

# WHAT FACULTY LEARNED IN 2020 BY CTE OF BOSTON COLLEGE

[HTTP://CTERESOURCES.BC.EDU/DOCUMENTATION/WHAT-FACULTY-LEARNED-ABOUT-TEACHING-IN-A-PANDEMIC/WHAT-FACULTY-LEARNED-IN-2020-ORGANIZED-BY-MODALITY/#IN-PERSON-FULL-CLASS](http://cteresources.bc.edu/documentation/what-faculty-learned-about-teaching-in-a-pandemic/what-faculty-learned-in-2020-organized-by-modality/#in-person-full-class)

## ACROSS MODALITIES

### Simplicity

- **Focus on what's most essential:** Plan on covering only the most essential parts of the course so that you can build in regular check-ins, breaks or less-intensive weeks when everyone can regroup. For particular ideas about how to check in with your students, see the “[Connection](#)” section of this report.
- **Identify core technologies:** Decide on a few key technologies or features you want to use to support student learning in your courses and let go of the rest. This can minimize distractions and the stress of technological learning curves for you and your students.

### Flexibility

- **Open up assessments:** Provide options for how students demonstrate their learning (assign a variety of assignment types and/or give students choice over the medium they use to demonstrate their learning).
- **Be flexible with deadlines:** When possible, be accommodating on assignment deadlines.
- **Create a flexible assignment structure:** Provide a structure where students can have a certain number of drops for an assignment type or include a “grace period” for assignment submission. This can also help minimize the need to create make-up work if students have to miss class or an assignment because of illness.
- **Provide multiple pathways for office hours:** If possible, offer remote and in-person (outside) office hours.

- **Solicit feedback from students:** Check-in with students about how they are doing and how the class is going, and make adjustments, as necessary using exit tickets, the mid-semester feedback process, and other mechanisms.
- **Provide participation options:** Allow students multiple pathways to participate in the class session (discussion, chat, polls, Google Docs, etc.)
- **Anticipate glitches:** Be prepared for technical issues to come up and have a flexible plan in place for what you or students will do in the event that you lose a connection and drop off the call.

## Connection

- **Practice vulnerability:** Be vulnerable with students about learning the new medium and emphasize that you are all in this together. Ask students to be slightly vulnerable with each other at the start of the semester by kicking off a conversation where everyone shares an embarrassing story.
- **Openly value your own well-being:** You'll likely need to do less in order for you and your students to make it through the semester without burning out. Try to identify the places where you can pull back to make time for other important aspects of your lives. Talking openly with your students about what you're doing to care for yourself (i.e. "I won't be available for office hours at that time because I'll be out for a run.") can also help students recognize steps that they can take to care for themselves.
- **Meet with students at the beginning of the semester:** Offer "Meet the Professor" slots for 15 minutes at the beginning of the semester to meet as many students one-on-one or in small groups as you can, either in-person (outside) or on Zoom.
- **Project steadiness and hope:** As much as possible, serve as a steady, positive, hopeful presence to students.
- **Peer review:** Structure opportunities for students to regularly engage in peer review, preferably students who are working together in stable small groups over the course of the semester.
- **Simplify your feedback or grading load:** Use a check scale, grade things for completion rather than accuracy, create time in class when students can receive feedback (polls, group work in breakout rooms or Google Docs, etc.), avail of Speedgrader and automatic grading features in Canvas Quizzes.

- **Help students find what they need:** Create an “I Need . . .” Canvas course module that consists of pages that provide students with information about how to get help with the course or access resources at the university (e.g. “I need a rec letter” with information about what you need to write a strong recommendation letter, or “I need someone to talk to” with information about campus, local, and national mental health resources, etc.).

## Structure

- **Assign smaller assessments more often** (reading checks, Discussion Boards, Perusall annotations, journal entries, “exit tickets”) so that you have a better sense of students’ learning and students can receive brief feedback more frequently.
- **Create a stable schedule for students:** If students are doing more frequent small assignments, create a routine schedule with assignment types and due dates (e.g. Perusall comments due on Monday afternoon and Quiz due on Wednesday afternoon). This was mentioned in comments across modalities, but was most frequently raised in reference to Online Asynchronous courses.
- **Generously-graded Discussion Boards** can incentivize students to interact with one another and prime further discussion/engagement on a topic. Some instructors have asked students to highlight a quote that stood out to them and respond to it, others have asked students to raise questions they would like to discuss.
- **“Flip” the class**, or make content delivery happen outside of class (readings, recorded lectures, curated lecture notes) so you can spend class time processing the material and practicing skills (case studies, practice problems, discussion, etc.).
- **Assess during class time:** Have students work on and submit small assignments or learning checks during class time to reduce their labor and cognitive load (quizzes, practice problems, etc.).

## Communication

- **Share an agenda** before class periods.
- **Leverage Canvas:** Have as much information as possible live in Canvas (Quizzes, Discussion Boards, Assignments, Zoom links etc.) to help students

have a homebase in the course and use Modules to clearly organize the course schedule for students. Organize Modules chronologically and by topic (e.g. Week #: Topic Title).

- **Solicit anonymous feedback** from students to learn more about their experience (mid-semester feedback or “exit tickets”).

## IN-PERSON: FULL CLASS

### Simplicity

- **Substitute “engagement” for “participation”** in your grading structure to make sure students stay home if they are under the weather and to reduce the grading load. Grade small, asynchronous assignments on a  $\checkmark$ -,  $\checkmark$ ,  $\checkmark$ + scale and combine that with student self-assessments to tally the final “engagement” grade.
- **Have in-person students “host” remote students:** Assign a student who is in the classroom to “host” any isolating/quarantining students on Zoom and task that person with signing into Zoom, making sure classmates are brought into discussion by keeping an eye on the chat.
- **Have students take a more active role in class:** To provide you more time to focus on other areas and students a chance to synthesize material, invite students to take a more active role in class, like having them write exam questions and comment on one another’s, or have them generate the discussion questions for the class period.

### Flexibility

- **Invite remote students to participate on Zoom:** Some instructors invited quarantining students to participate remotely via Zoom to indicate their willingness to be flexible with students in a difficult situation. However, a number of other instructors found this method too distracting to justify, as you can see in the “Simplicity” section of this report. If you do want students to participate remotely via Zoom, you can learn more about technical solutions different faculty adopted in the “Technology” section of this report.
- **Plan for remote exams:** Assume exams and other major assessments will have to take place remotely for at least some students who need to isolate or quarantine.

- **Provide participation options:** Allow students multiple pathways to participate in the class session (discussion, polls, Google Docs, chat, etc.)

## Connection

- **Structure opportunities for sharing:** Create intentional opportunities for students to share with one another. For instance, one instructor in a Masters program asked students to share responses to the question “what’s behind your mask?” in a jamboard on the first day of class to acknowledge the literal and metaphorical context.
- **Regular check-ins:** Devote time to the beginning of every class to ask students how they are doing. Let that portion of class take time (10 mins.+ if needed)
- **Get students moving:** Send students out on socially distanced walks for a set period of time to discuss a text passage or discussion question.

## Communication

- **Talk about COVID classroom norms:** Because it’s more difficult to read students’ faces and students might find it more difficult to speak up, spend time talking with students about the importance of speaking up if they have any questions and come up with methods students can use to stop you and interject when they need to in the socially-distanced environment.

## Technology

- **Options for group work:**
  - *Google Docs:* Have students collaborate in Google Docs to replace group work.
  - *All on Zoom:* Have all students in the classroom bring headphones and get on Zoom to facilitate group work.
- **Options for discussion:**
  - *Start talking in Google Docs:* Have students answer a prompt in a Google Doc during the first few minutes of class (while you deal with administrative tasks) to prime the pump and get everyone participating.

- *Polls*: Use polls to get insight into student understanding without battling to hear students.
- *Meet remotely*: Meet remotely (over Zoom) for discussion-heavy and group-work-heavy class periods. Some instructors split their regular weekly schedule into classroom sessions and remote sessions (e.g. for a class meeting three times a week, lecture in person twice a week and host a Zoom discussion once a week).
- **Whiteboard alternatives:**
  - *Google docs for collaborative note-taking*: Have students take collaborative notes in a Google Doc to surface questions they have throughout the class period. Devote the last few minutes of class to going back through the notes and addressing any questions.
- **Pedagogical approaches for having absent students participate on Zoom** (while some instructors made this work, others found asynchronous and/or less labor-intensive solutions preferable, as is evident in the “Embrace simplicity” section):
  - *Have in-person students “host” remote students*: Assign a student who is in the classroom to “host” any students on Zoom and task that person with signing into Zoom and making sure classmates are brought into discussion by keeping an eye on the chat. In classes with alternating groups, students can be paired with a peer “buddy” from the other group. Each class period, all students get on Zoom and the in-person student is responsible for communicating with and raising
  - *Minimize Zoom participation*: Have students attend on Zoom and encourage them to ask questions if they have them, but mostly absolve them from robust participation, and allow them to engage more robustly when they are in person.
  - *Make Zoom participants the focus*: Put the focus on the students in Zoom, by engaging in conversation with them, with

in-person students chiming in, based on the observation that students who were on Zoom were more likely to disengage.

- **Technological strategies for having absent students participate on Zoom:**
  - *Split screen:* Project the online students on the classroom screen and project any other materials you might need to share (slides, website, etc.) through Zoom’s “split screen” option (works best with 4 x 3 slide ratio) or leave the thumbnail overlay of students in the far right part of your slides and plan for that space to be blank (works best with 16 x 9 slide ratio).
  - *Two devices:* Log into a Zoom account on your laptop and a second device. Point the second device at you. Plug an external camera (pointed at the students in the classroom) and microphone to the laptop so that online students can see and hear everyone in the classroom.
  - *Classroom audio system:* Hook the Zoom students into the classroom’s audio system and have all students on Zoom chat to respond to questions and engage with one another.
  - *All on Zoom:* Have students in the classroom bring headphones and have everyone get on Zoom to facilitate discussion and group work more naturally.
  - *Mute audio:* Ask students in the classroom to mute themselves on Zoom unless they are speaking to minimize feedback.

## IN-PERSON: ALTERNATING GROUPS

### Simplicity

- **Use consistent small groups** for different aspects of the course: communicating who should attend on which days, breakout room activities, final projects, etc.
- **Have in-person students “host” remote students:** Pair every student with a peer “buddy” from the other group. Each class period, in-person and remote students get on Zoom and the in-person student is responsible for communicating with and raising questions in the classroom from their remote counterpart.

- **Use the “flipscootch” method** or ask students to engage with content asynchronously and then cover that topic with each group of in-person students instead of bringing in students to participate via Zoom.
- **“Flipscootch” for longer seminars:** Split the class period in half and meet with in-person students for the first half and remote students for the second half to reduce the distraction for everyone.
- **Limit technology:** If students are participating via Zoom, keep the rest of the technology simple (Powerpoint, Google Docs, video) to minimize the number of things you have to keep track of during class and lower the risk of glitches for students.

## Flexibility

- **Make materials available online** (brief lecture recordings, class recordings, etc.) for students to review when they’re able to and as often as they need to.
- **Allow students to lead, on occasion:** Give students a chance to provide input on the focus of particular class sessions or activities.
- **Provide remote options:** If you are using a “flipscootch” model, discussing the same content in any given week with each group of students, make one of those sessions remote to accommodate quarantining students or students who are otherwise unable to attend.
- **Provide participation options:** Allow students multiple pathways to participate in the class session (discussion, chat, polls, Google Docs, etc.).

## Connection

- **Virtual introductions:** Have students post short introductions to Canvas before the class starts. These can be text or video contributions where students share an answer to one light personal question (favorite music, hobby, best book you’ve ever read, etc.)
- **Consistent small groups:** Have students in consistent small groups and have them asynchronously interact with those groups during the days when they are not in the classroom. Give them something to work on that requires real collaboration (like submitting a video solution to a case study) to help them bond.



- **Asynchronous interaction across groups:** Set up asynchronous assignments (discussion boards, Perusall annotations, etc.) where students can learn with their peers from the other group.

## Structure

- **Make recordings available at a predictable time:** Provide students with predictability by posting class recordings at around the same time. You can make Panopto recordings available by default in Canvas, meaning that any videos taken with Lecture Capture will automatically publish when they're ready and any videos you upload to your Panopto course folder (e.g. Zoom recordings) will automatically publish after you upload them.

## Communication

- **Clarify expectations for students who are participating via Zoom:** If remote students will be on Zoom in the class, be clear from the start about what they can expect from that experience in your class (how much they'll be participating and how they should do so, etc).
- **Talk about COVID classroom norms:** Because it's more difficult to read students' faces and students might find it more difficult to speak up, spend time talking with students about the importance of speaking up if they have any questions and come up with methods students can use to stop you and interject when they need to in the socially-distanced environment.

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## ONLINE SYNCHRONOUS

### Simplicity

- **Limit time on Zoom:** Whenever possible, keep synchronous sessions to an hour or under.
- **Leverage Zoom features:** Use the features already within Zoom — chat, polls, breakout rooms —to facilitate student participation without bringing in too many additional platforms.
- **Allow students to determine class content:** Put students in breakout rooms at the beginning of the session to summarize key points from the reading and come up with questions they would like to discuss with the group. Bring everyone back, and use those questions to guide the discussion.

- Plan for simple, asynchronous opportunities: Add in asynchronous weeks to the calendar when students review material.

## Flexibility

- **Provide participation options:** Allow students multiple pathways to participate in the class session (discussion, chat, polls, etc.)
- **Create adaptive guidelines for Zoom protocols:** Keep in mind the many different factors (low bandwidth, living situation that they have little control over, hours of Zoom calls) that might be informing how students show up to your class when writing Zoom protocols. You may want to encourage students to keep their cameras on to cultivate participation, but do so with a light touch.
- **Integrate asynchronous content:** Build in a few weeks of asynchronous content to give everyone a break from Zoom.

## Connection

- **Routine breakout room introductions:** Start each session by putting people into breakout rooms of 2-3 for a few minutes and ask them to introduce themselves, say hi and check in with each other so that students can meet new people and feel known in the class
- **Chat check-in:** At the beginning of class, ask everyone to type one word to describe their week into the chat. Then do a countdown and ask everyone to press “Enter” and send their message at the same time.
- **Image check-in:** Ask students to bring a picture to the class session that represents how they are feeling.
- **Contemplative practice:** If you have your own practice, some instructors have found students have really responded to grounding/mindfulness exercises.
- **Limit meeting size:** Split larger classes into more than one group and meet with each group once over the course of the week to cover the material for that week. This enables everyone to see each other on one Zoom screen.
- **Support socializing:** Create optional breakout rooms at the end of class sessions that students can join to socialize for a little bit

- **Reduce screensharing** so that everyone can see each other as much as possible.
- **Build short breaks** into class sessions to limit Zoom fatigue.
- **Embrace personal reflection and storytelling:** Invite students to reflect on the content of the course in their personal experiences and provide opportunities for students to share with one another through storytelling and discussion groups. One faculty member had students interview an older family member about what music meant to them when they were young and had a call session where students shared about the conversation.
- **Group projects:** Regularly use breakout rooms to enable students to collaborate on group projects during class time.

## Structure

- **Use breakout rooms intentionally:** provide students with clear instructions about what they should bring back to the whole group and have students make notes in Google Docs or Jamboards so you can keep track of their progress and intervene effectively. One instructor had students go into breakout rooms at the beginning of each class and populate a jamboard with key points from the reading and discussion questions they'd like to cover in class. The rest of the class period involved going back and forth between looking at Jamboard summaries and discussing student-generated questions in gallery view.
- **Create a regular rhythm** for class sessions (e.g. short Powerpoint presentation, class discussion, breakout rooms) to help students get into a routine and to minimize the effects of Zoom fatigue, especially during longer sessions.

## Communication

- **Clarify Zoom participation norms:** Talk with students about your expectations for participation in Zoom. (How will you all be using the chat? Do you expect everyone to be muted by default? What are your expectations for video use?) While some instructors found that encouraging students to have their videos on ended up being an important step for community building and participation, some also recognized the myriad reasons students

might have their videos off (joining from environments they don't have complete control over, significant Zoom fatigue, etc.)

- **If lecturing, intentionally create participatory moments:** Build in opportunities (polls, invitations to contribute in the chat) for students to ask questions or offer comments.
- **Prepare for technical glitches:** Invite students to interrupt you to let you know if something isn't being shared properly or if there's any other technical breakdown on your end.

## Technology

- **Options for student engagement:**
  - *Jamboard:* Use Jamboard for fun multi-media brainstorming activities.
  - *Guest speakers:* Without the need to travel, you may be able to bring in previously inaccessible guest speakers.
  - *Chat:* Start each session by asking students a question, giving them a minute to reflect, and then add their response to the chat. Use those comments to kickstart the conversation and use the chat at regular intervals throughout the session to solicit comments and questions.
  - *Polls:* Use polls to anonymously get some information from students and check their understanding as a way of breaking up a lecture or kicking off discussion.
  - *Self-selecting breakout rooms:* Allow students to self-select their own breakout rooms to encourage participation.
  - *Kahoot:* to gamify polls/quizzes
  - *Videos:* Stream videos during sessions to introduce content as a way of taking a break from slides. Note that some copyright-protected videos may not be shareable through zoom but linking through YouTube is possible, so make sure to test before doing this.
- **Whiteboard alternatives:**
  - *Google Doc:* Take notes in a Google Doc.

- *Whiteboard app*: Use a whiteboard app on a tablet that you also use to login to Zoom and screenshare.
  - *Physical whiteboard*: Get a physical whiteboard you can comfortably use on screen.
- **Options to improve Zoom user experience:**
  - *External mic*: Use an external mic to improve sound quality; test to make sure all your students can hear you.
  - *Ethernet*: Create a more stable internet connection by using an ethernet cable instead of wifi if you can.
  - *Two screens*: If you can, create a setup with two screens so that you can see students in gallery view while sharing slides or looking at other materials.

## ONLINE ASYNCHRONOUS

### Simplicity

- **Identify top priorities**: Be realistic about what you'll be able to sustain through the semester, and focus on those course components that will have the greatest impact.

### Flexibility

- **Offer optional Zoom sessions** where students can ask questions and work together.

### Connection

- **Build in breaks**, or weeks without due dates, when students can take a step back and regroup.
- **Group projects**: Have students work on group projects to get to know each other and engage in some synchronous discussions.

### Structure

- **Create interactive videos** with embedded Google Forms or quizzes to help keep students on track.

## Communication

- **Design a predictable course** and try to avoid relying on short notice announcements and quick updates.
- **Weekly recaps:** Use part of the weekly recap videos to remind students of upcoming deadlines.
- **Hold regular, small group check-ins** where you can see how students are faring and students can ask questions of you and each other.
- **Set expectations for responsiveness:** Set up systems so that students know how to reach out to you and that they can rely on you to respond to their queries.

## Technology

- **Annotate lecture videos:** Have students use Perusall to comment on video lectures for their “participation” grade.