

# Continuity of Instruction: During a Catastrophic Event

*A report of recommendations for faculty in the event that it becomes necessary for student learning to continue while implementing social distancing and without the availability of face-to-face classrooms.*



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April 12, 2007

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## **Recommendations for Continuity of Instruction**

### **Summary**

A pandemic or other catastrophic event may result in the official suspension of all activities including face-to-face classes on the East Carolina campus. The following two sets of recommendations are offered as guidelines to encourage the continuation of instruction within East Carolina University (ECU). The first set of recommendations assumes faculty and students will have Internet and/or computer access and presents a *Just-In-Time* scenario, Scenario 1. The second set of recommendations assumes that access to the Internet and/or a computer will not be available and presents a *Just-In-Case* scenario, Scenario 2.

ECU's Information Technology and Computing Services (ITCS) plans to maintain service of the technology needed for continuity of instruction during a pandemic or catastrophic event. As long as communication and technology remain intact for the duration of a pandemic or catastrophic event, it is anticipated that courses being taught online via Blackboard will not be greatly affected during the event. This document contains suggestions and is intended as a guide for college, school and/or unit pandemic or catastrophic event planning.

The following are the capsulated recommendations provided within this document.

1. ECU colleges/schools and units should develop an agreed upon action plan addressing the continuation of student learning during a pandemic or catastrophic event to minimize student confusion, communicate expectations, and facilitate continued instruction.
2. At the unit level - Development and addition of a *pandemic/catastrophic-readiness* statement to each individual course syllabus and development of modifications to the syllabus reflecting revisions necessary for continuity.
3. Faculty should be prepared to utilize Blackboard by reviewing and becoming comfortable with the Blackboard platform.
4. At the course level - Preparation and distribution of a timeline of learning activity expectations before or immediately upon declaration of a pandemic or catastrophic event.
5. At the unit level - Designate lead instructors to oversee multiple sections of a course and promote team-teaching methods to address faculty overload situations.
6. Supported by the college/school - Address Checklist and Discussion Points at the unit level.

## **Introduction**

Continuity of instruction is important to both the university and its constituents because it assures a means by which the university can continue to meet its primary obligation of providing a rich and engaging undergraduate and graduate education to ECU students. Plans allowing for the continuation of instruction under pandemic or catastrophic event conditions serve two primary purposes. First, such plans assist students in continuing to seek timely matriculation and graduation which in turn, minimizes financial and family burdens throughout the event for stakeholders. Secondly, pandemic or catastrophic event planning helps to stabilize the university community and its surrounding neighbors during a crisis by removing or minimizing confusion for a portion of stakeholders' daily activities.

In order to prepare for continuity of instruction during a pandemic or other catastrophic event, this committee strongly suggests that each ECU college/school and unit develop a plan addressing the continuation of student learning. Plans should anticipate the use of alternate methods for delivery of course materials, for student-faculty communication and include the actions and timeline necessary to carry out such a plan. A plan should be detailed and could include creation of a separate syllabus and corresponding online course materials to be utilized in the event that classes cannot meet for a period of 4-8 weeks, as required by the pandemic or catastrophic event.

It is important to note that some faculty and students will be able to participate and others may be affected by circumstances that prohibit their participation. This committee also realizes that all courses are unique and some may require specific set-up or challenges for implementation during a pandemic or catastrophic event, such as labs or clinical components. The suggestions within this document are meant to be general in nature and provide topics for discussion in addressing of these issues.

## **Pandemic/Catastrophic Readiness**

We suggest that faculty develop and add a *pandemic/catastrophic-readiness* statement within each syllabus. This statement should instruct students to be proactive by determining if they would have computer and Internet access if relocation is imminent during or after event conditions. Students would hopefully then be prepared to participate at the level appropriate for their situation. In addition, students with Internet access should be instructed to monitor the ECU homepage for emergency information and updates. The remainder of this document can be used as a template or guide for discussion in developing a continuity of instruction plan.

It is the responsibility of the unit to determine guidelines concerning the minimum content delivered for each course by each individual instructor during the declared pandemic or catastrophic event time-frame.

Pandemic/catastrophic readiness should strive to encompass the highest values and standards in learning while providing students with an alternative learning situation.

**Example: *Pandemic/Catastrophic Readiness Statement***

“In the event that this course is no longer able to meet face-to-face, students should (first go to section XX in this syllabus and complete the alternative assignment) and/or (immediately log onto Blackboard and read the announcement.) and/or (etc.). . . .”

<p><b>Questions to Consider before Creating a Plan for your Course.</b></p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1. Determine if your students will have Internet access in the event of a pandemic or catastrophic event.</li><li>2. What will your teaching objectives be for this time period (material covered, explore new topics)?</li><li>3. How will you communicate with students?</li><li>4. What will you communicate to students (course work, updates, questions)?</li><li>5. How will you develop and/or make your content available (unit assignments, homework)?</li><li>6. How will you assess your students during this time period?</li><li>7. Does your current textbook have online resources or a course cartridge that might be utilized during this time?</li><li>8. Will social distancing affect access to software, for example, lab-based software that is only available on campus?</li><li>9. How will you distribute your Plan?</li></ol> <p><i>Take a minute at the beginning of the semester to discuss what would happen if the class is not able to meet for several weeks.</i></p>
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## **Pandemic/Catastrophic Plan in Action**

*Note: In the event of a pandemic or other catastrophic event, we cannot make the assumption that all students or faculty will have Internet or computer access. Based on this assumption, we provide the following suggestions to augment the university continuity plan.*

Begin planning by reviewing the learning outcomes you wish to achieve in the event of pandemic or catastrophic conditions. Review the Checklist provided in the Appendices of this document and have open discussions with colleagues utilizing the Discussion Points. These two items should foster and encourage open collaboration among faculty members before and during the declared event.

The plan should address two distinctly different scenarios: the scenario in which Internet and computer access will be available to most students, and the scenario in which students that will not have Internet access and/or access to a computer. Be sure to include any communication updates (how—when--where) and any announcements which are important to your students. For example, let them know how often they can expect to hear from you and how often you expect to hear from them.

A pandemic or catastrophic event timeline for continuation of course instruction should be distributed *before or immediately* upon university system declaration of a pandemic or catastrophic event. The timeline should contain all expectations and requirements for course communication, content delivery, assessment along with the dates associated with these expectations.

### **Scenario 1: Just-In-Time Planning - Students with Internet and Computer Access**

During a pandemic or catastrophic event, and after all face-to-face instruction has been suspended, communication will be expected to take place through Blackboard tools, Centra, PirateMail, telephone, text messaging, instant messaging, etc. We recommend that faculty become familiar with Blackboard prior to a pandemic or catastrophic event in order to reduce frustrations and confusion. Blackboard is East Carolina University's universal course management system and is available to all faculty members and all students. Centra is a web conferencing learning program that provides a virtual classroom using live and recorded sessions.

Beginning with the Fall 2007 semester, Blackboard will automatically generate a course shell for every ECU course offering, including face-to-face, blended, and distance education sections. Each course shell will be populated with students enrolled in the course. The instructor can activate this shell and make it available to students at any time. This committee strongly recommends the use of this platform in event that face-to-face classes are temporarily suspended. Social distancing may impact students' access to course related materials or software.

**Communication Options for Those with Internet and/or Computer Access**

<p><b>Possible Types of Communication Available</b></p>	<p>Blackboard Tools: <a href="#">email</a>, <a href="#">message tool</a>, <a href="#">announcements</a>, <a href="#">chat</a>, <a href="#">threaded discussion</a>, and <a href="#">groups area</a></p> <p>Centra</p> <p>Email: PirateMail, Blackboard Email, OneStop, and external email programs</p> <p>Instant Messaging</p> <p>Phone</p> <p>Snail Mail (Student addresses available in OneStop via the Course Roster.)</p> <p>Text Messaging</p>
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**Just-In-Time Options for Content Delivery**

*Possible methods for delivering face-to-face content online using Blackboard:*

Topics	Face-to-Face Delivery	Platform Delivery
<p><b>Course Content/Information</b></p>	<p>Microsoft PowerPoint Files</p> <p>Microsoft Word Files</p> <p>Paper Course Handouts</p>	<p><a href="#">Upload files into Blackboard</a>. Consider organizing this information into folders in the Course Documents area.</p> <p>In addition to uploading pre-existing content, you can also add content using the whitebox area in Blackboard. See <a href="#">video</a> and <a href="#">text tutorials</a>.</p> <p>Add audio to PowerPoint files (put lectures in short modules for minimum file size and maximum delivery).</p> <p>Deliver lectures using <a href="#">Centra</a>. <a href="#">See Centra Resources</a>.</p>

<b>Topics</b>	<b>Face-to-Face Delivery</b>	<b>Platform Delivery</b>
<b>Text Book Reading/Assignments</b>	Text material covered	<p>Before the semester begins, check to see if your current textbook offers online resources or a Blackboard course cartridge. See the <a href="#">text tutorial</a>.</p> <p>Make sure the syllabus is specific about which readings should be done at which time and how this material relates to assessments.</p>
<b>Group Assignments</b>	<p>Group projects</p> <p>Small group assignments</p>	<p>Utilize the Blackboard Group Area that offers group: pages, discussion board, chat, and file exchange. See <a href="#">video</a> and <a href="#">text tutorials</a>.</p> <p>Utilize Centra for group meetings. <a href="#">See Centra Resources</a>.</p>
<b>Individual Assignments</b>	<p>In class assignments</p> <p>Projects</p>	<p>Store assignment information in the Assignments area.</p> <p>Students can submit assignments using the Digital Drop Box. See <a href="#">video and text tutorials</a>.</p>
<b>Exams or Quizzes</b>	In class	<p>Alternate assignments scored.</p> <p>Exams given online with emailed passwords and/or time limits on taking. Consider giving mastery tests that can be retaken until a specific score is reached.</p>
<b>Course Announcements</b>	Timely verbal announcements or course updates given during a face-to-face course	Post course updates in the Announcement area in Blackboard. See <a href="#">video and text tutorials</a> .

<b>Topics</b>	<b>Face-to-Face Delivery</b>	<b>Platform Delivery</b>
<b>Course Lectures*</b>	Face-to-face Lectures  PowerPoint Presentations	Blackboard Chat. <a href="#">Text and Video Tutorial.</a>  <a href="#">Centra.</a> <a href="#">See Centra Resources.</a>  Threaded discussion. <a href="#">Text tutorial.</a>  Add audio to PowerPoint (put lectures in short modules for minimum file size).
<b>Syllabus</b>	Hard copy distributed in class.	<a href="#">Upload</a> a copy of your syllabus in Blackboard. This makes it always available to your students.
<b>Student Questions</b>	Verbal responses to Questions asked during class or office hours.	<a href="#">Utilize Email</a> , <a href="#">Threaded Discussion</a> and <a href="#">chat to answer questions.</a>

*\*Note: When creating or converting course materials to online formats, it is crucial to consider file size. The addition of particular graphics may cause PowerPoint Presentations to exceed online limitations and slow down the student access.*

### **Just-in-Time Sample Assignments**

Consider creating additional assignments that could be added to a course syllabus or as stand-alone assignment(s) available during a pandemic or other catastrophic event which temporarily suspends face-to-face classes. Consider how you could provide these items to students in both Scenario 1 and Scenario 2.

### **Assignment Examples for Consideration**

- A. Prepare an Individual and/or Group Assignment which might work for a short period such as:
1. Post a subject content link (in syllabus, Blackboard, text message, etc.). Have students prepare a paper assignment tying information to course content and personal experience. (Students could submit assignments via Blackboard or email.)
  2. Post an extension of the subject content link and prepare (or have students prepare) a 10 question (online or paper) quiz or have buddy discussions through text messaging, discussion groups, or IM.

### Assignment Examples for Consideration Continued

3. Post discussion questions (2) in the Blackboard Discussion Board or Text Message to facilitate online discussion. Groups might note time of discussion and 1-2 line overview of discussion for assessment of assignment.
4. Assign end-of-chapter materials for group project, individual question and answer session, or buddy discussion. Students can then post in PPT version with notes for peers to assess, or write up overview of discussions. Use end-of-Chapter assignments for chapters not covered in regular class period.
5. Provide an "Alternative" assignment in your syllabus to be used only in the event that face-to-face classes are suspended, including rubric for assessment. Example for this assignment - Assign Buddies at the beginning of the semester. Then have buddies post one content driven discussion question and be the moderator of the discussion.

### Scenario 2: Just-In-Case Planning - Faculty and Students without Internet or Computer Access

In the event that a pandemic or catastrophic event is declared, students may be required to leave the campus and temporarily relocate to an area which will not afford access to a computer or the Internet. Under these circumstances a great deal of pre-planning must go into syllabi and materials development. A syllabus with complete instructions for work completion at remote and inaccessible locations will need to be prepared within a detailed study/work plan. Note that in these circumstances a single Just-In-Case syllabus for multiple sections of a course might be appropriate. This event could cause a communication gap between instructors and students while face-to-face classes are suspended. These students will still need an explanation of your expectations and their responsibilities. It is important that a "just in case" course content outline/syllabus, and a timeline be available that students can either download or print, and take with them. Assignments from the current textbook which students can complete and submit when face-to-face classes resume are also an option. As with Scenario 1, social distancing may affect students' access to course related materials or software and will prohibit the use of any type of face-to-face meetings.

### Communication Options for Those without Internet and/or Computer Access

<b>Possible Types of Communication Available</b>	Phone  Snail Mail (Student addresses available in OneStop via the Course Roster.)  Text Messaging
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**Just-In-Case Options for Content Delivery**

*Possible methods for delivery of face-to-face content without Internet or computer Access.*

<b>Topics</b>	<b>Face-to-Face Delivery</b>	<b>Manual Delivery</b>
<b>Course Content/ Information</b>	Microsoft PowerPoint Files  Microsoft Word Files  Paper Course Handouts	Students could download or print content available in advance. (Just in Case)  Paper through Snail-mail
<b>Text Book Reading/ Assignments</b>	Text material covered	Prepare and place in Syllabus for later use. (Just in Case)
<b>Group Assignments</b>	Group projects  Small group assignments	Prepare and place in Syllabus for later use. (Just in Case)  Textbook readings
<b>Individual Assignments</b>	In class assignments  Projects	Prepare and place in Syllabus for later use. (Just in Case)  Textbook readings
<b>Exams or Quizzes</b>	In class	Alternate assignments scored  Mastery test taken when students return
<b>Course Announcements</b>	Timely verbal announcements or course updates given during a face-to-face course	Phone Tree

<b>Topics</b>	<b>Face-to-Face Delivery</b>	<b>Manual Delivery</b>
<b>Course Lectures</b>	Face-to-face Lectures  PowerPoint Presentations	Paper copies provided ahead of time or substitute a particular chapter in the textbook.  Electronic copies of course lectures and/or notes available for print or download.  CDs with all course materials including lectures available for purchase with text.
<b>Syllabus</b>	Hard copy distributed in class.	Alternate hard copy distributed in class.
<b>Student Questions</b>	Verbal responses to Questions asked during class or office hours.	Peer Phone Tree, (Ask 3 then me)  Faculty Phone (Assign groups and one student as communicator to ask questions.)

### **Just-In-Case Sample Assignments**

Consider creating additional assignments which could be added to course materials and made available during any pandemic or other catastrophic event which temporarily suspends face-to-face classes. Consider how you could provide these items to students in both Scenario 1 and Scenario 2.

### **Assignment Examples for Consideration**

Prepare an Individual and/or Group Assignment which might work for a short period:

1. Provide subject content (in syllabus, course packet, text message, etc.) for students to review and self reflect upon in a paper Students could mail assignment(s) in.

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2. Post subject content link and prepare a 10 question quiz or have buddies discuss using text messaging or phone. Due to social distancing any type of face-to-face meeting will be highly discouraged.
3. Post discussion questions (2-4) in syllabus to facilitate discussion. Have students discuss through phone or text-messaging. Groups might note time of discussion and 1-2 line overview of discussion for assessment of assignment.
4. Assign end-of-chapter materials for group project, individual question and answer session, or buddy discussion. Students can then report for peers to assess, or discuss and write up overview of discussions. Use end-of-Chapter assignments for chapters not covered in regular class period.
5. Provide an "Alternative" assignment in your syllabus to be used only in the event that face-to-face classes are suspended, including rubric for assessment. Example for this assignment - Assign Buddies at the beginning of the semester. Provide a current article for students to read and discuss with their buddy.

### **Items for Consideration at the University, College/School, and/or Unit Level**

Develop and recommend guidelines noting a minimum course standard in relationship to course content and aligned with assessment and accreditation for the unit be provided by each faculty member for each of their designated courses.

Develop and recommend a university standard for delivery that would designate the amount of course content which must be available online in the event of a declaration of pandemic or catastrophic conditions.

Upon recommendation of the unit head, course extensions and incompletes will be discouraged.

Upon recommendation of the unit head, courses consisting of both face-to-face and DE delivery format should consider merging into the DE format upon declaration of an event.

The unit head should take appropriate action in supporting the continuity of the learning process for students.

Involve Pitt Community College as a possible partner concerning the sharing of resources during a pandemic or catastrophic event.

Have a UNC System Bank of Lectures and courses that are on line from across the system. So if ECU closed for four weeks due to a hurricane or pandemic, then an instructor could go online and construct lectures and quizzes from a bank of modules that are available online for use at the system bank.

Course Substitution: For example, substituting AS/NTR/PO 413 at North Carolina State University for NUTR 3105 here at ECU. (Note that this would require an emergency agreement between universities, but it would appear that within (and perhaps outside) the university there could be such agreements.)

### **Items for Consideration at the Unit Level**

#### **Designate Lead Instructors**

Faculty members teaching sections of the same course could meet and prepare modules of course content in order to provide students with continuation of learning opportunities and lessen faculty loads during a pandemic and catastrophic event. Each module could equate to ½-1 face-to-face lecture or content materials. This might mean approximately 10 prepared modules. Preparation tasks could be shared allowing for instructor outages during the event. Classes could then immediately switch to the prepared platform (Blackboard) site. Depending on the software selected to create the modules, the content

could also be copied to a CD in order that the CD be mailed to those students without Internet access but having access to a computer. This would require a list of students and student addresses to be readily available at all times, unit support, and faculty participation.

### **Encourage Faculty Platform Training**

This committee strongly suggests that all faculty members be encouraged to become familiar with the current learning platform through formal training in order to continue to provide students with the highest quality of education and meet program standards during a pandemic or catastrophic event. This would require direct unit support, mandates from units, and faculty participation.

### **Team-Teaching**

It is also suggested that some form of team-teaching be investigated and staged in order to curtail faculty overload during the declaration of an event. This would require direct unit support and faculty participation.

### **Planning Resources**

The following list of tools and resources are provided in order to promote thought and provide options during pandemic and catastrophic event planning.

Blackboard Training: Blackboard face-to-face and online training opportunities

Blackboard Tools:

*Chat* - Synchronous communication (live communication)

*Threaded Discussion* - Asynchronous communication (happens at all hours of the day and students and faculty don't have to be present for it to take place)

*Blackboard Group* - Area in Blackboard in which small sets of students can interact on group projects. Each group would have the use of Chat, Threaded Discussion, File Exchange Area and Email.

*Email* - A system for sending and receiving messages electronically over a computer network, as between personal computers.

*Messages* - Internal "email" within each Blackboard class. Although the messages sent are not email they are and look just like an email.

Blackboard Course Cartridge: an electronic version of a textbook that can be uploaded into your course.

Centra Training Workshops

Continuity of Instruction Planning Workshops

### References

Wake Forest Professor Rick Matthews

<http://www.wfu.edu/~matthews/courses/p230/hw/pandemic.html>

Colleges and Universities Pandemic Influenza Planning Checklist

<http://www.pandemicflu.gov/plan/collegeschecklist.html>

DE Contingency Plan

<http://www.ecu.edu/cs-acad/learningplatforms/contingency.cfm>

Blackboard Tutorials

<http://ecu.supportcenteronline.com/ics/support/default.asp?deptID=557>

### GLOSSARY

**Catastrophic Event:** Area situation causing declaration of emergency. May require social distancing.

**Centra** is a web conferencing learning program that provides a virtual classroom using live and recorded sessions. Centra provides voice, video, and graphics in a structured online learning environment replicating a traditional classroom.

**Emergency Information** will be available at the ECU homepage <http://www.ecu.edu>.

**Instant Messaging** - real time communication between two or more people based on typed text. The text is conveyed via computers connected over a network such as the Internet. Commonly used IM software include: AIM, MSN Messenger, and ICQ.

**Pandemic Flu:** Global outbreak of human flu which can spread easily and quickly from person to person and from city to city.

**Snail Mail:** Postal mail

**Social Distancing:** Limiting contact and activities with others to slow down the spread of a flu pandemic.

## **Appendices**


### Discussion Points

For Units – The following can be used to promote dialogue concerning the learning process and pandemic or catastrophic event situations. Faculty should be encouraged to discuss the following points with peers in a small group setting in addition to any other ideas which may arise as an extension of the discussion.

- What would you do if you were unable to have your class meet face-to-face for extended period of time beginning tomorrow?
- How would your face-to-face syllabus change if you had to suddenly begin teaching at a distance?
- If servers and communication went down for a long period of time, how would you communicate with students?
- How could the content materials of your current course be changed to reflect the conditions (Scenario 1 or Scenario 2)?
- Is your course currently being taught online by anyone?
- What are your department and program standards for consistent, high quality course instruction?
- How could a course provide value and meet program standards during a pandemic or catastrophic event?
- How would it be possible for students who anticipate graduating at the end of the semester to meet program standards during a pandemic or catastrophic event?
- What would an outline for Just-in-Time or Just-in-Case course materials look like? What would be included? What would be excluded?
- What materials are essential for optimal Just-in-Time and Just-in-Case learning?
- Reinventing the wheel* is time-consuming and difficult. How can you provide the minimum requirements without *reinventing the wheel*?
- When should you share your Just-in-Time and Just-in-Case materials with students?

### Faculty Checklist

The following is provided in order to facilitate and focus attention on preparation for a catastrophic event.

	Item Description
	Answer the Questions to Consider
	Attend a Continuity of Instruction Session
	Attend Blackboard Training Sessions
	Test Communication Tools
	Select Communication Tools to Implement
	Develop a Continuity of Instruction Outline
	Revise Syllabus – Continuity Syllabus
	Continuity Syllabus Readily Available to Students
	Ensure Just-In-Time and Just-In-Case Content Readily Available
	Ensure Just-In-Time and Just-In-Case Assignments Readily Available