

Guidelines for Single-Incident Disruptions of Classes Due to Campus Closure February 2020

Realizing that instructional disruptions due to campus closures across the whole or the majority of campus are increasingly becoming the “new normal” for the UC Berkeley community, the Berkeley Division of the Academic Senate’s Committee on Courses of Instruction (COCI) urges instructors to be as prepared as possible for such campus closures ahead of time. Building safeguards into your syllabi, such as by including classroom activities that can be easily converted into graded assignments, pre-recording some lectures, or including a statement that explains how you plan to proceed in the event of a campus closure, can help provide the kind of flexibility that will be needed. Instructors should also be cognizant of two related matters ahead of a campus closure: First, as the instructional leader in your classroom (in physical and virtual spaces) students and instructional support staff will be looking to you to be the authority on how the course will proceed as a campus closure is contemplated or enacted. The Center for Teaching and Learning (<https://teaching.berkeley.edu/home>) provides various toolkits and in-person consultations on how to shape your syllabi to be responsive to campus closures. Second, the specific nature of a campus closure will largely determine the extent to which you and your students will be able to engage with instructional activities during the closure, or to make up for lost instructional time afterwards. The timing within the semester of a closure will also affect the ease or difficulty of adapting and adjusting the syllabus; instructors should also prepare for the possibility of multiple one-day closures across a semester. Recognizing that in some cases the impact of campus closures may be too great for the semester to resume under normal conditions, we encourage instructors and their departments to work with students as best as possible to meet educational goals, while remaining attentive to students’ general well-being. Depending on the nature and extent of a campus closure, it may not be reasonable to expect that all planned materials will be covered, or that students will be able to produce the same quality of work as in an uninterrupted semester. Instructors are encouraged to collaborate with their students in each class to develop a revised instructional plan, and to be transparent about expectations once regular instruction resumes.

SPECIFIC GUIDELINES FOR CAMPUS CLOSURES

ONE-TIME EVENTS LASTING ONE DAY OR LESS

- Missed material can be covered at an accelerated pace in remaining course sessions.
- Missed material can be canceled from the syllabus.
- Virtual meetings for lectures and seminars may be held, as appropriate, using a Zoom Pro account, which can accommodate up to 300 simultaneous participants. We encourage faculty to record the virtual meeting and post it to bCourses for the benefit of students who may not be able to participate in the virtual session.
- In the event that missed material or activities cannot be accelerated or canceled from the syllabus, missed material may be rescheduled to be covered during RRR week. Instructors should be aware, however, that the loss of days for review and exam preparation may create additional pressure for students, and COCI advises that alternative means of working around campus closures without “annexing” days of RRR week be devised wherever possible. In any event, faculty are encouraged to exercise their best judgment in making such adaptations to their course syllabi, and to communicate any changes to students and student instructors as quickly as possible.
- Where a lab or discussion section occurring only once per week is impacted, and where no other means of adjusting the course schedule is deemed feasible, the remaining sessions may each be postponed by a week, and the final session rescheduled for the corresponding day of RRR week. If there are several lab sections per week (e.g., the same Chemistry lab on M, W, and F), and only one

is missed, options include canceling the lab as part of the course evaluation, canceling it for the affected students (and possibly pro-rating their overall course grade), doubling a later lab that week to allow affected students to attend, and attempting to schedule a weekend session.

- Assignments due on a disrupted day can still be due if submitted electronically (through bCourses or to individual instructors) or postponed to the next day or class session. Instructors should be mindful that, depending on the nature of the campus closure, some or all students may not be able to engage with the course at the same level as they would be able to during regular instruction.
- Where feasible, classroom activities or discussion topics may be converted into homework assignments in order to maintain continuity during short-term campus closures.

EVENTS REQUIRING THE CANCELLATION OF MULTIPLE DAYS OF CLASS SESSIONS EQUAL TO OR LESS THAN THE EQUIVALENT OF TWO WEEKS

For events requiring the canceling of classes for several class sessions, consecutive or nonconsecutive, we recommend blanket approval for classes to continue in their assigned classrooms during RRR week, where this is deemed necessary in order to compensate for essential lectures, labs, field trips, or discussion sections canceled during the term. Some condensation or omission of course material may be inevitable. For five or fewer days of canceled classes, we recommend approval for make-up sessions on the corresponding days of RRR Week (e.g., if T, W, and Th were canceled, the make-up sessions should be on T, W, and Th of RRR Week) to avoid disruption of the normal weekly schedules of students and instructors (work, family, etc.).

As noted above, however, we at the same time urge instructors to preserve as much of RRR Week for its intended purpose as possible, balancing students' need for final exam preparation time with the instructional needs of their courses by creatively utilizing the various recommended remedies for one-day closures listed in the preceding section, singularly or in combination. Additionally, recognizing the likelihood that multiple "like" days may be canceled during a single semester (e.g., two Mondays in separate weeks), reallocating RRR Week days to compensate for lost days during Weeks 1–14 may not always be feasible.

At this point, we further note that whereas these general guidelines for maintaining instructional continuity around campus closures are grouped according to single-day closures, multi-day closures totaling up to two weeks, and closures totaling over two weeks, vagaries of the calendar will mean that actual impacts on classes will in many instances not be evenly felt. For example, if classes are canceled at noon on Monday in Week 1, and then canceled again for the entire day on Monday in Week 3, then classes with one meeting per week on Monday would experience the equivalent of either a "one-week" or "two-week" interruption, depending on whether their meeting time is before or after noon.

EVENTS REQUIRING THE CANCELLATION OF CLASSES FOR MORE THAN TWO WEEKS

COCI views two weeks of campus closures as the threshold at which the remedies enumerated in the above sections are likely to be insufficient to allow normal instruction to proceed. As noted above, in practice, depending on circumstances of class scheduling and the calendar, some classes may experience the equivalent of a two-week disruption even when the total number of lost instructional days across campus may be less than two weeks, so this two-week threshold is not intended to be precise or absolute, and instructors' implementation of remedies will have to take the specifics of each course into account. Where campus closures across the board do extend to a total of over two weeks, however, COCI endorses the consideration of the more extreme modes of remediation outlined below.

Depending on when in the semester a disturbance occurs, and on its duration, options for given courses include abridging of material covered; issuing pro-rated grades for the semester; securing decanal approval to waive or otherwise extend the add/drop and grade change deadlines; or non-issuance of grades (providing instead notice of “participation” in a course that was ultimately suspended). Where needed, such remedies could be applied in combination. Explanatory notes about individual courses might be provided by instructors to students for subsequent transmission to campus academic departments, graduate schools, professional schools, and employers to which they may later apply. Students remaining on campus for a subsequent offering of a suspended or abridged course might be given waivers of course repeat rules if they choose to retake the course; COCI however does not advise that they be required to do so. We encourage instructors to consider these, and other, options in the event of an extended campus closure, and to apply the set of options they deem works best in light of the specifics of their course and of options made available by their colleges.