

Distance Learning: Time-on-Task/Support/Guidelines for the 2020-21 Academic Year

The Academic content of courses delivered through distance learning should be designed to be academically equivalent to courses offered in an in-person format. For example, opposed to “Contact Hours” in in-person teaching, distance-learning courses are to have sufficient “Time-on-Task” to match the experience that a student would have in the face-to-face model.

Time-on-Task Context

Full-credit, online, seven-week courses should be designed to include approximately 20 hours per week on task (Background: [SACSCOC Credit Hours Policy Statement](#)). Reading, studying, homework, engagement in online discussions, or practicing should all be considered time on task.

Institutional Support

Berea College recognizes the challenge of transitioning in-person classes to an online format.

- [Leslie Ortquist-Ahrens](#) will continue designing and delivering faculty development appropriate to these unprecedented circumstances.
- [Anthony Basham](#) will continue to provide educational technology support for Moodle and other software packages.
- [Lisa Ladanyi](#) will continue working with faculty and students on disability accommodations.
- [Chris Lakes](#) and the Office of Student Success and Transition will provide supplemental advising and support student success.
- [Amy McCleese Nichols](#) and Writing Resources will continue offering writing support.

Design Guidelines

The most effective distance-learning course design relies on

- **Communication:** Clear, frequent and transparent.
- **Effective course design:** Learning outcomes are [tightly aligned](#) with course materials, activities, assignments, assessment, and timely feedback.
- **Strong Relationships:** Commitment to the process will rely on the development of two-way relationships between instructors and students that create a sense of “[presence](#).” Be intentional about building accountability and engagement.
- **Collaboration:** Connections among students are structured by the instructor around course material and projects or discussions.
- **Active learning:** Course design engages students in active learning (where possible, using multiple media for variety and to deepen learning).
- **Short recorded lectures:** Lectures, if any, are made in alignment with [strong findings from research](#) (e.g., recommended 6-minute “mini-lectures” interspersed with student activity).
- **Attention to accessibility:** Ensure that the course and any assessments are developed with the understanding that accommodation requests will be part of any course. Consider [Universal Design for Learning](#) as an option. (*Note:* legally, faculty must design for [accessibility of all online materials](#).)
- **Frequent low-stakes assessments:** Faculty provide ongoing feedback and practice, together with higher-stakes assessments (projects or tests), that are [appropriate for the medium](#). Consider ways to avoid high stakes testing that must be proctored.
- **Significant asynchronous delivery:** Seize opportunities for asynchronous approaches (to accommodate complexities in students’ work and home lives). While strategic use of synchronous activities can be very helpful, extensive synchronous activities (e.g., classes with daily 105 minutes of Zoom meetings) are unlikely to be effective.
- **Clear expectations:** Inform students up front, in your syllabus and other communications, of expectations for required synchronous activities.

Additional Requirements

- **Inform students of your connectivity/technology expectations** before the course begins to allow students to find an alternative course if needed.
- **Build courses primarily using Berea-supported platforms and tools (Moodle, Zoom, Box, and Teams).** Note that while Zoom and Teams have FERPA statements, FERPA compliance on Berea's campus has only been confirmed for Moodle and Box. Seek guidance from IS&S before requiring students to sign-up for additional applications to ensure that all ethical considerations and issues related to student privacy, safety, remote surveillance, and/or the inappropriate sharing of student data have been taken into account.
- **Use accessible platforms and tools** with strong track records of accessibility in their design (like Moodle).
- **Ensure that all course materials are already in accessible formats** or made accessible to students with guidance and/or aid from the [Office of Disability and Accessibility Services](#) (contact DAS for assistance).
- **Consider alternatives to high-stakes traditional assessments** like alternative assessment strategies and/or open-book formats with modification ([appropriate for the medium](#)) or work with consultants from the [Center for Teaching and Learning](#). While there are some tools in Moodle for remote proctoring, there is a learning curve to using them, there are some ethical concerns about privacy, and both students and faculty members will need to work early on to test them. Contact Anthony Basham at bashama@berea.edu for more information.

If you have questions or concerns regarding this document, please contact Matt Saderholm at saderholmm@berea.edu.