Committee on Instruction Policies and Guidelines for Distance Instruction for Spring 2020

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The decision of the University to move to distance education for Spring 2020 raises many questions for faculty, staff, and students alike. We are issuing these guidelines for faculty to ensure equity and consistency and to put in place a process for record-keeping for accreditation. Lawrence is not currently accredited to provide distance education; the Higher Learning Commission has provided us with a temporary waiver to do so through June 2020. We wish to preserve the flexibility and room for creativity and experimentation that is a hallmark of faculty pedagogy at Lawrence as much as possible, and to encourage compassion and understanding for one another and our students in this very challenging time. We also wish to preserve, as much as possible, the close faculty-student interaction that characterizes a Lawrence education.

As you prepare for Spring 2020, we encourage you to survey the students in your classes about their concerns. Examples of survey questions are on the Moodle "water cooler" site. As you make decisions about assignments, pedagogy, etc., keep in mind the learning outcomes of the course, your department or program, and the university.

1. Synchronous or Asynchronous?

    Many faculty and students have already raised the question of whether they may offer their courses asynchronously, or must teach at a course's scheduled time using Zoom or other means to replicate face-to-face instruction. The University is **not** mandating synchronous instruction, because to do so would potentially exclude international students (and others) living outside the Central time zone. Likewise, synchronous instruction in larger classes might be challenging (though technologically feasible). We encourage all faculty where possible to provide some synchronous instruction, but this will depend on a number of factors. Please take into account the needs of your students, the size of your class, and learning outcomes when making this decision. We encourage you to consult with Lawrence's Instructional Designer, Jedidiah Rex, to determine what mix of synchronous and asynchronous instruction would make sense in the context of your course's learning outcomes.

2. What Technology are Students Expected to Have?

    It is reasonable to expect students to have access to a computer and an internet connection. Students who lack either or both of these have been given the option to stay on campus. While many students will use mobile devices to access library resources, Moodle, videos, etc., we still expect students to have the technology needed to write papers, produce presentations, and other work which is difficult to do on mobile phones.

    We strongly encourage you to make use of the technologies and applications made available by Lawrence first and foremost, including Zoom, Moodle, and Office 365 applications, which are available to all students. Consider that students are taking multiple classes and that adjusting to, or experimenting with, other technologies might increase their anxiety at a difficult time. This, too, is an issue worth consulting with students about to ensure fairness and consistency for them.

3. <u>Final Examinations?</u>

   Final examination times will be preserved for faculty who wish to use them in a distance format. Students should expect to submit all work for a given course by the designated final examination time.

4. <u>S/U Courses</u>

   All students may take any or all courses S/U during Spring 2020, even if the course(s) are required for the student's major, minor, or degree requirements. Courses taught in Spring 2020 will **not** count toward the limit on S/U courses students may take overall. Students will be able to mask any grade from Spring 2020 up until the fifth day of the Fall 2020 term. That is, they will not need to decide to take a course S/U until after grades for Spring 2020 have been reported.

5. <u>Add/Drop Deadline</u>

   The deadline for students to add/drop in Spring 2020 is **April 10**. We need to do this because stable enrollment reporting is important for financial aid and other purposes. Faculty members are encouraged to keep their Moodle site open for the first week to allow students to explore courses. As a reminder, students only need instructor approval to add a course in the first week if it is a limited enrollment course.

6. <u>Instruction Committee Approval</u>

   We ask you to request approval from the Instruction committee for **substantial** changes to your courses. Changes to learning outcomes or expected student time per week in the course necessitated by the move to a distance-learning format are considered "substantial". For guidance about how much time a student should be spending on a course, see the Student-Initiated Course Registration Form, which offers general estimates for that purpose. You can find that form here: https://www.lawrence.edu/mw/Student-Initiated_Course_Registration.

   Please send this information to Peter Blitstein by **March 30**. A draft syllabus and explanatory paragraph will likely suffice.

We understand how challenging this will be for all of us. The extended spring break should help provide more time to prepare, but there will no doubt be more questions over the coming weeks. This applies to the Committee's work too. Please bear with us as we adjust to events, and don't hesitate to contact members of the Committee with questions and concerns.