10 minutes answering questions which **helps facilitate some relationship** between professor and students.”
- “I feel like there is more room to connect to professors compared to in-person classes. Everyone is super understanding.”

KEEP CONNECTING THROUGH OFFICE HOURS

The lack of commute, both on and off campus, as well as more chances for asynchronous instruction allows students the opportunity to connect more easily during office hours.

- “Instructor office hours are easier to access now since **I no longer have to travel for half an hour** to attend them in person.”
- “It is more convenient to go to office hours as professors are providing more time outside of class to help.”

UTILIZE ZOOM CHAT FOR PARTICIPATION

Many students feel more comfortable “speaking up” through chat than they would in a classroom of peers.

- “I get nervous to speak up in class so through remote learning I am able to type my questions rather than speak out loud.”

FACILITATE INTERACTIONS THROUGH BREAKOUT ROOMS

Students cite breakout rooms as an environment where they can interact in a way that mimics class discussion.

- “It’s nice to be forced to meet new people in breakout rooms that I may not have interacted with.”
- “Breakout rooms have always engaged in meaningful discussions.”

GET CREATIVE WITH ONLINE POLLS OR SHARED GOOGLE DOCUMENTS

Consider using other technologies to foster different types of student interactions, such as the use of polls or shared Google Docs.

- “One of my professors is using [online polls and a Google form](#) for questions during lecture.”
- “Our class discussion is more interactive with the use of a live polling site.”

ENCOURAGE STUDENT-TO-STUDENT COMMUNICATION

Some students enjoy having a class GroupMe where they can interact outside of class. While many students can and do initiate this on their own, professors can help by spreading the word to everyone.

- “Classmates are more likely to work together and form GroupMe groups.”

FINALLY, REMEMBER THE OBSTACLES FACING MANY STUDENTS

Students are struggling with isolation, serving as caretakers, dealing with family medical emergencies, or studying in households filled with multiple family members also conducting their lives remotely. What students express most strongly is gratitude for professors who demonstrated understanding, solidarity, and [compassion](#).

- “I am sharing computers with my children, so we have to juggle classes.”
- “It is difficult to get any time alone while caring for younger children since the family I live with are essential workers and [I am the only available baby sitter.](#)”
- “It's been nice to see how much our professors care. They've been the one high point.”
- “My instructors I feel have been very understanding. I wish I would have met them in person. But a lot of them have changed the coursework and have been a lot more communicative.”
- “Most of my professors have been very [kind and considerate of all the students are going through](#) and have taken setbacks and difficulties into account. I am very appreciative of this.”

The recommendations in this brief are based on UCLA undergraduate responses to COVID-19 and the shift to online instruction at the end of Winter quarter 2020. Data used in the writing of this brief come from early responses to the 2020 UCUES, which contained questions related to the COVID-19 pandemic. UCUES was administered online to 30,535 UCLA undergraduates beginning in April 2020; the current data represent responses that had been received by May 4, 2020. For more information about the information contained in this brief, contact Amy Woodbridge: awoodbridge@saonet.ucla.edu.

