



RESEARCH BRIEF: CONTINGENCY PLANS FOR ONLINE INSTRUCTION

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In the following research brief, Hanover presents strategies and policies informing online contingency plans at national institutions of higher education. The report focuses on contingency plans that relate to a range of scenarios, beyond the 2020 pandemic.



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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

RECOMMENDATIONS AND KEY FINDINGS



A CONTINGENCY PLAN SHOULD EXPLAIN RESPONSIBILITIES, RESOURCES, AND SUPPORT SERVICES.

In contrast to regularly scheduled online courses, remote teaching and learning during a disruption (e.g., due to severe weather) typically requires flexibility and adjustments on the part of faculty, students, and staff. An institutional online contingency or instructional continuity plan should include an overview of scenarios that may call for temporary distance education, a reminder of important laws and institutional policies (e.g., FERPA), current contact information for all essential support services (e.g., IT services), expectations of faculty and students, as well as a detailed discussion of teaching strategies and tips, how-to explanations of relevant Learning Management Systems (LMS), and other resources available to students and faculty.



THE CONTINUITY PLAN SHOULD BE AVAILABLE ONLINE AND FOR DOWNLOAD.

The Citadel ([Citadel](#)) and the University of Washington Tacoma ([UW Tacoma](#)) have plans for instructional continuity – available for download from institutional websites – that capture relevant contact information, policies, teaching strategies, and technology-related issues. Bundling a range of important information into one document that can be reproduced as a hard copy will allow affected stakeholders to quickly find answers and recommendations should a disruption of regular campus life occur.



DURING STABLE PERIODS, LEADERS SHOULD ENCOURAGE FACULTY TO EXECUTE PRACTICE DRILLS.

Many institutions emphasize preparing for remote teaching before a disrupting event occurs. Faculty should be familiar with the LMS, develop a basic contingency plan and, if possible, execute a practice drill with their students. For example, they might schedule one assignment or lecture in a distance format to ensure functionality of used tools, availability of communication, etc.



LEADERS SHOULD SOLICIT REAL-TIME FEEDBACK DURING DISRUPTIONS TO INFORM FUTURE PLANS.

The U.S. Coast Guard Academy ([USCGA](#)) and the U.S. Naval Academy ([USNA](#)) have been collecting information on common issues with remote teaching in order to build a repository of potential solutions. Relatedly, Columbia University launched the “Students as Pedagogical Partners” initiative which asks student consultants to provide feedback on their online learning experience ([Columbia](#)). Gathering such responses will help leaders identify areas for improvement in online instruction based on the real experiences of students and faculty.

KEY CONSTITUENTS AND RESOURCES



CONTINUITY OF INSTRUCTION



Faculty should prepare for instructional continuity in case of a potential temporary closure. But the “primary objective in these circumstances is not to re-create a robust educational ecosystem but rather to provide temporary access...that is quick to set up and is reliably available during an emergency or crisis” ([Educause](#)).



Students who do not have the necessary equipment or space for online learning should be provided with resources or accommodations. Students should familiarize themselves with tools for online instruction, communicate with instructors, and have a clear understanding of learning expectations.



Essential support services include Information Technology, Center for Teaching, Library Services, and Office of Emergency Services/Management. These units usually provide digital resources for remote instruction and also offer trainings, workshops, and additional support.



In addition to online resources and downloadable documents on continuity of instruction, departments should inform faculty and students about relevant policies that are in effect despite any disruption or that generally apply in online teaching. This includes fair use and copyright law, FERPA and HIPPA acts, internet safety, etc.



GUIDELINES FOR FACULTY

Plan Ahead	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Create a basic contingency plan ready in case instruction on campus is interrupted. University of Washington has developed a useful “readiness quiz” that may serve as a checklist for online course preparation (UW).
Technology	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Use an institution-approved Learning Management System (LMS) for online instruction though they may choose other technologies based on determined learning goals.
Syllabus	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Include a statement on online instruction in case of emergency (e.g., inclement weather) and provide relevant information for students with disabilities. Barnard College has developed a useful guide for its faculty (Barnard).
General Resources	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Upload course calendar, syllabus, and course-related resources to have them available online in case of an emergency, and make sure to have online access to grades and other student performance metrics.
Communication	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provide a detailed communications plan that explains how students and faculty should contact each other. Communicate early and often with students and set up virtual office hours.
Expectations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provide students with a clear understanding of course expectations. Columbia University recommends that faculty review their course goals and determine priorities during a disruption (Columbia).
Assignments	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Designate a centralized location where students can submit assignments or other work (Carleton). Regularly assess learning through quizzes, exams, and written assignments (Georgetown).
Instructional Resources	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> If synchronous sessions take place, consider recording them for students who may not be able to attend at the moment (due to temporary power outage, no access to internet, etc.).
Lab Courses	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Refer to Berkeley’s “Labs, Studios and Other Non-Classroom Spaces Best Practices” (Berkeley).
Privacy & Safety	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Stay informed about privacy laws. Social networking sites are usually <u>not</u> safe for FERPA and HIPAA content. Use updated anti-virus software and follow internet safety guidelines.
Practice Drill	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Plan ahead – become proficient in using online tools and hold one practice drill to gain practical experience and identify potential issues.



GUIDELINES FOR STUDENTS

Technical Support	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Learn where technical support is available when off campus. Depending on institutional policy, borrow “tech items for use at home” (UW).
Tools	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Become familiar with the tools that used for online instruction. Participate in practice drills.
Communication	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Reach out to instructors regularly with any questions or concerns, and attend virtual office hours.
Disability Resources	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Contact faculty or staff before a disruption occurs to ensure they are prepared for any necessary accommodations. Faculty and departments should ensure that students with disability have access to accommodations and consider any necessary needs when instruction is off campus. Georgetown University recommends to use digital sources that can be read by screen readers and to provide captions and/or transcripts for video lectures (Georgetown).
Privacy & Copyright	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Do not record lectures or class discussions without permission and that do not distribute any class materials without instructor’s permission (Georgetown).
Feedback	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provide feedback to faculty and institutional offices. Student feedback provides valuable insights into effective (or ineffective) teaching strategies. Columbia University has launched the initiative “Students as Pedagogical Partners” which, among other topics, also concerns remote teaching and learning (Columbia).



THREE AREAS ARE PARTICULARLY VITAL FOR CONTINUITY PLANNING

Technology	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Information Technology (IT) services are essential to ensure a smooth operation of Learning Management Systems (LMS), digital resources, etc. The IT offices at reviewed institutions have usually put together resources that address frequently asked questions (FAQs), guides to relevant software and applications, as well as suggestions for troubleshooting (see for example Pomona College and University of Washington).• Contingency-related websites and guidelines should include current contact information for the institutional IT service desk.
Teaching Center	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Institutional teaching and learning centers play a vital role in assisting faculty with the design and instruction of online courses, as well as providing them and students with tips, strategies, and resources. Georgetown University's Center for New Designs in Learning and Scholarship (CNDLS) has developed a user-friendly and well-organized website. Faculty is asked to focus on three things in remote teaching: 1) deliver content, 2) engage with students, and 3) assess students (Georgetown).
Library	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Libraries may support faculty and students with the creation of library guides and digital resources. A recent interview with librarians at Middlebury College demonstrates that they assist remote students and faculty with online chats, workshops, research consultations, and other services (Middlebury).

POLICIES, TOOLS, AND OTHER RESOURCES



EXAMPLE CONTINUITY PLANS AND TOOLS

Continuity of Instruction Plan	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• The Citadel's Center for Excellence and Innovation in Teaching, Learning, and Distance Education has created A single document that clearly summarizes important policies, steps towards preparedness, and strategies for online instruction (Citadel). See also the Instructional Continuity Guide developed by UW Tacoma.• Georgetown University has a brief policy on instructional continuity in the event of an interruption of face-to-face instruction (Georgetown). The University's Law Center has created a step-by-step guide (Georgetown).• Key initial steps towards a plan include 1) define event or circumstance that may call for implementation of continuity of instruction plan; 2) include contact information for all relevant staff and offices (e.g., IT Helpdesk, library services); and 3) provide list of approved learning management systems (LMS) and other platforms.
Checklists	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Some institutions provide students and faculty with a preparation checklist to facilitate instructional continuity in case of a disruption. See for example George Washington University (GWU).
State and Federal Law / Institutional Policies	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Many institutions remind students and faculty of laws, stipulations, and institutional policies that are in effect during remote instructions. Important considerations concern, for example, FERPA, HIPPA, as well as copyright and fair use (Rockhurst).
Websites	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Institutions typically publish bundled information and resources related to instructional continuity on sites of institutional Center for Teaching and/or Information Technology Services. Notable examples for intuitive site organization, clarity, and general user-friendliness include Columbia University, Georgetown University, and Rockhurst University (Columbia, Georgetown, Rockhurst).
Webinars	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Embedded among general resources are often webinars that illustrate how to use Learning Management System, online platforms (e.g., Zoom), and other relevant tools.

BENCHMARKED INSTITUTIONS

Institution	Protocol / Guidelines / Strategies / Tips		Additional Resources for Faculty
Amherst College Amherst, MA	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Planning for Academic Continuity 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • General Teaching Resources
Barnard College New York, NY	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tips & Strategies for Instructional Continuity 		--
Carleton College Northfield, MN	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Instructional Continuity 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Resources
The Citadel Charleston, SC	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continuity of Instruction Plan 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Training video
Columbia University New York, NY	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Contingency Planning: Teaching Online 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • General Teaching Resources
Dickinson College Carlisle, PA	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Academic Continuity 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Setting up a quiz
Georgetown University Washington, DC	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Instructional Continuity 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tools and Services • Webinars
Middlebury College Monterey, CA	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Academic and Course Continuity 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tips and Resources for Remote Teaching
Pomona College Claremont, CA	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Instructional Continuity 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tools in aid of instructional continuity
Rockhurst University Kansas City, MO	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Instructional Continuity and Contingency Planning 		--
Texas A&M University College Station, TX	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continuity Planning (concerns institutional continuity but includes useful templates) 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continuity Planning Online Course • Quick Start Guide
United States Naval Academy Annapolis, MD	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Remote Work From Home (in response to COVID-19) 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tools and Resources
University of Washington Seattle, WA	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Teaching remotely 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Prepare for when classes can't meet
William College Williamstown, MA	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A Guide to Teaching Through Disruptions for Instructors 		--

APPENDIX

EXAMPLES OF USEFUL DOCUMENTS AND EFFECTIVE WEB PRESENTATIONS.

Emergency Preparedness Continuity of Instruction

STEP 1: REVIEW THE LMS COURSE CONTENT

- Review syllabus (upload if necessary)
- Review current content (discussions, assignments, documents, tests, quizzes)

STEP 2: COMMUNICATE WITH YOUR STUDENTS

- Familiarize yourself with the various communication features available in the LMS (Announcements, Email, Discussion Boards)

STEP 3: CREATE CONTENT IN THE LMS

- Create new content (discussions, assignments, documents, tests, quizzes)
- Convert paper copies of articles, handouts, quizzes, tests and other materials needed into a digitally accessible format

STEP 4: PRACTICE

- Make an announcement in the LMS
- Post an online discussion
- Create an assignment in the LMS
- Record a screencast
- Hold a Zoom meeting

FOR ASSISTANCE, CONTACT:
CEITLDE@citadel.edu
or visit: <http://citadel.edu/root/ceitl>

THE CITADEL
CENTER FOR EXCELLENCE AND INNOVATION
IN TEACHING, LEARNING
AND DISTANCE EDUCATION

First Steps for Moving a Class Online

When you realize you have to move your class online quickly and teach from somewhere other than your Columbia classroom, consider the following steps right away.

Graduate Student TAs: Adapting Your Teaching

Resources that graduate student instructors can draw on to stay connected to students and maintain learning in classes they're TAing.

Asynchronous Learning Across Time Zones

Asynchronous learning gives students the flexibility to access course information, demonstrate their learning, and communicate from anywhere and at any time.

Inclusive Teaching and Learning Online

With the rapid shift to online learning, instructors can draw on principles of inclusive teaching to help students feel a sense of belonging, ensure they can access course materials, and support them in achieving learning goals.

Teaching with CourseWorks

Set up discussions, take attendance, create and grade assignments, and create online exams and quizzes using CourseWorks, Columbia's online learning management system

Creating Online Exams

Implementing online exams creates a new set of considerations for the instructor. CourseWorks (Canvas) offers a variety of tools, options, and settings that can help implement exams efficiently and fairly and make the exam experience positive for both instructors and students.

Categories of Issues Encountered	Possible Solutions/Suggestions
Instructor- Lack of Equipment (tablet PC, iPad, Wacom, Doc Cam, Webcam, printer)	<p>To capture handwritten notes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Make Surface the standard laptop for faculty or issue iPad to faculty. Use a Webcam/Smart Phone with a flexible stand Use EpicCam app to turn your smartphone into a doc cam <p>To grade students work electronically</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Blackboard Assignment Inline Grading Grade and return an assignment with Google Classroom Use the Review options in MS. Word to markup Word documents Use Adobe Acrobat to mark up PDFs Use Microsoft Edge to markup PDFs

FAQS FOR REMOTE WORK

HOW TO ACCESS USNA RESOURCES REMOTELY

Conducting business from a remote location requires different levels of access. These levels range from Level I resources that are available from an outside network such as the USNA public website and Gmail to Level III, access to resources that require a USNA IP address. Instructions for accomplishing the different levels of access are provided below. If you require a level of access not listed here, or have a question please submit a Web Help Desk Ticket ([Click Here](#) for instructions to submit a help ticket).

External
Do not use VPN / VDL

Internal
Faculty / Staff - VPN Required
Midshipmen - VDI Required

Preparation Checklist

Be prepared in the event of a closure. Follow these steps for instructors and students to take before and during an unplanned university closure.

Sources: [Citadel](#); [USNA](#); [USNA](#); [GWU](#); [Columbia](#)

