

Recommendations and Pointers on Best Practices and Inclusive Remote Learning Environments

Students may need support as they join you in the remote learning environment. Below are some considerations for inclusive teaching. You'll be taking into account your students' cognitive load, helping them manage their technologies, and considering their diverse learning abilities and documented accommodation needs.

Remote Learning Pedagogy

- Offer multiple, diverse, and active ways to learn, engage, and contribute. Think about an appropriate balance of individual and collaborative tasks or written and oral tasks.
 - Think-pair-share model:
 - Allow individuals to reflect or think about what they have learned on a topic -> allow to share in a small group discussion -> expand to sharing in a large/whole group discussion.
 - Breakout Rooms: Be sure to communicate how much time groups will have, and how and where to report the results. Groups function more inclusively with more structure
 - Assigning specific roles and giving students a structured document for their work reduces the stress for all students. This short [video](#) demonstrates how to implement this technique on Zoom in breakout rooms.
 - Polls:
 - Use a quick Zoom poll to gauge understanding of the content.
 - For really quick questions — "Can you see my screen?" or "How are you feeling about the material so far?" — just ask everyone for a thumbs up or down in the Zoom reactions.
- Create opportunities for students to build rapport with each other and with you at the beginning and throughout the semester or term. Keep connection and community alive -- [here](#) are some tips.

Inclusive Excellence Teaching Strategies

- **Establishing an inclusive remote environment**
 - Allow students to introduce themselves and affirm pronouns to promote community.
 - Consider adding a discussion forum in the learning management system that allows students to do an informal introduction of themselves

- Establish community norms and provide opportunities for students to engage with each other inside and outside of class.
 - Be mindful to use language which is respectful to a diverse set of students (e.g., different mindsets, viewpoints, backgrounds, communities, etc.)
 - Provide an introduction/orientation video that introduces you, the course, learning systems, and provides students with what to expect in the class.
 - Consider getting to know your students through online surveys or needs assessments in order to better support students and provide equity-minded teaching
- **Curriculum, Teaching, and Assignments**
 - Develop a curriculum and text resources that draw from both historical and current work that is relevant and representative of diverse identities and perspectives
 - Allow students to bring their own identities into the classroom
 - Ensure that learning objectives drive your choices for content and delivery methods that also keep accessibility and potential bias in mind
 - Make sure success is clear and transparent. Ensure students know what to do, how and when to do it, and what it will take for them to be successful
 - Explicitly communicate the purpose, task, and evaluation criteria for each graded assignment
- **Provide resources and opportunities for asynchronous learning.**
 - Record each Zoom session in order to be inclusive – Alliant’s Zoom subscription allows recording to the cloud to create audio transcriptions.
 - (Another option for transcription: Upload your class sessions to YouTube and then post the link in a secure place on Moodle to protect students’ privacy.) Post the audio files, too, since video can be difficult to view for some students.
- **Ensure materials are accessible and mobile-friendly.**
 - All course materials including PowerPoints, online readings, scanned readings, handouts, websites etc. should be accessible for screen reader technology, and include the following:
 - descriptions of all images, graphs, diagrams, etc.
 - clear reading order
 - accessible data tables
 - clear heading structure
 - accessible, navigable links

- references to any supplemental materials (tactile graphics, accessible music files, etc.)

Typically, materials that are text documents (DOC, DOCX, RTF, TXT, etc.) can be accessed and edited easily via screen reading software. When creating any handouts in Word or PDF, please make sure you enter the descriptive text for images or graphics in the Alt Text box.

The [National Center on Disability and Access to Education](#) has a wonderful compendium of free and easy to understand one-page accessibility resources (“cheat sheets”) that have been developed to assist anyone who is creating accessible content, with a particular focus on faculty as the audience for the cheat sheets.

- **Facilitating Group Discussions and Navigating Difficult Conversations**

The diversity of our students, their experiences, and our collective interests create conditions where conflict and volatile conversations are always possible. Often it’s the role of faculty to lead students in exploring “hot button” items that can arouse intense opinions and feelings. Do not sweep moments of disagreement aside; this can lead to problems and create more harm than good.

- Prepare for difficult dialogues by establishing classroom expectations and guidelines early on in the semester. Encourage the use “I” statements (rather than “you” statements) when speaking on personal experience or perspective.
- Observe your own reactions. Try to distinguish between what you are experiencing, what is actually being said or done, and the various possible interpretations of what is happening. And allow yourself and the class to pause if needed.
- Understand the situation and/or detach ideas from the person by reiterating the statement as something to be analyzed
 - Ask for clarification: it’s possible someone may have misspoken or mistaken the meaning, help them articulate their point as a specific, verifiable claim
 - Open it up for class discussion
 - Demand careful listening & restatements
 - In case of a dog-pile (where students collectively turn on a particular student):
 - Allow the original commenter to clarify further, revise, or back off their point

- Help rehabilitate the point by teasing out relevant ideas or concerns, or use the bankrupt point as an opportunity to pivot to more meritorious criticism
- If the class freezes:
 - Ask penetrating questions to tease out relevant issues
 - Warm calling: Have students write their thoughts (or pause to think, or discuss as small groups, if you think they can handle that emotionally) and them to share
- Refer to class expectations & norms → If needed: Explain violations as violations; explain how these violations disallow intellectual inquiry and are thus inappropriate
- Refer to relevant positions from the readings, changing the class focus while helping them see the relevance of the course content to the preceding conflict
- If the topic is too big or hot to manage in the moment; suggest postponing until the next session to give everyone a chance to gather themselves. Just remember to come back to the topic. You can also suggest relevant homework (i.e. Each person should come in with one scholarly source on the subject)
- When necessary, talk with students outside of class about what happened. This may be especially important for the students who were most embroiled in the hot moment.
- Acknowledge the importance of the issue (or simply the importance of discussing it) and invite affected student(s) to office hours or to stay after class

General Considerations

- Consider the impact remote teaching and campus closures have on all students, and encourage other instructors, staff, and administrators to do the same to ensure support is available for all students.
 - Not all students have safe and welcoming homes to return to in times of crisis, and many students rely on campus resources for regular access to food, shelter, employment, and health care (including mental health care). These needs may be invisible, and students may be reluctant to disclose these needs to individual instructors.
- Be mindful of the ways in which a crisis can impact communities in different ways, and how students from different identity groups (race, ethnicity, age, religious affiliation, gender, sexual orientation) may have different responses to a situation. Moreover, consider that some

communities may become targets of bias incidents, discrimination, and even hate crimes during times of crisis.

- Reflect on how your own response to the situation is impacting you, your approach to teaching, your interactions with students, and what steps you can take to best support your students.
- It's ok not to aim for perfection. Allow flexibility in course planning, be transparent with students, and expect that mistakes and hiccups will happen! As you support your students, remember to seek support and assistance from your fellow instructors, department and university administrators, university support staff, as well as friends and family when you need it.

[The Alliant International Community has created Yammer Sites to share best practices and Alliant specific FAQ's for remote learning.](#)

a. Zoom

Talk https://www.yammer.com/alliant.edu/#/threads/inGroup?type=in_group&feedId=20720861184&view=all

b. Moodle Talk

https://www.yammer.com/alliant.edu/#/threads/inGroup?type=in_group&feedId=30607400960&view=all

c. Canvas Talk

https://www.yammer.com/alliant.edu/#/threads/inGroup?type=in_group&feedId=30607335424&view=all