

Resource Guide

Preparing Analog Alternatives for a Digital Disruption in Distance Learning.

With memories of the emergency pivot to online instruction during the Covid-19 pandemic looming large, it is natural to think that maintaining academic continuity goes in one direction: **from in-person to online distance formats**. That might work well enough for certain disruptions. However, distance instruction requires a functioning electric power grid, secure internet access, and stability of the Learning Management System (LMS) in which the course is conducted. If any of these large-scale systems are disrupted, distance teaching and learning can come to a standstill.

Consequently, we must consider a pivot going the other way: **from digital to something more akin to analog, or at least less digital**. There will be limits on what is feasible depending on the magnitude, scope, and duration of the disruption, and maintaining academic continuity might not even be the highest priority in an emergency. Guidance from university administrators will be important in all emergencies but especially during extreme situations. **This resource guide considers some steps that individual instructors can take in situations when some level of academic continuity can be maintained.**

Routine Preparations for Possible Systemic Disruption.

We never know when an emergency will happen, but there are a few things instructors can do **before** an emergency and **routinely**, as part of their usual teaching practices, to maintain a moderate level of preparedness **at all times**. These suggestions aim to have information readily accessible and in some sort of “backup,” so the instructor does not need to re-invent the course at a moment’s notice during an emergency. Here are some actions to consider:

- **Have multiple ways to contact students:** If some form of communication is functioning during the disruption, instructors will need contact information for students in their course:
 - **Course Roster:** Download and print a copy of the Course Roster from Banner or Canvas so that you have student names and emails to contact them individually.
 - **Course Listserv:** Know the [Course Listserv email](#) address to send one email to the entire course.
 - **Other options:** Some instructors may have other ways of communicating with students, such as phone, shared websites, etc.
- **Make a “In Case of Emergency” Page in Canvas:** Include a **downloadable document** with information and basic instructions explaining backup plans in case of disruption. Advise students to **download and print** this document during the first week of the course so they always have access to it.

- **Maintain Course Files and Documents in Alternate Formats:** Having a backup of course materials in case Canvas access is unavailable ensures that you can distribute materials to students via email or a shared site outside of Canvas. Keep all major course materials (files, assignment sheets, slides, recorded lectures, etc.) somewhere handy should you need them.
- **Plan for Alternate Formats of e-Textbooks:** If the course uses an e-book or other digital materials from a publisher, develop alternative formats. This might include formats such as a scanned file of the e-book (or the ability to scan pages or sections if needed), downloaded digital versions that can be used offline, a paper copy on reserve in the library, or a secure, bookmarked e-book version accessed through the library.
- **Export Course Gradebook in Canvas:** Periodically throughout the course, [export a copy of the Course Gradebook](#). Consider incorporating this practice after you've graded every major course assignment and after submitting midterm grades. Perhaps even take screenshots of the grades or consider a paper gradebook as additional backups.

DURING the Disruption.

Despite preparation, the magnitude, scope, and duration of the disruption will dictate much of what can and cannot be done and what other options are available to maintain instructional continuity. Remember that events may be fluid, and not every student in your distance course may be impacted the same way. Flexibility is key; due dates, assignments, and content may need adjustments for some or all students. Communicating (in whatever means possible) frequently with students is essential to maintain a sense of community and calming anxiety. Sharing course materials via email (or whatever means possible) might be necessary to maintain continuity.

It's impossible to prepare for everything that the future holds but putting as many practices as you can into place **early and routinely** will mitigate confusion and stress for everyone during disruptive times. If the above suggestions aren't feasible for your course, think about what might work for your course, your students, and yourself.

Resources:

For more information on Instructional Continuity, please visit the Reinert Center's Resources "[Distance Teaching and Instructional Continuity](#)" and the Office of the Provost's "[University Guidance for Instructional Continuity](#)."

For more information or to discuss how you might incorporate these ideas into your courses, contact the Reinert Center by [email](#) or submit a [consultation request form](#).