

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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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, and other Internet based technologies, by reviewing and becoming comfortable with the platforms and online tools suggested in this document.
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 2-4 weeks, or 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 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 via an alternative learning situation, without compromising quality of instruction.

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>Questions to Consider before Creating a Plan for your Course</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Determine if your students will have Internet access in the event of a pandemic or catastrophic event.2. What will your teaching objectives be for this time period (material covered, explore new topics)?3. How will you communicate with students?4. What will you communicate to students (course work, updates, questions)?5. How will you develop and/or make your content available (unit assignments, homework)?6. Do you have course content readily available in a distance education section in Blackboard that you could copy into a Blackboard course shell for a face-to-face section of the same course?7. How will you assess your students during this time period?8. Does your current textbook have online resources or a course cartridge that might be utilized during this time?9. Will social distancing affect access to software, for example, lab-based software that is only available on campus?10. How will you distribute your Plan? <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. Start by reviewing 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 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, and 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, if all face-to-face instruction has been suspended, or the student absentee rate is high, 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 and other Internet based technology tools 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.

Currently, a Blackboard course shell is automatically generated 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

1. Blackboard Tools:

[Email](#) [Message Tool](#) [Announcements](#)
[Chat \(Collaboration\)](#) [Threaded Discussion](#) [Groups](#)

**Consider creating a Q&A Discussion Forum in Blackboard where students can post their questions instead of emailing you. You may also want to allow students to answer other student questions – this will help manage student questions and encourage student interaction.

2. Centra: is a web conferencing learning program that provides a virtual classroom using live and recorded sessions. Centra enables faculty and students to attend class "live" from anywhere they have access to an Internet connection.

Visit the Centra Resource Center at <http://www.ecu.edu/centra/>

3. Email: PirateMail, [Blackboard Email](#), External email programs

4. Instant Messaging

5. Phone/Text Messaging

6. Facebook <http://www.facebook.com/>

7. Twitter <http://twitter.com/>

Just-In-Time Options for Content Delivery

Possible methods for delivering content using Blackboard and other Internet Tools:

Topics	Platform Delivery
Course Content/Information <i>Paper Course Handout</i>	<p>Add content to Blackboard. If you have existing course handouts, then you just need to upload them to your Blackboard course. See the Adding Content to Blackboard tutorial for steps to add an item or text inside Blackboard.</p>
Course Lectures <i>Live or recorded PowerPoint files Handouts</i>	<p>Upload Lecture Notes to Blackboard</p> <p>Narrate PowerPoint files. You can use the Record Narration option in PowerPoint or Camtasia to add audio to your PowerPoint Presentations. See the Camtasia Studio 7 Tutorials: http://www.techsmith.com/tutorial-camtasia-current.html</p> <p>Record screencast lectures using Camtasia. You can record and narrate the on screen activity on your computer and share it with your students. See the Camtasia Studio 7 Tutorials: http://www.techsmith.com/tutorial-camtasia-current.html</p> <p>Deliver lectures with Centra. Using Centra you can present PowerPoint presentations, course material and application share. Students can login and participate live or watch recorded sessions. See Centra Resources.</p> <p>Practice Drill: try recording a face-to-face lecture this semester using Centra or Camtasia, then save the file for use as needed.</p>

Collaboration & Group Assignments	Utilize the Blackboard Group Area that offers group features: pages, discussion board, chat, and file exchange. See video and text tutorials . Utilize Centra for group meetings. See Centra Resources.
Individual Assignments	Store assignment information in the Assignments area: video
Exams or Quizzes	Alternate assignments scored. 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.
Course Announcements	Post course updates in the Announcement area in Blackboard and send an email copy. See video and text tutorials
Syllabus	Upload a copy of your syllabus in Blackboard. This makes it always available to your students.
Student Questions & Office Hours	*Utilize Threaded Discussion , * Email , * Chat , and Centra to answer student questions.

* Click links and scroll through Course Tools to locate appropriate topic.

**Note: When creating or converting course materials to online formats, it is crucial to consider file size. The addition of particular graphics and video files 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.
3. Post discussion questions 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 PowerPoint format 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, or students become ill, some 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

Possible Types of Communication Available
1. Text Messaging 2. Phone

Just-In-Case Options for Content Delivery

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

Topics	Manual Delivery
<p>Course Content/ Information</p> <p><i>Paper Course Handouts</i></p>	<p>Students could download or print content available in advance. (Just in Case)</p>
<p>Course Lectures</p> <p><i>Live or Recorded PowerPoint files Handouts</i></p>	<p><i>Students could download recorded presentations.</i></p> <p>Narrate PowerPoint files. You can use the Record Narration option in PowerPoint or Camtasia to add audio to your PowerPoint Presentations. See the Camtasia Studio 7 Tutorials: http://www.techsmith.com/tutorial-camtasia-current.html</p> <p>Record screencast lectures using Camtasia. You can record and narrate the on screen activity on your computer and share it with your students. See the Camtasia Studio 7 Tutorials: http://www.techsmith.com/tutorial-camtasia-current.html</p> <p>Practice Drill: try recording a face-to-face lecture this semester using Centra or Camtasia, then save the file for use as needed. Paper copies provided ahead of time or substitute a particular chapter in the textbook.</p> <p>Electronic copies of course lectures and/or notes available for print or download.</p> <p>CDs with all course materials including lectures available for purchase with text.</p>
<p>Text Book Reading/ Assignments</p>	<p>Prepare and place in Syllabus for later use. (Just in Case)</p>
<p>Individual Assignments</p> <p><i>In class assignments & Projects</i></p>	<p>Prepare and place in Syllabus for later use. (Just in Case)</p>
<p>Exams or Quizzes</p>	<p>Alternate assignments scored</p> <p>Mastery test taken when students return</p>
<p>Course Announcements</p>	<p>Phone Tree</p>

Syllabus	Alternate hard copy distributed in class.
Student Questions	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.
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.

Faculty that are teaching face-to-face and distance education sections of the same course or courses that contain some similar content, can copy content from an existing distance education course into the face-to-face section.

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 online 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.

Practice Drills

Encourage faculty to record a face-to-face lecture this semester using Centra or Camtasia, then save the file for use as needed. This item would require direct unit support for Centra and Camtasia use, as well as file storage for Camtasia files.

Team-Teaching/"Pandemic Partners"

It is also suggested that some form of team-teaching or "Pandemic Partners" be investigated and staged in order to curtail faculty overload and prepare for the possibility of faculty illness 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 are offered throughout the semester.
- Log into the ITCS Online Help Desk to request a copy of Camtasia <https://ithelp.ecu.edu/Default.asp>. Training is offered each semester.
- Visit the [Centra Resource Center](#). Training is offered throughout the semester.
- Visit the [Teaching through H1N1](#) site for information and updates, as well as interviews with faculty.
 - Interview with [Tim Kelley](#)
 - Interview with [Mark Weitzel](#)

References

Wake Forest Professor Rick Matthews

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

DE Contingency Plan

<http://www.ecu.edu/cs-acad/eai/upload/DE-Contingency-Plan2011-2012-2.pdf>

Blackboard Tutorials

<http://ondemand.blackboard.com/r9/index.htm>

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>.

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

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 an 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? If so, can you obtain a copy of the course content for use during an event?
- 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 are 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
	Try a Practice Drill – record a face-to-face lecture this semester using Centra or Camtasia, then save the file for use as needed.
	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