

Quick Guide: Moving In-Progress Courses Online

It's important to have a contingency, or emergency, plan in place to enable you to continue teaching in the event that you are unable to teach your classes in person or the University ceases normal operations for any length of time. You have a variety of tools and resources at your disposal, which enable you to continue teaching by moving online. Having a viable online alternative enables your students to continue working on their course activities if and when physical class meetings are modified or cancelled.

What happens when the University is closed?

Automated alerts and notifications are generated via text message, phone, and/or email in the event that campus is closed. You and your students can sign-up to receive notifications on the status of campus operations by opting into SLU's Emergency Notification System: [\[LINK\]](#). Communicate to your students the importance of receiving these alerts to prevent misunderstandings and delays in course activities.

What resources are available to me?

Teaching during times of disruption creates uncertainty and unique challenges. The Reinert Center has various online resource guides [\[LINK\]](#) you can access and use for online teaching. You can also schedule a consultation [\[LINK\]](#) with Reinert Center staff to learn more about the pedagogical uses of online tools, and the Introduction to Online Teaching seminar [\[LINK\]](#) may be helpful to you as you are thinking about design features, facilitation, and delivery. In addition, you can request a template that can be copied into an existing course shell as a starting point, especially if you have never taught or experienced an online course in Blackboard.

What tools can I use in the event that the University is closed?

Blackboard:

Every course has a Blackboard shell that is automatically populated each semester. Rather than waiting for an emergency, consider taking time now to post basic documents, such as your syllabus or course schedule, if these are not currently posted on Blackboard. In addition, map out and post all required course materials, learning activities, and assessments students will need to access and complete in the event that campus is closed.

Blackboard has many tools that you can utilize, including:

- **Syllabus tool:** You can use this to share or create a link to the printable copy of your syllabus.
- **Announcements tool:** Use this tool to easily communicate written or recorded messages to your entire class via their SLU email accounts. Announcements might provide instructions, updates, and other important information students need to continue working on course activities, and you can send these via email by clicking on the "Send a copy of this announcement immediately" option before submitting. You may want to set the announcement tool as your homepage so students can read important messages or updates as they enter your course.

- **Assignment tool:** Use this tool to assign and collect student assignments, including Word documents, PDFs, PowerPoint presentations, or multimedia files. Grades and comments are automatically populated in the Gradebook for you and your students to view.
- **Test tool:** Use this tool to administer exams or quizzes. You have the option of randomizing the order of questions, timing attempts, and setting different point values and question formats (e.g., multiple-choice, true/false, short answer, fill in the blank). Scores for true/false, multiple-choice, and fill-in-the-blank formats are automatically populated in the Gradebook, while you can manually input grades and comments for short-answer or essay formats.
- **Discussion board tool:** You can use this tool to foster class discussion on topics, assign collaborative activities, promote student interaction, and allow students to share work or ask questions. Multiple discussion boards can be created with different point values, and posts are timestamped and synced with the gradebook.
- **Learning modules:** You can use this tool to organize and structure the learning experience much like you do in your on-ground, face-to-face class. This tool creates a “learning path” for students rather than just dumping files or assignments in a folder or on your homepage.

If you are unfamiliar with these tools, we recommend that you call ITS 314-977-4000 or visit the Blackboard Learn [\[LINK\]](#) website to ease this transition. You might even try running a class discussion board or creating an assignment now so you and your students know how these tools work. We also recommend taking time to make sure your students can log into your course and walk them through key course features, even if you will only be using it in case of an emergency.

Skype, Zoom, or Google+ Hangouts:

Web-conferencing tools, such as Skype, Zoom, or Google Hangouts are popular options for holding live, real-time classes with students through voice, video, chat, and/or screen sharing. In addition to “holding” class virtually, you can use these tools to conduct office hours or break students into groups for collaborative work. A key point to consider here is that students may need to create personal accounts and they likely will not have access to University technical support in the event they experience interface problems or forget their username and/or password.

Panopto:

Delivering live lectures or holding synchronous exchanges may not be an ideal method for you to use, especially if you or your students are personally impacted by an emergency or do not have access to fast, reliable Wi-Fi. You can record lectures and other content in Panopto for students to view later at their own pace. Panopto offers multiple presentation (webcam, screencast) and editing options, and includes quiz, chat, and discussion features to make video content interactive for students. Please view our Getting Started with Panopto guide [\[LINK\]](#) as a starting reference.

What strategies can I use if I’m not able to teach in my regular face-to-face setting?

Consider your options when facilitating online classes:

You can facilitate your classes in two main ways. Teaching your course “synchronously” means that you and your students are meeting at the same time to conduct class or work on course learning activities

together. Asking students to use Zoom or another web-conferencing tool to view a live lecture or using a live chat tool to discuss course content are both examples of synchronous teaching options. This format requires set time commitments and works best for small classes marked by extensive discussions. Our Getting Started with Zoom Meeting [\[LINK\]](#) guide lays out technical requirements, and you might find Zoom's Breakout Rooms [\[LINK\]](#) functionality useful when facilitating real-time interactions.

Facilitating your course asynchronously, on the other hand, means that you are creating content in advance and students view that content at a later point. Asking students to respond to question prompts in written discussion boards, work through a series of learning activities in a module, or watch a pre-recorded Panopto video are all examples of asynchronous teaching options. This format works best for larger classes, when not all of your students are able to meet at the same time, and/or if you want students to have more time to engage with and reflect on course material individually.

The choice between these two formats is up to you. Consider the advantages and disadvantages associated with each format, and be willing to switch tactics if something is not working. You may also want to consider infusing elements of each format to engage your students and foster interactions in different ways.

Communication:

Having open and consistent lines of communication with your students is key in the event of an emergency or unplanned disruption. Devote plenty of class time now to convey your expectations on how students should proceed with the understanding that they will likely not know how to access files or assignments, participate in learning activities, complete assessments, or access graded feedback in Blackboard. In other words, you may find the need to teach Blackboard itself to your students. You should also be consistent in the channels of communication you use and reach out to students who you notice are absent or aloof. In addition, students must know your preferences for communication (phone, text, social media) when they have questions or concerns. Drafting a communication policy that specifies how quickly you will respond to these inquiries can offset student uncertainty and hold you accountable when you are facilitating your course in an alternative online format.

Modify your learning activities and assessments:

Moving your face-to-face course(s) online is not a seamless process that occurs overnight. Students might not know where to access information, and you may not be able to teach exactly the same way. Focus on your learning outcomes and possibly reimagine in the ways in which students can meet these in an online learning environment. The goal here is to make sure your students are still able to meet the same learning outcomes you have for your face-to-face course even if they are working in an online format. The only difference they may encounter is the tools they are using and the types of interactions they are accustomed to in physical classroom environments. Be flexible and accommodating when you modify your course content. If you scheduled student presentations for your on-ground course in Week 15, consider adjusting your instructions by allowing students to record video presentations on their webcam or submit a final PowerPoint presentation that has narrated audio. Having visible due dates, posted instructions, and all course materials in place will further ease this transition for your students.

Use tools that you and your students are able to quickly learn and use successfully:

Panopto, as the University's supported lecture capture and recording software, has many practical and applied applications for both faculty and students alike; however, you and your students may find it difficult to use this tool if this is the first time you are downloading and opening the tool itself. We recommend using tools with simple features that everyone can interact with successfully. The tool itself does not necessarily matter; how you use the tool to promote learning activities and to enable your students to achieve desired learning outcomes is what matters most.