

From: [Office of the MSU Provost](#)
Bcc: ["msu-academic-dddh@sympa.montana.edu"](mailto:msu-academic-dddh@sympa.montana.edu); [Mokwa, Robert](#); [Eitle, Tamela](#); [Swinford, Steven](#); [Obbink, Kimberly](#); [Burroughs, Beth](#); [Singel, David](#); [Fastnow, Christina](#); [Adams, Dean](#); [Fredenberg, Heidi](#); [Anderson, Rachel](#); [Campeau, Tony](#)
Subject: Planning for Fall Courses
Date: Monday, May 11, 2020 3:02:00 PM
Attachments: [Academic Spaces FM Astra.xlsx](#)

Dear Department Heads and Directors,

The Academic Continuity and Contingency Planning Task Force have, with input from Deans and other College leadership, defined an initial set of academic guidelines for the fall semester. These guidelines foreground face-to-face educational experiences while acknowledging uncertainties about COVID-19 and concerns for mitigating the risk to students, faculty and staff. We ask you to use these guidelines and constraints to help plan for instruction in Fall 2020. These guidelines will assist department heads, directors and faculty thoughtfully in planning for your Fall semester courses and will be updated as we approach the Fall and have a better understanding of the virus implications, and as we receive additional ideas and suggestions from you.

Department heads are responsible for managing section delivery and teaching assignments to ensure the delivery of required courses, in consultation with their faculty. Because of the unprecedented circumstances of COVID-19, we request academic units include the University guidelines described below, and the need to stay within budget constraints. Deans will review these decisions with an eye for equitable workloads, appropriate balance of delivery methods and alignment with University priorities. Finally, the Academic Continuity Task Force will check the overall balance of delivery methods to support a quality educational experience and progress toward their chosen degrees.

The following university guidelines should inform decisions about course delivery in the Fall.

MSU priorities to guide department-level decisions:

Prioritize face-to-face/blended ^[1] delivery for Freshman courses and for courses that are difficult to deliver in other modalities.

- 100-200 level courses taken mostly by first and second-year students – University Seminar, WRIT 101W, and other core courses.
- Labs, field courses, studio courses, or recitations that are difficult to deliver virtually or online.

Prioritize face-to-face/blended delivery based on pedagogy used in discipline-specific courses.

- Research experiences, if prioritized by the department
- Seminars or courses with group projects

Prioritize offerings such that most students have some face-to-face courses (unless they self-select into online classes)

Prioritize offering some online sections – Communicate with your dean about these decisions and update the Registrar about the section's online format to allow students to be fully informed

- Courses that have multiple sections. Please move one or more sections to online delivery to accommodate students who prefer to take all courses online, or if there are demand and resources for an additional section of a course, then consider offering a section online.
- Upper-division and graduate courses - Research demonstrates that graduate students and upper-division undergraduate students have more developed study habits and motivation to do well in online classes. Please consider whether your upper-division or graduate elective courses could be delivered effectively online.

By this time of the year, students have enrolled and classrooms have been assigned based on historical needs and anticipated demands. To the extent possible, please work within the constraints described below. Please think about how to use blended instruction within your assigned classrooms' capacities with physical distancing. As courses move to online delivery and additional classroom space is identified, requests for changing classrooms will be considered using the list of priorities outlined above.

Classroom capacity under physical distancing:

- Estimates for classroom capacities are included in the attached spreadsheet with updates to be available at https://www.montana.edu/registrar/Classroom_Reservation_Guidelines.html; these estimates will be updated with more accurate information as audits are completed over the next week. Please look for updates in the box folder.
- Physical distancing may impact the close collaboration between students that characterize many course learning activities – consider how you may facilitate these essential interactions through the use of technology by groups of students.
- Instructional laboratories, studios, maker-space, and the like will require special attention to physical distancing requirements. The Academic Continuity and Contingency Planning Task Force will be reaching out to coordinators of courses that use such spaces to document physical distancing plans.

Every faculty member should be ready to switch to remote delivery if required by public health authorities:

- Please ensure that all faculty are aware of the requirement to use the learning management system supported by MSU to, at a minimum, post a syllabus, use the announcement tool as the primary means to communicate with students about class, and post course content in an organized manner. Currently, MSU uses Brightspace by D2L and provides training here: <http://www.montana.edu/ecat/help/>.
- Please ensure that all faculty include in the syllabus their plans for how the semester will proceed if there is a transition to online delivery based on public health requirements. For example, faculty should be familiar with how to set up online meetings via either WebEx or Microsoft Teams. They should also ensure that students also know how to access and use these tools and technologies.

Additional protocols that are in development by the task force:

- **Personal Routines.** Academic Affairs, University Services, University Health Partners and others are coordinating protocols and developing expectations for a heightened level of personal routines for students, faculty and staff in Fall 2020. These may include temperature checks, handwashing, social distancing and facemask use. Faculty will be expected to follow these guidelines and may add any additional measures such as wearing a plastic face shield or gloves in the classroom if they so choose. Students, faculty and staff should not come to class if they are not feeling well and should contact their health care provider for virus testing if they are experiencing symptoms. Decisions about personal routines and testing will be made based on the best public health guidelines at the time.
- **Classroom Routines.** University Services will be developing guidelines and protocols **for cleaning** (wiping down desk surfaces, doorknobs, light switches, and other high-touch surfaces) and disinfecting contaminated surfaces. Classrooms and buildings will have inflow and exit routes identified when possible. Language for faculty to include in their syllabus that establishes expectations for facemask wearing will be developed by the Dean of Students office in conjunction with recommendations from this committee.

The following pages provide resource links and templates for designing your courses in different delivery modalities. You will find these helpful as you work with your faculty as you make adjustments to fall semester courses and prepare for the possible pivot to remote instruction if the need arises.

We continue to be grateful for your flexibility, ingenuity, and commitment to educating Montana State's students as we all work together to deliver high-quality education in a challenging new environment.

Sincerely,
Tamela Eitle, Chair
Steven Swinford
Kim Obbink
Beth Burroughs
David Singel
Chris Fastnow
Dean Adams
Heidi Fredenberg
Tony Campeau
Academic Continuity and Contingency Task Force

[\[1\]](#) Blended courses are those that provide some f2f and some virtual or online learning