LESSONS LEARNED FROM THE PANDEMIC: HOW CAN WE BETTER SUPPORT OUR STUDENTS AND STUDENT LEARNING?

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UNIVERSITY OF TORONTO

Sources:
UTM Teaching and Learning Support, CTSI, and UTSC Centre for Teaching and Learning
How are you doing? Student Feedback Session - September 2020
UTSU Report on Online Learning & Remote Classes – October 2020
ISTEP Transition to Remote Learning and *Workload Guide for Instructors*
Feedback and Meetings with Student Leaders, Vice-Deans, and Faculty

OVERVIEW

Through a variety of mechanisms, we have heard about our students' experience from this past fall. Much of the feedback falls within one of these four categories:

Academic Experience & Course Delivery

Accessibility and Universal Design for Learning (UDL)

Student Mental Health and Wellness

Communications and Engagement

OVERARCHING THEMES – CARE, COMPASSION, AND FLEXIBILITY

Throughout the feedback, it is clear that the best support we can provide to our students is through our understanding and flexibilty, demonstration of care, and compassion to the many and varied challenges that our students are facing

Care through our *communications* with students

Compassion to the significant and multiple ways that COVID has *impacted our students' academic and personal journey*

Be as *flexible* with course assessments, deadlines, and policies as is possible

Appropriately *modifying policies and procedures* with a compassionate lens

Extending *care and kindness to ourselves* and our colleagues

ACADEMIC EXPERIENCE & COURSE DELIVERY

Swarm of hairy
assessments

Key Considerations

- Rethink how much to cover

- Rethink the necessity and extent of micro-assignments

- Fixed timed assessments are very stressful

- Workload – ask all instructors to plan out a weekly budget for the expectations for all
  the work required by their course – keep this to 10 hours or less per week

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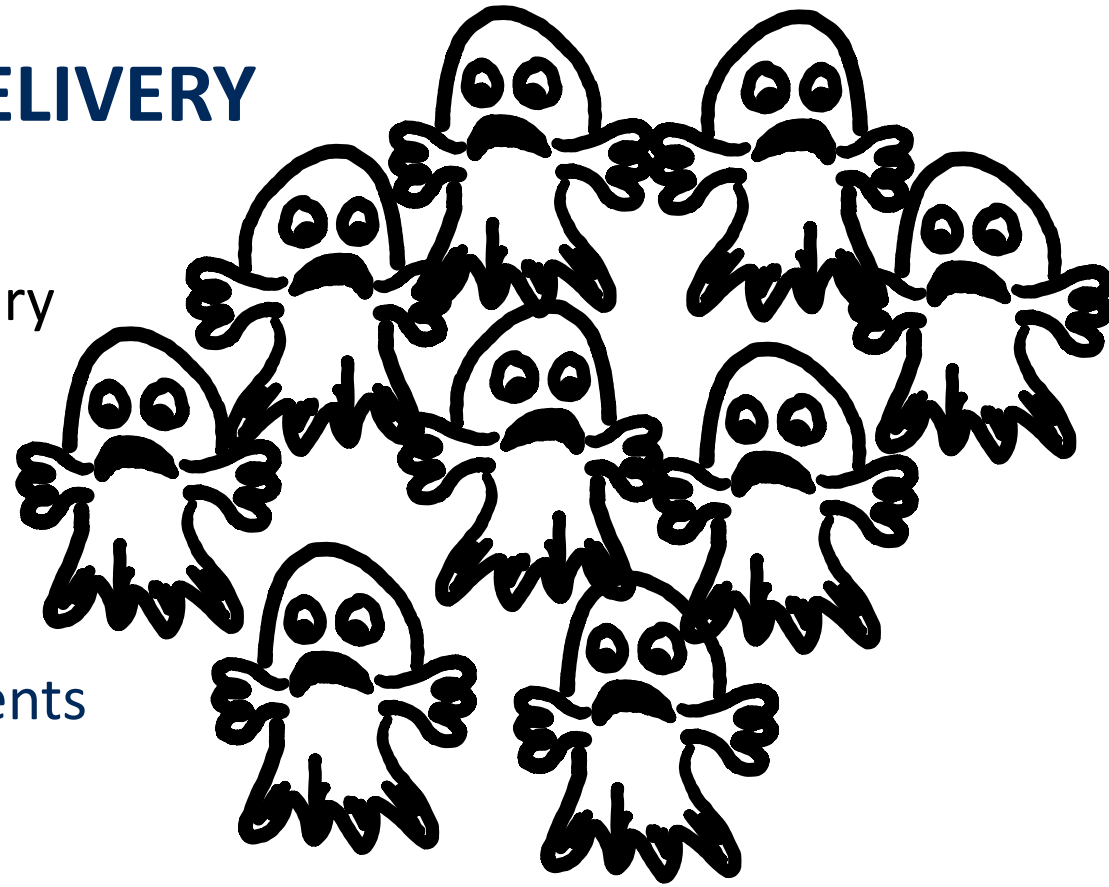
Rethinking assessment

- Build assignments from one to the next to support academic integrity

- Balance is key:
  not too many small assignments, not too few big ones

- Design flexibility into assessment

Rethinking Assessment

How can we design and deliver online assessments that take student and instructor academic needs and pandemic-stress levels into account? In-person options, like paper final exams, often don't always translate well to the online environment and relying on frequent, short online quizzes and assignments, while they help keep our students on track, can put added pressure on already overloaded schedules.

We asked some U of T faculty members to reflect on their experiences teaching online over these past eight months, in particular as most of us are experiencing online and quarantine fatigue, and share what has worked best for their students' – and their own – academic success and mental health.

Liza Bolton, Assistant Professor, Teaching Stream, Statistical Sciences, FAS

Nathalie Moon, Assistant Professor, Teaching Stream, Statistical Sciences, FAS

We'd heard from many people that capacity to focus is lessened online, so felt our usual fixed 90-minute midterm test block would not be appropriate. Our solution was to break

Courtney Jung, Professor, Political Science, FAS

In this course of 1200 students, we normally ask students to write a 5-7 page essay, and we have a final exam. Once we transitioned to online teaching, we decided to alter our assignments to make them less high stakes, and more likely to keep students engaged with lectures and reading throughout the semester. To that end we had assignments every week of the semester, and we asked students to complete 9 of the 11 assignments available. As a universal accommodation in the event of emergency or illness, all students

ACCESSIBILITY AND UNIVERSAL DESIGN FOR LEARNING (UDL)

Key Considerations

- Record synchronous sessions and allow asynchronous use

- Reaffirm commitment to supporting students with accessibility needs (e.g., syllabus statement)

- Consider the possibility of including captioning in your materials (also see the recent CTSI webinar with additional materials on this topic)

- Respond to Accessibility Advisors and Office requests

- Consider impact of time-zones and tech limitations on assessment and engagement (e.g., FASE petition change)

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STUDENT MENTAL HEALTH AND WELLNESS

Demonstrate a personal commitment to supporting student mental health

- Include a statement on your syllabus (example below), use this as an opportunity to discuss further with your students, and periodically check in with your students

- Explain how the design of the course has incorporated considerations of student wellness, with a special thought given to *workload* expectations

- Complete the *IAR training*

- Consider attending webinars such as the upcoming *Supporting faculty to create a healthy and engaging learning environment* or reviewing the *Mental Health Toolkit for Faculty* from the Centre for Innovation in Campus Mental Health

- Refer students to the new https://mentalhealth.utoronto.ca/ website

STUDENT MENTAL HEALTH AND COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

<u>Faculty of Applied Science & Engineering Mental Health Syllabus Statement:</u>
As a university student, you may experience a range of health and/or mental health challenges that could result in significant barriers to achieving your personal and academic goals. Please note, the University of Toronto and the Faculty of Applied Science & Engineering offer a wide range of free and confidential services that could assist you during these times.

As a U of T Engineering student, you have an Academic Advisor (undergraduate students) or a Graduate Administrator (graduate students) who can support you by advising on personal matters that impact your academics. Other resources that you may find helpful are listed on the U of T Engineering Mental Health & Wellness webpage, and a small selection are also included here:

- Accessibility Services & the On-Location Advisor
- Graduate Engineering Council of Students' Mental Wellness Commission
- Health & Wellness and the On-Location Health & Wellness Engineering Counsellor
- Inclusion & Transition Advisor
- U of T Engineering Learning Strategist and Academic Success
- My Student Support Program (MySSP)
- Registrar's Office
- SKULE Mental Wellness
- Scholarships & Financial Aid Office & Advisor

If you find yourself feeling distressed and in need of more immediate support resources, consider reaching out to the counsellors at My Student Support Program (MySSP) or visiting the Feeling Distressed webpage.

COMMUNICATIONS AND ENGAGEMENT

Ensure syllabus contains accurate and specific information about the online course delivery

Enable real-time or regular feedback opportunities within courses

- o We should endeavour to be as responsive and flexible as is possible, while also respecting the critical learning outcomes for each course

Create a clear structure in Quercus for each course, and a regular communications plan

- o For example, once weekly course newsletter rather than many emails throughout the week
- o Use Quercus calendar to highlight course activities including events such as office hours

Make intentional efforts to create community within each course, and opportunities for extra engagement between students and faculty

Communicate good examples

Insights from Open Conversation: Creating An Inclusive Online Space

LEARNING HOW TO CREATE AN INCLUSIVE ONLINE SPACE

Kate | 25 September

Takeaways from the Open Conversation: Creating & Maintaining Inclusive Online Spaces session!

Courtney Jung, Professor, Political Science, FAS

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UTSC CTL

This worked for me!

The Centre for Teaching and Learning has launched "This worked for me", a new webinar series designed to help instructors transition to remote and online teaching.

Connect with the TLC

Creating opportunities for educators to come together

Chat about teaching and learning over (virtual) coffee, tea, or lunch

The current COVID-19 situation has drastically changed the way we communicate, interact, and exchange ideas about teaching and learning. That said, the TLC is constantly brainstorming creative strategies for fellow staff and course instructors to connect and engage with ideas on education. The "Colleague Connections" section of the TLC website lists your colleagues and the topics they are interested in. If you are interested in joining the list, please complete the form at www.utm.utoronto.ca/tlc/colleague-connections.

Join a pedagogical online reading group

Each term we select one or two books to read. Throughout the term, we meet over Zoom to discuss our thoughts, reactions, and how the reading influences our own teaching. All participants who commit to regular participation in the group receive their own copy of the book. Meeting dates and times are determined by participants' availability. To vote on this year's books and to register your interest in joining a group, please complete the form at www.utm.utoronto.ca/tlc/reading-groups.

Attend a Faculty Drop-In (Mondays)

Join us every Monday from 12-1pm for open Faculty Drop-In sessions. Hosted by TLC staff and education technology specialists, participants can ask questions, get support, and share ideas on teaching and learning. A link to this drop-in session is available in the Teach Anywhere Quercus shell.

Participate in a workshop, seminar, or panel

Check out the at-a-glance calendar on pages 3 and 4 for the dates of upcoming TLC sessions. Session descriptions can be found on pages 5-10.

To register for events, please visit the TLC website at www.utm.utoronto.ca/tlc/upcoming-events.

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

Pedagogy of Kindness:

Showing Kindness: Biology professor strengthens human connections during uncertain times | University of Toronto Mississauga (utoronto.ca)

https://www.utoronto.ca/news/new-normal-maydianne-andrade-ep-12-guest-host-fiona-rawle-pedagogy-kindness

'A pedagogy of kindness': U of T faculty find creative ways to support students, learning during COVID-19 | UTMTogether2020 (utoronto.ca)

Summaries on how to approach...

Remote Assessments: https://ceea.ca/wp-content/uploads/2020/08/EQG_RemoteAssessmentV2.pdf

Academic Integrity without Proctoring: https://ceea.ca/wp-content/uploads/2020/09/EQG_IntegrityWithoutProctoringV2.pdf

Academic Integrity Resources: https://www.academicintegrity.utoronto.ca/ and

https://teaching.utoronto.ca/teaching-support/strategies/a-i/supports/

Support for faculty and staff

Employee and Family Assistance Program: https://hrandequity.utoronto.ca/employees/efap/

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