


Professor Jean Morrison, University Provost and Chief Academic Officer

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TO: Boston University Faculty and Staff
FROM: Jean Morrison, University Provost and Chief Academic Officer 
DATE: March 19, 2020
SUBJECT: Current Guidelines for Course Completion this Semester

As you know, in response to the growing spread of COVID-19, starting this week we moved from in-person classes to remote teaching. President Brown [announced](#) Tuesday that BU will not resume in-person classes this semester. While we made this decision to ensure the health and safety of the BU community, it is critical that the academic life of the University continue, even in this period of uncertainty. **Most importantly, we must ensure that all students – undergraduate and graduate – can complete the spring 2020 semester earning academic credit for the classes in which they are enrolled.**

Many have raised questions about whether any changes will be made to our normal grading policies to mitigate the profound disruption of this semester. This is an important University-level decision with real consequences, and we want to ensure that we appropriately engage faculty, Deans, and the Faculty Council in the decision-making process. This discussion is actively underway and we will communicate any changes to the community as soon as possible.

In order to provide ongoing support throughout this semester, our [Remote Teaching Readiness Plan](#) designates Remote Teaching Coordinators (RTCs) in each of the schools and colleges. These individuals are available to provide support and guidance to faculty as needed. The [Office of Digital Learning & Innovation](#) and the [Center for Teaching & Learning](#) are also key partners in this venture and can provide help thinking through pedagogical and assessment questions raised by this new mode of instruction. Faculty are also encouraged to explore the many resources available on the [Remote Teaching website](#).

As you think through how to transition the entirety of your semester's course content and assessments into remote teaching, we offer the following general principles and guidelines with an eye towards the completion of the semester:

I. Course Management

- Because students normally take between two and five courses per semester, **it is critical that faculty be available to their students synchronously (via Zoom) during their regularly scheduled class hours.** We recommend that faculty use their synchronous

class time to deliver a version of what they would normally do in their classrooms. As faculty gain more experience with remote teaching, they may record and post some of their "lecture-style" materials as videos that students can watch asynchronously. In those cases, the expectation of synchronous class meetings during regularly scheduled class hours remains, but faculty can re-purpose those meetings for discussions, Q&A, and other active learning techniques.

- While it is our preference to conduct synchronous classes throughout the semester as a way of maintaining structure and normalcy for students, some students may be unable to attend courses over the next few days as they move back home from campus residences. During this timeframe, we should be mindful of the strain students are under and be appropriately flexible and understanding.
- Some courses include essential components that would be impossible to mirror online (e.g., hands-on labs or live performances). In these cases, we urge faculty to think creatively about how elements of these activities might be adapted to online settings. If this turns out to be impossible, faculty should develop alternative activities. If these new activities require modification of the course's original learning goals, that would be acceptable under these unusual circumstances. The Center for Teaching & Learning is available to partner in considering meaningful alternative activities.
- Clear and regular communication will be critical to mitigating the disruption to students. Faculty should inform students as soon as possible of any updates to the original course plan. Any revision to the syllabus or changes to modes of assessment should be made clear to students as soon as is practical.
- Many students have accommodations for documented disabilities; [Disability & Access Services](#) can provide resources to help address potential issues that could occur in a remote synchronous format.
- Faculty should make every effort to post their PowerPoint slides, notes, or other material on Blackboard. If you are having difficulties doing this, seek assistance from your RTC. Faculty should communicate with students about what has been posted and where it is available.
- Some students will not be able or willing to return to campus and therefore may not have access to their books and course materials. It is acceptable for faculty and staff to scan print materials, such as book chapters, for posting to Blackboard during this extraordinary time. Faculty are also encouraged to [contact the Libraries](#) to see if they have electronic resources available.
- Faculty should be flexible in accepting late assignments and giving makeup exams, since many students may encounter health and other challenges in the face of the coronavirus outbreak.
- Student participation and engagement may be different in a remote teaching environment than in a face-to-face classroom. For example, in a Zoom meeting some students may not

speak due to the mode of communication and/or the technology they are using to connect. We encourage you to be aware of differences in participation and engagement and to provide multiple opportunities for students to participate in the course. This may include using the Chat function in Zoom to ask questions or make comments, or using the Blackboard discussion forums as a means to facilitate asynchronous engagement.

- Faculty should consider providing online office hours via Zoom, Blackboard, or email.
- Please work closely with teaching fellows and assistants to ensure they understand their responsibilities and how to use technology to meet them. Teaching fellows and assistants should not be asked to return to campus to facilitate course components. Faculty should think creatively about how to adjust the roles of teaching fellows and assistants in their courses. For teaching fellows who lead discussion sections, discussion sections should be held remotely where possible, following the established course schedule.

II. Exams and Culminating Experiences

- Faculty may delay their midterm exams in order to consider what format of assessment now makes sense. Both the CTL and Remote Teaching Coordinators are excellent resources for considering how and when to administer midterm or final exams. The CTL provides context for thinking about assessment in different forms and the RTCs and IS&T can assist in supporting the technological challenges that arise.
- Online exam proctoring services are now available through [Examity](#). Examity requires the use of Blackboard online exams. Due to both the cost of the service and the effort required for adoption, please use this service only if required to meet accreditation or other critical requirements and after receiving written approval from your Remote Teaching Coordinator or another designee of your dean.
- Faculty teaching classes with culminating experiences other than papers or exams should consider whether these are still possible. Alterations in the culminating experience, especially where these involve group activities, presentations, or performances may need to be considered. Further, such experiences may simply need to be removed from the course, and students evaluated based on the remainder of their course work.
- Doctoral students must be allowed to defend their dissertation. Zoom can easily be used for the committee portion of dissertation defenses. For fields that normally hold public seminars as part of the dissertation defense, it may be possible to arrange such seminars virtually. However, if it is not possible to do so, the student should be permitted to make their presentation virtually to their dissertation committee alone.

*III. Grading Under Current Policies**

*[*Note: These guidelines may be superseded if the University adopts a special grading policy for Spring 2020]*

- It may be necessary to give special consideration to students whose class performance may have been affected by COVID-19 issues. **Before assigning a non-passing grade to**

a student, please work with the student to ensure they have the opportunity to complete the course.

- WebGrade will continue to be the method of submission for course grades.
- Be aware that moving to remote instruction may affect the amount of the original course content that a class may be able to get through.
- We expect that most students will rise to the current challenge. However, students should be made aware that the usual academic policies dealing with integrity and academic misconduct still apply.
- Use of the Incomplete (I) grade should only be used for **individual** students in accordance with the [Incomplete Coursework Policy](#) and not as a mechanism to ensure that all original course material is covered by the class. As referenced above, moving to remote instruction may require flexibility around syllabi, including eliminating some content.
- If circumstances beyond a student's control prevent the student from completing the course, we ask that faculty provide maximum understanding under the current situation. An alternative to an Incomplete grade, which may be difficult for students to resolve in a timely way, is assessment based upon the work submitted.
- As it is unclear how the COVID-19 outbreak will progress, we must be prepared for circumstances in which grading is based on the assessment of a percentage of the planned coursework. Adjustments to the number of assignments, as well as the nature and timing of assessment, can assist in the successful completion of the semester. Our goal is to make sure that the student's academic work is fairly recognized and that this disruption does not disadvantage their academic or professional progress.

IV. Student Attendance

- If students anticipate missing classes due to illness or travel challenges, they should contact faculty directly via email or Blackboard.
- Faculty should be understanding if students have to miss class due to illness, and adjust attendance policies accordingly.
- Students should not be required to provide official medical verification in order to miss or delay submission of take-home assignments without penalty.
- Where illness interferes with a student's ability to complete all assignments, we expect that faculty will reweight completed assignments and calculate a student's final grade based on this reweighting.

V. Resources and Support

- Regularly check the [Center for Teaching & Learning](#) website as the Center will continue to develop resource materials related to remote synchronous instruction and asynchronous activities.
- [IS&T Working and Teaching Remotely](#)
- [Digital Learning & Innovation](#)

We will provide updates to these plans over the coming weeks and as necessary as the situation continues to evolve.

Thank you for working to move the semester successfully forward to completion in what is undoubtedly a less-than-ideal situation. We understand that adapting to a wholly new modality of teaching in the middle of the semester is a very challenging task, but we appreciate your willingness to do what is necessary to ensure that our students can finish the semester with the appropriate learning outcomes and academic credits.