VLC Academic Continuity -Tips

In cases where classes are postponed due to sudden campus closures, an emergency, weather, illness, utility or infrastructure, the VLC offers the tools and support for academic continuity.

Faculty unable to meet in person with their class for single or multiple sessions can utilize tutorials found in [VLC Training On Demand](#). Create a VLC training login, then click on On Demand, select a recorded webinar, tutorial, or document to learn how to provide instruction online.

Preparation Checklist
Colleges should provide a course shell in the learning management system for every course regardless of the delivery of instruction. This habit will assist each instructor in planning ahead for possible disruptions, as well as allowing a supplement for ongoing instruction. Doing so will make your transition easier in case of unexpected disruption.

Engagement Strategies

Colleges and learning management systems provide several ways to communicate with students. Review your options and pick one or two that will work best for you and your course.

- Collaborate
- Moodle Chat and/or Forums
- Moodle Announcements
- Bb Learn Announcements
- Microsoft Teams (Skype)
- Aviso
- College Email

Getting Help

The VLC Team is here to help you take your course online to support your student learning in an emergency.

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Preparation Checklist

Your online LMS supplemental course shell provides you the flexibility to organize and supplement your instruction 24/7 while maintaining academic instruction and learning continuity. Resources and activities can easily be added to your course and made available to students at your leisure.

Key Tips:

- Your course shell is available 24/7 to you and your students. You can begin adding content at any time.
- Next, keep your plan simple.
- Finally, work with the technologies you know best.
  - Your LMS supports a variety of tools you may be familiar with (adding documents/PowerPoints, URLs, videos, assignments, quizzes, forums, gradebook, and even a live virtual classroom).
  - If any of these are new to you, Contact the VLC to set up an online training session.

Course Communication

When transitioning from face-to-face classroom to online, communication with students is of the utmost importance prior to and during the transition. Students can easily become disengaged feeling lost or overwhelmed without such communication to help keep them aware of what is going on, what needs to be done, and by when.

1. It is wise to reach out to students using a variety of messaging options.
   - Within the LMS:
     a) Course Announcements display in your course and automatically sends an email directly to a student's college email account.
     b) Forums, Chat, Collaborate or other web-conferencing can be used as a means of communication.
   - Web Attendance Class Roster provides you with a student's phone and other student contact information.
   - Aviso provides you with student roster, contact information and alert options.
2. Distribute your contact information to your class.
3. Clarify your turnaround time for communication.
   - 24 hours? Preference for email, phone call, text?
4. Manage your communication load.

- *Some faculty create a Frequently Asked Questions page or a Course Q&A discussion forum to centralize inquiries.*
5. Use Collaborate (a live virtual classroom) Moodle Chat or other tools to host virtual office hours.

Course Materials

1. Share your syllabus with students in digital format (PDF or Word)
2. Convert paper-based materials to digital format (ex: Word, PDF or PowerPoint)
   - This helps to keep content mobile-friendly in case students only have access to portable devices.
   - Your course is available 24/7 to you and your students. You are encouraged to upload content as supplements.
3. Provide enough content in your course shell so students could work independently for a short period – if needed.
4. Identify and prepare at least one week of content
   - Record lectures or offer a live virtual class using Collaborate (Collaborate allows you to record your lecture and track participation/attendance).
   - Prepare PowerPoints for digital distribution.
   - Develop study guides.
   - Consider using supplemental resources (URLs, Videos, or Open Educational Resources) to help further explain your content.
5. Consider having your students complete 1-2 online activities to become familiar with this delivery format.
   - Many face-to-face instructors use quizzes to reinforce student reading.
   - Others have students submit their work through Moodle to secure a digital record of submitted assignments and to make grading easier.
6. Consider using activity completion, and/or restricted access, to create self-guided course content for students. This can help students stay on task and avoid skipping important content you deem vital to their learning.
7. Prepare synchronous and/or asynchronous engagement opportunities to support instruction.
   - Open Forum supports text-based discussions.
   - Collaborate is a live virtual classroom supporting video and audio synchronous meetings with the ability to present slides, your screen, interactive whiteboard, polls, chat, and breakout sessions for groups. All sessions can be recorded.
   - Microsoft Teams (Skype) can also be used for virtual class meetings.

Engagement Strategies

Planning your communication strategy:

- Use all communication channels – email, voicemail and Moodle announcements.
- **Maximize your reach!** Be prepared to use at least two types of asynchronous and synchronous tools to maximize your options for communicating with students:
    - Asynchronous: Moodle (Announcements, Discussion Forums) as well as college email
    - Asynchronous: Bb Learn (Announcements, Discussion Forums) as well as college email
    - Synchronous: Collaborate, Chat, Microsoft Teams

Engaging students:

- Discussion forums can support course participation when class cannot meet. Assign specific prompts to guide student responses and require students to respond to peers for further engagement.
- Use Moodle *Workshops* or *SafeAssign* to create opportunities for peer review feedback when students cannot meet in person to respond.
- Collaborate is another good resource to use to meet with students in virtual, real-time sessions.

Online Activity Tips

LMSs support several gradable options (see italicized terms):

- *Quiz* can be standardized, set to display random questions and answers, timed, and set to a specific number of attempts.
    - Accommodations can easily be made to allow specific students extended time.
- *Assignment* is a virtual dropbox for students to submit essays, homework, labs, etc. It accepts most file types and can also be limited to specific file types.
    - Use of rubrics for grading is supported.
- *Open Forum* is a place where you and students can interact with each other on a common or open-ended topic.

Flexibility is important

- Consider how you can leverage technology to offer assessments online.
- Academic continuity may require adjusting deadlines for one, some, many or all students on your course.

- Remember: Students may struggle with time management or their own emotional responses to the current situation.

Preparing to use Moodle for assessment:

- If you give paper exams, consider posting a low-stakes quiz in Moodle to give you and your students some practice using the online quiz tools.
- If you assign papers or other written work in your class, post a practice assignment to provide you and your students with an opportunity to use this tool.
- Some third-party tools may also link to the LMS gradebook (e.g., Cengage). If you are using these products, make sure to first consult your LMS administrator to confirm these are setup in your course shell.
- *SafeAssign* may be used on assignments to determine the originality of student work.

Grading online:

- The built-in *Grader* allows you to provide written feedback.
- A *Rubric* for assignments can easily help you apply consistent grading.

Best Practices:

- Cultivating presence with online learning tools is important. Communicate early and often to maintain presence when classroom continuity is disrupted.
- Focus on course outcomes: Prioritize coursework that helps your students move toward achieving those outcomes.
- Rearrange schedules and convert classroom activities to asynchronous activities that promote the same learning outcomes.

Remember accessibility:

- Whenever possible, create videos in 5 to 15-minute recordings and request captions from college distance learning team.
- Check the accessibility of your course materials with Ally. Use the quick fix tools to remediate your content and let students know about the alternative file formats.
- Set test time accommodations for individual students.