

Guidelines for Response to Disruptions to Instruction APRIL 2020

Realizing that instructional disruptions due to environmental or public health emergencies or natural disasters 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 eventualities 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 an interruption to instruction, can help provide the kind of flexibility that will be needed. Instructors should also be cognizant of two related matters in any disruption to instruction: 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. 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 various sorts of disruption. Second, the specific nature of the disruption will largely determine the extent to which you and your students will be able to engage with academic activities during the impacted period, or to make up for lost instructional time afterwards. The timing within the semester of a disruption will also affect the ease or difficulty of adapting and adjusting the syllabus; instructors should also prepare for the possibility of multiple one-day disruptions across a semester. Recognizing that in some cases the impact of an emergency 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 disruption, 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.

The specific guidelines presented in the following sections take campus closures as their point of reference, and suggest different strategies, and different degrees of flexibility, for responding to different lengths of such closures. Our hope, however, is that the strategies and guidance presented below may still be of use in circumstances where a disruption does not result in campus closure per se.

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 video conferencing software or the equivalent. 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 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. In the event of complete cancellation of classes for five or fewer days, 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.

Instructional continuity post-disaster or during an extended emergency

The table below has itemized advise on how to respond to emergencies based on specific circumstances. Factors that guide these recommendations include: ramifications for financial aid and refunding tuition, requirements by the State to complete a set amount of instructional days; and the timing of the disruption in the semester.

The recommendations, risk/impacts, and tactics for management listed below are designed to provide a framework for consideration in the event of an extended emergency and decrease the amount of response time to arrive at a decision. Much of these recommendations will be actualized through scenario specific options from the COCI as the need arises.

Recommendation	Risk/Impact	Tactics for Managing Risk
If an extended emergency is declared after the published drop deadline, COCI recommends that colleges extend the deadline for dropping classes.	Students may fall below limits established by financial aid lenders.	COCI urges the campus to pursue options for working with lenders to ease this burden.
In the event of instructor illness, smaller classes or sections of the same course should be collapsed into one when feasible and if a health risk will not be created.	Over-impacted space demands, especially at peak times.	Prepare instructors to be flexible in scheduling, especially to offer classes during off-peak times. Departments plan ahead by conducting succession planning and establish a “teaching buddy” system so to have alternate instructors identified in advance.
Where feasible, if alternative teaching modules, such as recorded lectures or online discussion groups have been prepared, these should be activated as the effects of extended emergency become significant.	. There may be bottle necks with campus or student resources that would limit student engagement (e.g., poor WiFi access, lack of online instructional tools).	Solicit funding so that technology can be used in all courses. Have archive of courses stored off site.
Alternate final examination methods, such as take-home exams or term papers, may be used in lieu of an in-person final exam with the approval of the department chair and do not require authorization from COCI.	Volume huge in large departments. Chair may not be available. Additional time may be required to grade. OR will not know how the instructor is administering the final.	Departments should be prepared to track changes in final exam methods. Departments will need to notify OR about changes. Deadlines could be extended for final grades submission.

Recommendation	Risk/Impact	Tactics for Managing Risk
<p>If classes are cancelled for the rest of the semester, COCI may waive the requirement to hold a final examination. In this case instructors should assess student performance to date.</p>	<p>In the case where the final exam is a large percent of the grade, instructors may not have enough data to give a final grade.</p>	<p>Alternative grading options could be considered. In limited cases, instructors could assign an incomplete (I) grade and give the final exam later or the campus could move to a temporary “default Passed/Not Passed” policy. The Registrar could manage such changes in consultation with COCI. There are a range of ways to handle grading in extreme circumstances and COCI will be involved in actualizing options dependent on the scenario.</p>
<p>In the case of emergency, during or expected during Final Exam Week, COCI will announce via CalMessage and on its website if the final exam requirement has been waived.</p>	<p>OR and department will not know how the instructor is administrating the final.</p>	<p>Department should still require that the instructor notify them of any change and the department will notify OR.</p>

Recommendation	Risk/Impact	Tactics for Managing Risk
<p>If the semester is disrupted between Week 9 and 13, instructors may grant students Incomplete (I) grades at their discretion</p>	<p>Students may have too many I grades. Graduation could be affected.</p>	<p>Graduate Division and colleges have a procedure in place to waive the requirement for the number of I grades allowed. The replacement grades could be managed as changes, not I removals. Degrees could be backdated to allow students more time to submit incomplete coursework.</p>
<p>Students making up coursework during future semesters should be accommodated as to unit requirements for full time status.</p>	<p>May affect financial aid; federal regulations may not allow.</p>	<p>The Financial Aid Office (FAO) will take mitigating circumstances into consideration in any student appeal process for deadlines, family contributions, academic progress, and requests for budget adjustments. During times of natural disasters, the Department of Education provides guidance regarding extended federal deadlines for federal aid, deferrals of federal loans, extension or retraction of certain rules for affected populations. The Financial Aid Office will take its lead on federal aid issues from the Department of Education. Likewise, the Chancellor and the Office of the President will provide guidance for university aid in such times.</p>
<p>The campus should seek to extend financial aid to students who are required to register for semesters past their original academic plan.</p>	<p>There may not be enough aid for these students.</p>	<p>See above.</p>

Recommendation	Risk/Impact	Tactics for Managing Risk
Deans extend the deadlines for changing grading options to P/NP or S/U.	Programming is required and there may not be sufficient time to implement.	This option should be used only if programming staff is available.
Depending on the severity of the extended emergency, COCI will consider waiving the 1/3 limit on P/NP and S/U units, or any other limits on P/NP and S/U grades for the affected semester.	Could adversely affect students who are applying to Medical or Law schools.	Work with Association of American Medical Colleges (AMCAS) and Credential Assembly Service (CAS) so that P or S grades taken during the pandemic are treated differently than regular P or S grades.
OR may grant extensions or consider requests for extensions in certain circumstances.	Numbers of requests could be overwhelming.	Determine in advance what types of circumstances warrant an extension and who has authority to grant. Create central database to track situations.