Preparing to Teach a Fall 2021 Course

Transitioning to In-Person Teaching

UNIVERSITY OF MIAMI

Table of Contents

Introduction

This Fall 2021, the University of Miami is transitioning to in-person and on-campus classes and will continue to maintain several COVID-19 safety guidelines to ensure a safe and healthy campus environment. During the last academic year, faculty introduced creative, and innovative strategies to adapt to the complexities of online, and hybrid teaching, focused on supporting student learning. Strategies ranged from reimagining course assessments, integrating learning technologies, and exploring flipped and active learning approaches.

This guide therefore builds upon existing strategies from last year, and options for remote students, to ensure a smooth teaching and learning experience this semester. Some of the logistical choices you'll need to make will have a direct impact on the learning experiences of students, and you may want to ask students for their own input as to what would work best for them. Additionally, the appendix to this guide includes technical guidance and links that compliment this document's teaching guidance, and the last page contains a helpful checklist for recommended steps to take before, during, and after class.

What can I expect the in-person classroom experience to look like?

- Most students will attend in-person. Students may participate in live classes remotely, or watch class recordings if they are in quarantine or isolation. Review latest teaching guidelines for faculty.
- International students who are not able to arrive the first day of class due to visa processing delays are permitted to attend their classes remotely. These students are expected to complete their classes in person by the end of the semester, however, some students may be attending remotely the entire semester.
- For in-class absences, you may want to consider workarounds so students can make up missed coursework. For students who request to attend remotely due to illness or absence from campus, provide flexible options, such as sharing a recording of a class session, or alternative makeup activities.
- Mandatory masks will continue to change the dynamics of in-person classroom engagement, such as class discussions. Consider starting an open dialogue with your students early on in the course about the changes and how they will affect instruction. Repeating questions, asking for clarification, and sharing of prompts through your Blackboard or presentation materials are some options.
- Courses have been scheduled to have 25 minutes between each class to help people move between spaces safely. You may want to consider using some of this time to set up classroom technologies and address questions with students before or after class.
- Physical barriers like plexiglass will still exist, so some seating may be more fixed than others. Large group activities and moving around class may still be limited.
- Pre-determined seating will no longer be implemented. However, you may wish to create seating charts for managing small group engagements and projects.

What should I do before the semester starts?

When preparing for the upcoming semester, there are a number of elements to anticipate as we transition to in-person teaching.

- First, become familiar with Zoom, the recommended video conferencing platform, that you can use to record your lectures, and connect with the students who attend your class remotely. (See Zoom guides in the Appendix).
- For each course, prepare your Blackboard course page for teaching by following the guidelines from the Learning Platforms team. Make your course available and send a welcoming announcement by the first day of class.
- Create a Zoom meeting link, and recurring Zoom class sessions in your Blackboard course for upcoming classes. This will help prepare for students who will need to join remotely. Zoom is currently integrated within Blackboard, you can schedule all upcoming classroom sessions there, and make the links accessible to students from day one. That way, students attending remotely know exactly how to join the class session every time.
- Develop a video conferencing etiquette summary for any students that may need to join remotely. Co-create this resource with your students, or amend existing guidelines.
- Review your syllabus, give thought to which in-class activities may require some modifications, or alternatives that will have to be determined. View planning templates here.
- You may want to share your syllabus with students before your first session, on Blackboard, which should include your logistics and expectations for an in-person classroom session.
- Communicate options for remote students to participate on the first day of class (e.g., recorded session, or attending live via Zoom). Some students may need to participate in the first day remotely if they have delayed arrival due to quarantine requirements.

What should I do on the first day of class?

There are a number of steps you can take to ensure a smooth start to class. For in-person classes, using the classroom podium for instructional lectures is an approach you may be familiar with, but elements such as recording sessions, and providing digital classroom resources are important to consider. The more comfortable you are with the technology, the more time and energy you can dedicate to your teaching rather than technical troubleshooting.

- Arrive early to your first class to make sure all of the technology is working properly and ready to go. Many UM classrooms have been outfitted with necessary equipment for faculty to record in-classroom lectures, including freestanding webcams that connect with the room's computer or your own laptop. See specific guidance for Teaching in the General Purpose Classrooms.
- To record your session, launch the Zoom desktop app on the classroom podium, or your personal computer, login, click 'Meetings' and launch your Zoom meeting for the day.

Test your speaker and microphone to ensure you have the correct speakers and microphone input selected, and students attending remotely can hear you. Next share your screen, or a 2nd camera, such as the UBS document camera, or a freestanding camera to point at you. Once the recording or session is complete, log out of Zoom and the system.

- Transitioning to in-person teaching may be more of an adjustment for some students than others. Consider being deliberate in speaking to students as they enter the classroom, asking how they are doing, and acknowledging the need for flexibility or adjustments throughout the course due to COVID-19 safety guidelines, and their own personal situations. Community building activities can help set expectations here too.
- Seating within the University of Miami classrooms will have already been arranged in the optimal default setup, but some adjustments may be necessary. For discussion-based activities, you might need to ask your students to sit facing each other or sit in locations to simulate a "round-table."
- Have a backup plan in case there are connectivity or technical issues for any students that join remotely. Share the multiple options students can connect to a session (e.g., another computer, mobile device, or tablet), or using alternative collaboration tools such as Blackboard or Google Drive to have students work "asynchronously" (offline).
- Make sure you have technical support contacts on hand in case of any issues during your class session; these are located at the end of this document.

How do I share materials with students, such as handouts and presentation slides during class?

- Any presentation or paper-based handouts, like worksheets, should be made available online via Blackboard before the session, so students can access these during class. You can also use this as a way to download and launch any presentations you want to screen-share during class.
- If you are recording or hosting a live session on Zoom for remote students, avoid focusing the camera on both you and your presentation slides (PowerPoint, Google Slides, etc.). Have the camera focused on you as the speaker. Use Zoom to share your screen as you present, but also consider making any slides available to all students before the session or posting a link to an online document through the chat feature.
- Consider sharing an outline of the agenda, discussion prompts, or problems on the board visible to students throughout the session.

Should I record my class sessions?

- In general, recording your class sessions with Zoom is recommended. Recordings are helpful for students who want to review past sessions, for students who are unable to attend class because of medical reasons, or students who are unable to attend because of travel-related issues.

- Session recordings can easily be shared with students in Blackboard (see [Recording a Session](#) in the Appendix).
- If you are teaching a class that deals with sensitive topics, and the possibility exists that students will be uncomfortable sharing their perspectives because of the session recording, disable recording. While recording is helpful for students, don't sacrifice the learning experience for the sake of the recording.
- Keep in mind that class recordings that contain student contributions may constitute educational records under FERPA. For more information, refer to [Virtual and Other Classroom Recording and Student Privacy (FERPA)](#).

How do I ensure remote students feel involved and engaged in the classroom?

Remote students can feel isolated and less involved, so it's important to acknowledge them and involve them in the classroom experience.

- At the start of each class, consider being deliberate in acknowledging the remote group's presence and extending them a special welcome.
- Remind your remote students that their involvement is invited and encouraged, including asking and answering questions. You may want to have remote students post questions in the chat or use the "raise hand" function in Zoom to indicate that they want to speak.
- Consider assigning (on a rotating basis) one of your in-person students to monitor the chat or "raised hands" in Zoom. You can check in with this student periodically to see if there are any questions from the remote group.
- When soliciting input from the class, consider alternating between in-person students and remote students.
- With social distancing measures, it may be difficult to hear questions or contributions from students in the back of large auditorium-style classrooms. Repeat contributions from students, so everyone can hear. Another solution is to invite these contributions over text chat in Zoom in the same manner as your remote students.
- Remember that if a student's webcam is disabled, that doesn't always mean they're not paying attention. Some students might be joining class from a home office with others in the background that they prefer not to share or have disabled their cameras to optimize limited bandwidth. Authentic participation is a better indication of engagement than having a webcam on. If you're concerned about a student's engagement, it might be better to discuss individually with them after class.
- At the end of class, acknowledge the remote students and confirm when they can exit the Zoom session. Before ending the remote session, check to see if any Zoom students want to stay after class to ask any questions (and, if so, turn off recording).

How do I encourage collaboration and teams among all the students in class?

Collaborative learning opportunities, or assignments where students work in groups toward a common goal, can lead to greater academic achievement and more positive attitudes toward learning (Terenzini, Cabrera, Colbeck, Parente, & Bjorklund, 2001; Springer, Stanne, & Donovan, 1999), and teaching creates unique challenges and opportunities for assigning group work.

- When creating assignment groups, consider the logistics of either grouping together students who are in the same in-class session, and students who are attending remotely.
- Students who are not in the same in-person sessions *can* work together, and this is a good way to promote a learning community among all the students in your class (and break down the barriers between the session groups). Students can use Blackboard or Google Docs to work asynchronously (not at the same time), or their own Zoom rooms to hold live meetings outside of (or even during) class time.
- During in-person sessions, you may need to set logistical guidelines for small group activities so students can avoid sharing electronic devices, books, pens, and other learning aids. Students may share work digitally or collaboratively take notes, for instance using collaborative tools to work on together (see Collaborative Tools in the Appendix).

How can I share board work or handwriting?

If you rely heavily on writing out work on the board while teaching (math or science problems, sentence diagramming, etc.) you may need to accommodate students working remotely.

- If your classroom is equipped with a document camera, you may be able to use that as the "webcam" instead of your normal camera. Your in-person students would see your handwriting on the projector screen, and your remote students would see your handwriting via screen-sharing in Zoom. This solution will likely be more effective for your remote students, with a higher quality image, but it is more difficult to set up. It's a good idea to test this setup before a class session that needs it.
- One option is to point the webcam at the board (instead of you). This is fairly easy, but you'll want to make sure that your remote students can see what you're writing on the board clearly.
- The third option is to use the whiteboard or annotation tools in Zoom (while projecting to your in-person students). This is generally less intuitive than using a physical whiteboard or document camera but might be a good option for some instructors.

How do I handle exams?

Managing tests and exams is more complex when some students are in-person and the others remote, but there are a few adjustments you can make to effectively assess your students' learning.

- Whenever possible, consider other ways of assessing students' learning. Authentic projects for written assignments such as research papers or position papers may be more effective at soliciting higher order thinking. [A full guide dedicated to this topic is available to review.](#)
- More frequent, lower-stakes assessment may give you a better indication of how your students are doing than fewer, high-stakes exams. This allows you to review concepts that students have struggled with before moving on. Open-book exams are also a good option, especially when students are asked to apply knowledge and synthesize concepts rather than recall facts.
- If you plan to give high-stakes closed-book exams in your class, consider using Blackboard to deliver them online outside of class time. To mitigate issues relating to academic dishonesty, you can incorporate virtual proctoring with [Respondus LockDown and Respondus Monitor](#) or use randomized questions from large question pools. Online exams also mitigate the use of paper and may help prevent the transmission of disease, since having multiple people handling paper exams may spread pathogens.
- If you prefer to give the exams in-person, consider what activities your remote groups will do offline as you give the exam to each session. You'll likely to consider different forms on the exams with similar questions, since your earlier session groups may discuss their experience with students taking it after them.
- Unless there is no other choice, it's not recommended to give exams to the remote and in-person groups at the same time; the in-person students may feel as though they are taking the exam at a disadvantage.

How do I manage student presentations?

Having individual students or groups present or peer-teach to the class can be an effective and meaningful way to have them engage with the course materials and learn from each other (Joughin, 2007).

- If you want to include peer presentations, consider assigning presentation dates based on when the students can present in-person.
- Have students share their slide decks before their presentation using a Blackboard assignment. In-person and remote students watching the presentation should also be encouraged to ask questions and share thoughts.

How can I manage my office hours?

Managing both in-class and remote students who want to stick around after class to ask clarifying questions is a little more complex.

- At the close of your class session, check in with the remote group to see if anyone wants to stay longer to ask questions or discuss topics with you. If so, remember to stop recording the session before chatting with the student.
- Another possible solution is to host "virtual" office hours in Zoom where any student can meet with you remotely outside of class time.
- Some faculty members may want to keep a set schedule for virtual office hours. An open meeting allows all students to join, which could lead to productive discussions about similar issues. Or, using a waiting room feature (like that in Zoom) will allow you to manage who you meet with at a given time.
- Other faculty members might prefer to schedule individual appointments with their students. Scheduling tools like Calendly, which integrates with Microsoft Outlook, are a good option for giving students opportunities to schedule meetings with you (note that Calendly's Zoom integration, a paid feature, is not supported at UM).

How do I accommodate students with disabilities?

Some students may require accommodations to tests or other aspects of their remote learning experience because of a documented disability, such as extended time on tests and quizzes.

- If you have any students who require accommodations in your course, you are encouraged to work with the Office of Disability Services (disabilityservices@miami.edu) in the Camner Center to ensure that they are engaging in equitable learning opportunities.
- Disability Services has issued specific guidance to University of Miami faculty members regarding the accommodation request process, the types of accommodations, and engaging in communicating with students regarding their accommodations.
- To share transcripts on recorded lectures, Zoom Cloud Recordings provide machine-generated audio transcripts, and live transcripts on a video or audio recording. Google Slides and PowerPoint presentations also have real-time captioning features you may use in a screencast or synchronous video lecture.
- As you prepare online content for students to engage with, guides like EDUCAUSE's ADA Compliance for Online Course Design, or CAST's Universal Design for Learning share principles and practices to ensure inclusive and equitable course design.
- Blackboard Ally is a feature in Blackboard that creates alternative and accessible files from the original documents in your course (e.g., readable text for screen readers, pictures with captions, and easy-to-navigate content). Contact the learningplatforms@miami.edu to enable Blackboard Ally in your course.

How do I (and my students) find additional support?

For additional guidance relating to teaching in-person classes, feel free to reach out to Learning Innovation and Faculty Engagement at academictechnologies@miami.edu. The team is ready to help you create an effective and engaging learning experience for your students.

For additional support, these teams are ready to help you or your students:

- The Learning Platforms Team (LPT) supports faculty with the use of Blackboard, and a variety of teaching-related technologies.
- University of Miami Information Technology (UMIT) faculty with the use of Zoom and any hardware that is used in the classroom to support teaching and learning.
- Student Technology Help Desk (STHD) supports student technology needs.
- The Camner Center for Academic Resources provides online tutoring support to students' academic achievement.
- The Writing Center provides online help to students working on papers for a course, theses and dissertations, personal statements, business letters and resumes, grant proposals, articles for publication, and personal writing projects.
- The Math Lab provides specialized online math tutoring to any student enrolled in an undergraduate math course.
- The Modern Languages Lab supports undergraduate students with online help for assignments and essay projects from courses in Spanish, French, Portuguese, Arabic, and Chinese.

References and Additional Resources

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Appendix: Technical Guides

This appendix includes some helpful technical guides to accompany the teaching advice provided in the previous sections. University of Miami faculty members have access to multiple video conferencing platforms that can be used in course. Zoom is the recommended tool for classroom use, which features screen sharing, chat, breakout rooms, annotation, file sharing, and more.

Zoom

University of Miami Information Technology continually updates resources on using Zoom on their service page. The following are highlighted resources for teaching using Zoom.

Getting Started

To activate your Zoom account, sign into zoom.miami.edu using your CaneID and password. You will also need to download the Zoom Desktop client onto your device by visiting zoom.us/download. For a comprehensive tutorial engage with the tip sheets below.

- Get Started with Zoom at the U
- Zoom Frequently Asked Questions
- Join a Zoom Meeting

Creating a Remote Class Session

You can schedule all upcoming classroom sessions within Blackboard. If you create a meeting with Zoom within the desktop app, you can also use Blackboard to post the link so that it is available for all students.

- Learn How to Use Zoom in Blackboard
- Learning Platforms Team: Zoom Playlist
    - Create a Zoom Meeting Link
    - Create Recurring Zoom Class Sessions

Recording a Session

Zoom allows you to record all sessions and download them either on a computer or through the cloud. You can also pre-record lectures for students to watch at their own pace. Recordings may take up to 24 hours to process. Although synchronous meetings in Zoom can be recorded for future reference, session recordings may constitute protected educational records per FERPA. For more information, refer to Virtual and Other Classroom Recording and Student Privacy (FERPA).

- Zoom Recording
    - Recording a Meeting Locally

○ [Recording a Meeting to the Cloud](#)
● [Automatically Transcribe Cloud Recordings](#)

In-Meeting Video Conferencing Guidance

Once you have launched your Zoom session, you can leverage various features to facilitate learning for your remote students. You may wish to also inform students how you will share information through Zoom.

● [Video Conferencing Tips and Suggestions for Faculty](#)
● [Resource Guide: Zoom Meetings](#)
● [Recommendations for Using Live Captioning in Zoom](#)
● [Student Tips for Participating in Zoom](#)

Screen File Share

During a class session, you can use Zoom to share content to your remote students. **Keep in mind that your other tabs, bookmarks, or applications not related to your presentation might serve as a distraction–or expose personal materials to students that you'd rather them not see.**

● [Zoom Screen Share](#)

Chat

You can use the chat function in Zoom to allow students to ask questions in real time during class. You can also download the chat and review unanswered questions at a later time or send them to students as notes.

● [Zoom Chat](#)

Polling

You can use the polling features to ask questions, start classroom discussion, assess student knowledge, or allow for anonymous feedback. You can also set up polls prior to class start time and also download them to see remote student's responses.

● [Zoom Polls](#)

With these polling tools, only the remote students will be able to respond. Other polling platforms, such as [PollEverywhere](#) or [iClicker/ReefPolling](#), will allow you to include both your remote students and your in-person students in the same poll.

Breakout Groups

Breakout groups can be used to foster student-student interaction through discussion, group projects, or review sessions. You can drop in at any point to monitor progress or provide guidance to each group.

- [Zoom Breakout Rooms](#)

Annotation/Whiteboard

Zoom has basic annotation tools (text box, free form draw, shapes, and highlighter) that you can use to guide students or explain a concept. Access these tools by selecting the Annotate option when you're sharing your screen. You can also use the Whiteboard feature to have faculty and students annotate on a blank page. This feature allows you to incorporate "boardwork" that in-person and remote students can see.

- [Zoom Annotation Tools](#)
- [Zoom Whiteboard](#)

Collaborative Tools

During classroom activities where students work in groups, students can use and work synchronously on online documents, presentations slides or whiteboards. The following highlighted tools are available to students to login and engage with using the CaneID and password.

Google Drive Guides
- [Google Drive](#) (Docs/Slides)
- [Google Docs](#)
- [Google Slides](#)
- [Google Jamboard](#)

Office for the Web
- [Office for the Web](#)
- [Word Online](#)
- [PowerPoint Online](#)
- [Microsoft Whiteboard](#)

Teaching in the General Purpose Classrooms

The Office of Classroom Management has shared two important resources for General Purpose Classrooms.
- [Getting Started in the Classroom](#) (Text Guide)
- [Getting Started in the Classroom](#) (Video Walkthrough)

Notes and License

This document is based on Allan Gyorke's 2006 *Faculty Guide to Teaching Through Videoconferencing* and its 2020 successor, *Preparing to Teach a Hybrid Course*.

Helpful Class Checklists When Working with Remote Students

Before Class
- ❏ Share materials (slides, handouts, etc.) on Blackboard so that remote students have access to them.
- ❏ Arrive to the classroom early (~15 minutes) to make sure the hardware and software is ready to go.
- ❏ Connect the camera and microphone you'll be using.
- ❏ Optimize the lighting and other room conditions for the Zoom session.
- ❏ Start the Zoom session at least 5 minutes before class. After the first few students connect, make sure they can see and hear you.

Starting Class
- ❏ Assign a student to monitor the Zoom window for "raised hands" or contributions/questions via chat.
- ❏ If you are recording the class session, remind all students that the session will be recording before starting to record.
- ❏ Acknowledge and welcome your students attending remotely.

During Class
- ❏ As needed, adjust the webcam to face the focal point of attention (you, the whiteboard, a demonstration, etc.).
- ❏ Periodically check in with the student assigned to monitor the Zoom to address any questions or contributions (or technical issues).
- ❏ Alternate between in-person students and remote students when soliciting input from the class.

Ending Class
- ❏ Remind the class of which assigned group will be in attendance in the next session.
- ❏ Refer students to any materials hosted in Blackboard in preparation for the next session.
- ❏ Acknowledge the remote students in closing the class and confirm when they can exit the Zoom session.
- ❏ Before ending the Zoom session, check to see if any Zoom students want to stay after class to ask any questions. If so, disable recording.