



## Effective Remote Teaching and Learning: Suggestions from UMass Amherst Undergraduates

On April 9th, 2020, the Office of Academic Planning and Assessment (OAPA) launched a Remote Learning Check-In Survey to gather feedback from undergraduates about their experiences with the abrupt transition to remote instruction necessitated by the COVID-19 crisis. OAPA researchers developed the 28-question survey in-house after soliciting input from Academic Affairs and Student Affairs and Campus Life, and reviewing surveys conducted by other institutions and organizations.

All undergraduate students not poised to graduate in spring 2020 (n=16,548) were invited to complete the online, confidential survey and 5922 (36%) participated. More information about the survey is available at <http://www.umass.edu/oapa/survey-research/other-surveys/covid-disruption/remote-learning-check>.

The survey included a series of open-ended questions that asked students to reflect on their experiences with remote learning, both the difficulties they have experienced and their suggestions for how to help them learn remotely. Researchers in OAPA reviewed random samples of these responses and systematically coded them.

Seven categories of suggestions for instruction emerged from these student responses. They are described below in the hopes they will help instructors in developing and managing their online courses and teaching remotely.

The analysis for this last report was conducted using an inductive analytic approach, drawing emergent themes from students' own words. It is, therefore, particularly encouraging to note how much these student recommendations reinforce and provide additional context for the recommendations made in the [University Quality Standards for Fully Online Courses](#).

*A full report on these findings is available using the following link (NetID login required):*  
[Effective Remote Teaching and Learning: Suggestions from UMass Amherst Undergraduates](#)



### Build connections and foster responsiveness

- ✓ Create opportunities for students to ask questions, clarify points of confusion.
- ✓ Maintain regular office hours.
- ✓ Incorporate effective methods to promote collaboration/group work.



## Incorporate both synchronous and asynchronous learning opportunities

- ✓ Include opportunities for synchronous learning (during regular scheduled class time).
- ✓ Also incorporate asynchronous classes/recorded lectures (which both helps students who cannot attend synchronous class and facilitates student review of content).
- ✓ Keep lecture sections short, “chunking” them into segments.



## Support students in their efforts to maintain a schedule and keep organized

- ✓ Use regularly scheduled and consistently timed (e.g., every Monday morning, for example) emails to communicate important course information.
- ✓ Respond to student emails in a timely manner.
- ✓ Give oral reminders of due dates at the beginning or end of live class sessions.
- ✓ Have a weekly course schedule/agenda, communicate it early, and share it via the course LMS.
- ✓ Develop consistent timing and delivery method for sharing/posting materials.
- ✓ Use one LMS to organize and present content and use a limited set of platforms and tools for the delivery of course information.



## Consider workload implications in the online environment

- ✓ Keep in mind that remote learning can take more time for students and plan assignments and interactions accordingly.



### Use flexible and inclusive grading and assessment strategies

- ✓ Be aware of and adapt practices that support the success of students facing challenges in managing school work, the pandemic, family distractions, and, for some, additional work and/or childcare responsibilities as a result of the COVID-19 disruption.



### Pay attention to implications for equity, inclusion, and accessibility

- ✓ Students expressed an appreciation for instructors who demonstrated through their course policies and classroom practices an awareness of students' differential (and unequal) opportunities and resources -- across time zones, workspace, technology access, family situation, and financial pressures.



### Practice empathy when interacting with students

- ✓ Students recognized the actions of instructors who extended themselves to share warmth, show kindness, and check in on students' well-being through email or face-to-face interactions such as live class and office hours.