

Open-Ended Responses. Please let your instructor know your reflections on the following topics.

1. In what ways did your instructor try to make learning possible for you during the spring 2020 semester?
2. How would you describe your learning experience after the transition from face-to-face instruction to remote instruction? What did you find most helpful to your remote learning experience? In what ways, if at all, did aspects of your learning change? *[Modified version from the Faculty Executive Committee, Spring 2020]*

1. FACULTY: OVERALL ASSESSMENTS

Theme	Description	Quotes	Recommendations
a. Communication & interaction with faculty	Students valued clear, regular communication from faculty and expressed frustration when they did not communicate with students about changes to the course or were slow to respond to student queries.	"[Professor] somewhat refused to acknowledge the move to remote learning, he released no new syllabus and there was no communication until the very end of the two week "spring break" period, when we had a 9:30pm information session on Sunday night."	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Send weekly course emails summarizing upcoming deadlines, current course content/readings, and what to expect in the coming week. • Be available to students in multiple forms (virtual office hours, virtual group Q&As, Zoom chat, discussion forum, email).
	Students appreciated when faculty maintained office hours using virtual formats, and some preferred virtual office hours to in-person.	"Having virtual office hours made it SO much easier to communicate with professors and ask them questions when I was confused. It's much harder to schedule an office hour visit into my day when it requires walking 15 minutes across campus to some office when I only have a question that would take me 5-10 minutes to ask. I think virtual office hours should be here to stay forever at UNC."	If not using a specified form of communication (e.g., if not monitoring discussion boards), disable this feature.
b. Empathy	Students spoke highly of faculty who showed personal care and empathy for students, whether through direct outreach or check-ins before, after, or during lectures.	"I feel that [Professor] really cared about us during this time. She made sure we were okay. She sent out individual emails to us and I know there has to be able 200+ of us in class! She always checked on us during every lecture."	Students face a number of challenges at home, including caregiving responsibilities and stressful home learning environments, in addition to the stress of a pandemic. Check in with students regularly. If particular students are disengaged, reach out directly to check in and connect them to additional supports/resources.
	In contrast, students spoke negatively about faculty they did not perceive as empathetic to their struggles during the pandemic. If faculty were perceived as ignoring the pandemic and its potential impact, students felt discouraged.	"The professor and TAs had no empathy for students dealing with this pandemic ... She rarely connects with students. I tried to contact someone during the pandemic and they never responded. It just goes to show that they really aren't trying to help you."	Acknowledge the added stressors of the pandemic, and provide information about available supports (mental health, financial, and others) at the start of the class and on course materials (syllabus, website).
		"My professor began a lot of his lectures just sort of expressing his sympathy for us as well, which was really nice given the mental toll this pandemic is taking."	
c. Feedback	Students benefited from the opportunity to provide feedback on course adaptations and appreciated when faculty made course adaptations based on student feedback.	"[Professor] tried two different ways to teach the class, and ultimately went with what the class wanted. I really appreciate all of the effort."	Incorporate formal and informal feedback opportunities for students throughout each term:
		"He really listened to his students and their difficulties and adapted to make online learning as smooth and easy as possible for us to finish out the course strong. I really appreciated how he tried a few things to find	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Polls (Zoom polls, PollEV, etc.) to assess student progress, preferences, and well-being

		<p>what worked best for us and listened to our opinions, by giving us a trial with learning in real time and with a lecture previously recorded to see which we preferred, and it was great that he took our feedback and allowed us the opportunity to ask questions and get answers in real time.”</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Virtual “open-door” policies • Virtual office hours • Midterm evaluations • End-of-term evaluations
			<p>Anonymous “suggestion box” using Google Form or similar</p>
d. Flexibility	<p>Students said they appreciated faculty who demonstrated flexibility by providing multiple options for viewing course lectures (e.g., live or recorded), offering extensions for assignment submission, and making course adaptations.</p>	<p>“She understood that this was a stressful time for us all and did not put pressure on us to be perfect! She made sure people who could not attend live lectures had access to recordings, she did not take attendance, she pushed due dates of assignments back and also eliminated some that would cause stress.”</p> <p>“He was flexible with the changes he made, and when some changes weren’t making sense he made another change. For example. Participation became difficult to assess via zoom, so he decided we would participate with Piazza --which would be great except we have 200 students in class posting once a week, piazza became overwhelming and no longer a resource anyone wanted to use or even look at-- after he realized it wasn’t beneficial and was actually ruining that resource he was flexible and changed participation to a different form.”</p>	<p>Where possible, implement flexible course policies and communicate this flexibility to students. Offer multiple options for viewing lectures, earning participation points, completing in-class work, and (as appropriate) completing higher-stakes assessments (e.g., multiple exam time slots, longer turn-in window for papers, etc.)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Smaller classes: may be manageable on a case-by-case basis • Larger classes: consider offering multiple alternatives across the board
e. “Not to blame”	<p>Overwhelmingly, students emphasized that while the transition to online learning was a challenge, faculty members did their best with what they were given and were “not to blame” for students’ struggles.</p>	<p>“Both ways were fine, although the second one felt more unenjoyable (of no fault to the professor, just how online learning goes). I think I was less motivated to work as hard, simply because of being at home, and I had to discipline myself into watching the lectures. This is, again, of no fault to the instructor, just the way that this situation occurred.”</p> <p>“Throughout the transition to online learning, [Professor] still gave 110% to his students, even though he was at home with his kids, which I can imagine is quite challenging.”</p>	<p>N/A</p>

2. DELIVERING COURSE CONTENT: LECTURES, LABS, & RECITATIONS

Theme	Description	Quotes	Recommendations
a. Preferred lecture format	<p>Synchronous lectures: Most students enjoyed live lectures when they were engaging, interactive, and concise. For purely didactic lectures, students were mixed in their preference for live vs recorded lectures; many felt that if a lecture was not interactive, they would rather view it on their own time. However, several students who did not receive this option said they wished they had.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Pros: retain routine/course schedule, facilitate interaction, facilitate live Q&A Cons: potentially awkward, infeasible for students in other time zones/home learning environments <p>Asynchronous (recorded): Overwhelmingly, students appreciated having access to lecture recordings. Most suggested this be retained even when in-person classes resume. Students viewed lecture recordings when they were unable to attend live lectures, but also used them as a way to reinforce or review material at their own pace.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Pros: self-paced, allow for breaks Cons: less engaging, students unable to ask questions live, 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> For courses relying heavily on didactic lectures, consider offering multiple viewing and participation options (i.e. synchronous sessions that are recorded for students unable to attend). If attendance is low, make adaptations as needed. For discussion-based courses, offer synchronous discussion sessions. Consider alternatives (e.g. discussion forums) and record sessions for students who are unable to join live. For courses with an existing flipped structure, retain this structure; offer asynchronous lectures with synchronous discussion/Q&A sessions.
b. Synchronous lectures: What (not) to do	<p>Students who enjoyed synchronous lectures particularly enjoyed:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Use of interactive Zoom features (breakout rooms*, whiteboard, polls) to facilitate student participation Screen sharing—often easier than projectors or whiteboards to read and follow along Ability to ask questions in the chat box—for many, more approachable than raising their hand and asking in-person. <p>Students who did not enjoy these lectures mentioned:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Frustrations with faculty's lack of familiarity with technology Feeling detached and disengaged Misuse of chat box, which was distracting Breakout rooms in which students did not talk, which was awkward and not helpful 	<p>"In [in-person] class, I was often too far from the board to really see very well, so online was definitely more engaging and allowed me to ask questions and feel more comfortable doing so since they were in a chat format."</p> <p>"The breakout rooms were also really helpful. I was able to network with classmates I otherwise would not have met. The syllabus says that we should work with others in lecture to complete problems, but no one ever talks. The breakout room was the first time I worked together with people and it was really helpful."</p> <p>"On Zoom, we were often placed in breakout rooms to solve a set of problems with other students. While this seems like a clever idea, no one would ever talk."</p> <p>"While she did her best to stimulate the classroom environment during our virtual learning, the switch to breakout rooms often disrupted the flow of the class as there was no direction or explanation going on in the breakout room."</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> If needed, seek out support for use of online learning technology Break lectures into sections and incorporate time for breaks Monitor the chat box (or assign a TA to do so) to engage students with diverse communication styles Use interactive features purposefully to enhance student learning If incorporating discussion (large-group or via breakout rooms), set clear expectations and use tools (e.g. discussion questions, assigned student facilitators/note-takers, etc.) to facilitate participation.
c. Asynchronous lectures: What (not) to do	<p>Students who enjoyed asynchronous offerings mentioned:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ability to pause, rewind, and re-watch lectures Flexibility with student schedules and time zones 	<p>"Recorded lecture notes were actually more helpful than how I had to learn prior, in face-to-face meetings. With recorded notes, I could rewind notes just in case I missed something, and was able to take much more detailed notes."</p> <p>"I actually found that I was able to do a better job learning the course material via remote instruction. Having the lectures recorded was</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ensure you have adequate recording equipment (at the very least, a high-quality microphone, and ideally a high-quality webcam) Divide lectures into sections, so students can pause and take a break as needed

	<p>Students who did not enjoy these offerings mentioned:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Instructors moving too quickly through material • Inability to ask questions or clarify points live during lecture • Poor audio/video quality <p>Several students in asynchronous-only courses mentioned they would have liked the added option of live sessions to interact with instructors.</p>	<p>extremely helpful for me to go back and learn the material after the class and add notes that I wasn't able to write in time."</p> <p>"I felt like the videos covered too much too quickly and went much faster through the material than the in-person lectures went during face-to-face instruction. It was much more difficult to retain the information from the videos."</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure lectures are delivered at a manageable pace despite lack of interruptions • Consider offering live sessions (e.g. office hours, Q&A, review sessions, discussions) in tandem with recordings, to facilitate interaction
<p>d. Making online learning fun & engaging</p>	<p>Students appreciated faculty efforts to make online learning fun and stress-free. This was a common theme for synchronous classes, and included:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • creatively themed lectures (e.g. pajama day, bring your pet to class day, sit outside for class) • encouragement of student collaboration in and out of class • check-ins before or after lectures • guest lecturers (who may have otherwise been unable to come to campus) • real-world demonstrations 	<p>"Little things like dog of the day and the way she listened to questions made me motivated to show up and bring my best effort to class. It was a huge class, but she was able to make us feel more unified through these things and many more."</p> <p>"During a time like this, it was nice to always know that every [class] there was a kind face on the other side of the screen that was excited to see me."</p> <p>"Ironically, the online learning format allowed for opportunities that we wouldn't have had traditionally. Namely, [Professor] recorded online lectures from his lab, and he performed several demonstrations and experiments to show real applications of what we were learning in class."</p> <p>"Every day, [Professor] started class with a Spanish music video and it made class much more "fun" and got everyone excited for class."</p>	<p>For synchronous lectures, "arrive" to class early and stay late to say hi to students, answer questions, and check in on them socially.</p> <p>Encourage students to connect offline and form virtual study groups, etc. Facilitate in-class collaboration via breakout rooms where feasible.</p> <p>Be creative! Take advantage of teaching outside a traditional classroom to introduce new content, invite guests, etc.</p>
<p>e. Adaptations for labs</p>	<p>Most bench lab courses adapted by providing students with a video demonstration of lab procedures, datasets, and post-lab questions to assess their understanding of lab material. Students by and large found this challenging. While some students preferred watching the videos as it took less time, most felt that a meaningful part of learning was lost without the hands-on component of lab.</p>	<p>"Although there was the loss of hands-on experience, the videos were so detailed that the lack of in person activity was irrelevant. The lab went just as smoothly online as in person."</p> <p>"We kind of lost the physical aspect of actually performing labs. I honestly did not mind this because lab is tedious and takes 3 hours to do. I found it much more useful to just watch the video, look at the data, and then use the lab time to work through the post-lab."</p> <p>"After the remote instruction, it was very difficult to understand the labs as well, and the post-labs felt kind of pointless because I was basically just doing calculations without understanding the rest of the lab, as hard as I tried. There's a lot I gained from the hands on experience, I guess."</p> <p>"As a lab, my experience greatly decreased upon switching to online. I had no hands-on experience, that which is most necessary when performing a lab. This experience makes it easier to complete the post lab and internalize concepts learned before the lab. The videos were</p>	<p>If using videos to replicate lab, ensure they are highly detailed and accompanied by detailed instructions, background information, and extra resources to support student engagement.</p> <p>Offer live Q&A support for reviewing key concepts and procedures from lab videos.</p>

f. Discussing COVID in the classroom

A few students highlighted how faculty brought=COVID into wider class discussions. Students appreciated this opportunity to directly apply their course content to the ongoing pandemic, or to think about how the pandemic influenced their fields.

often hard to follow and I stopped watching them after the first online week.”
 “She also was able to make the course topical, looking at the current Covid-19 pandemic through an anthropological lens.”
 “Talking about the arts and how the current pandemic affects them was a great conversation to be a part of.”

Consider discussing the pandemic alongside existing class content, whether with a dedicated “COVID-19 and X” lecture, or by integrating topical discussions throughout the course.

3. ASSIGNMENTS & ASSESSMENTS

Theme	Description	Quotes	Recommendations
a. Exam format	<p>Most students found it stressful to adapt to a new exam format/website, particularly when there were embedded time limits or when the online exam required them to upload photos (e.g. in classes that required students to draw graphs, etc.).</p> <p>In contrast, students who had open-book exams or online take-home exams appreciated it and felt like the format was more relaxed than it normally would have been.</p> <p>Some students struggled with exam navigability on new platforms.</p>	<p>“Taking online tests was extremely unforgiving. The time limits were strict and impossible to manage when internet/connectivity issues. Also, new restraints on the final exam (not being able to go back to previous pages) add pressures that are not present in an in-person exam.”</p> <p>“Without explanation, the testing location was changed to a newly created website that didn’t allow you to go back to a section after you moved on to the next section. This was extremely unfair and stressful. This made it impossible to double check my answers at the end of the exam.”</p> <p>“She gave an open note midterm which students could write their answers and upload them to Gradescope within the 72 hour period. This was very helpful for students with difficult internet connection or time challenges because they could choose when to do it and not worry they would lose internet in the middle of a timed Sakai exam.”</p>	<p>Consider expanding exam time-limits or offering untimed take-home exams if feasible.</p> <p>Early in the semester, ensure all students are aware of the process to request an accommodation through the appropriate channel, in case they have a need for extra time.</p> <p>Provide detailed instructions for students on how to navigate exam websites. Consider doing a live demo, recording a how-to video, or offering practice (ungraded) exams so students can test out the format.</p>
b. Final grades & assessment weighting	<p>Students appreciated when adjustments were made to assignment/assessment weighting, particularly for high-stakes end-of-course exams which were a challenge for many.</p>	<p>“[Professor] also adjusted the grading policy, creating two methods of grading and keeping the highest for each student, after the third exam. For many students, myself included, the transition to online learning was difficult and the third exam was very challenging. My score was very low. [Prof] adjusted the grading policy to account for these challenges.”</p>	
c. Workload & number of assignments	<p>While most students preferred that the number of course assignments be reduced post-pandemic, a few indicated that having more lower-stakes assessments (e.g. weekly quizzes) was a helpful way to make sure they were on track and prepared for higher-stakes exams.</p>	<p>“I also really appreciated the cancellation of some assignments. It felt like my workload with my classes combined just kept piling up during the pandemic but I had less motivation to do any of it, so it was nice to have a professor that recognized things were difficult right now and tried to relieve some of that stress for us.”</p> <p>“Weekly quizzes were very helpful at letting me know what I needed to work on for the upcoming exams.”</p> <p>“The lack of homework once we went remote essentially killed all learning. [Professor] essentially expects students to teach themselves, but homework is the only effective tool.”</p>	<p>For classes designed to have a few high-stakes assessments, consider introducing optional lower-stakes assessments to help students recover grades and prepare for future assessments.</p> <p>For classes designed to have many regular assignments, consider making some optional or removing them entirely if it will not substantially impact grading schemes.</p>

4. COURSE MATERIALS & ORGANIZATION

Theme	Description	Quotes	Recommendations
a. PowerPoint slides	Overwhelmingly, students appreciated having access to PowerPoint slides in advance of class. Many requested that this be retained in the future.	<p>"With switching to online classes he made entire powerpoint slides that were extremely beneficial and helpful for me to understand the material."</p> <p>"After moving to remote instruction, I feel like I was able to absorb more of the course content than I was able to in class. In [in-person] class, [Professor] would have lengthy slides and would give our class little time to take notes from them. Also, her PowerPoints were never posted so it made it difficult to fill in the gaps."</p>	Post PowerPoint slides and consider developing extra slides with practice problems, reminders, and other content
b. Course organization	<p>Many students said they were able to succeed if courses were well-organized. This included having well-organized course websites, clear instructions for online assignments/lectures, and regular communication about changes to course policies and procedures.</p> <p>For students who did not previously have access to a course website, online learning provided them with an easier way to stay organized.</p>	<p>"I found it helpful that [Professor], after transitioning to remote instruction, began sending us the questions that were going to be discussed in class beforehand. It allowed me to gather my thoughts even more before coming to class. This is an aspect that helped me learn better."</p> <p>"All assignments were transferred to Sakai, and a new Syllabus was created which helped me stay organized."</p> <p>"I knew exactly what to expect and everything was readily available on Sakai, with lots of resources if I needed help."</p> <p>"Simply having access to Sakai from my laptop and being able to access all the course material was much easier than in person."</p> <p>"She continued to post extra resources for us to use to learn, which I found really helpful."</p> <p>"Every day, I had a lecture to copy into my notes, an activity to do, and multiple videos to watch. I appreciated that she put so much work into helping us learn the material, however I probably spent twice the amount of time working on this class remotely than I did in lecture ... The links were optional, but I felt compelled to watch them as they were recommended by the instructor."</p>	<p>Ensure essential course information (deadlines, assignments, where to access materials, etc.) is provided to students in a variety of formats—course syllabi, websites, email, Sakai announcements.</p> <p>Pay extra attention to Sakai/course site organization, as students may lean more heavily on these features than in in-person learning.</p> <p>Revise and redistribute syllabi as changes are made during online learning adaptation.</p> <p>Consider providing more practice problems, external links, and other resources than you might for in-person learning. Encourage students to utilize these collaboratively.</p> <p>If providing many optional resources, be clear about their purpose so students understand when they might be useful.</p>
c. Additional resources	Students appreciated having a variety of resources from which to learn (e.g. lectures, videos, slide decks, review sheets, practice problems, etc.). However, some students felt overwhelmed with options and obligated to use all resources provided, even those that were marked optional.		

5. LEARNING AT HOME: STUDENT ABILITIES & ADAPTATIONS

Theme	Description	Quotes
a. Stress	Overall, students struggled with at-home learning. Many found it was challenging to focus at home, given the online learning environment resulted in limited physical activity (e.g. not walking around campus/between buildings) and increased screen time. Students were also stressed and lacked motivation for learning during the pandemic.	<p>"It was very difficult to give these lectures the attention they demanded because of home situations and from just not being in the physical classroom."</p> <p>"The hardest part of the transition online for me personally was staying engaged during lectures. That is not a comment in any way on the quality of the lectures - I just got easily distracted at home and found myself not really paying attention."</p> <p>"Just what is going on in the world was the biggest challenge and dealt a blow to my scholarly motivation."</p>
b. Home learning environments	<p>Many students described facing household distractions which made home learning difficult. These included caretaking responsibilities as well as noise from other household members working and learning at home (which also had implications for connectivity).</p> <p>For these students, having the option to view recorded lectures later was important.</p> <p>Many students highlighted the importance of having a private space to study and attend lectures, which was not always available to them at home.</p>	<p>"It just is not feasible for most students to study at home the way we are able to at UNC. We do not have a place like Davis in our homes where we can go and have it be quiet like needed and have 100% dependable wifi. The learning cannot be as in-depth when we're online, which is not due to the professors, it is due to the change in living situations for students. Personally, I live in a house with 4 other family members who are working and attending classes online...so it is a constant battle of who is in Zoom meetings, who is trying to watch TV while others need to study, etc."</p> <p>"I don't have a space in my home to study, so it was very difficult to concentrate and focus for my school work."</p> <p>"Once classes became online things got much harder for me in this class. There was so much to learn with not much time to learn it and while taking care of my grandmother at home I really struggled to take my time learning the extra material he provided us."</p> <p>"It was challenging. It's harder to find the time to dedicate toward school when I'm surrounded by distracting young family members. Most helpful to the remote learning experience was the recording of lectures so I could watch them at nighttime when the distractions settled down."</p>
c. Student adaptations	<p>Students found the following adaptations helpful to facilitate their at-home learning:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identifying a quiet space to work • Planning and maintaining a regular schedule • Taking regular breaks • Seeking support from fellow students 	<p>"It's been a bit hard, just because I learn so well from a traditional lecture style. Keeping a regular schedule, as close to what I had in school, helped a lot, to keep things normal and to keep me motivated. I've had to change how I process and learn, which was difficult but in the end, possible."</p> <p>"It was definitely difficult to not be in a classroom setting, but it taught me to be responsible and plan out my time better."</p> <p>"I found it helpful to do lots of practice problems and try to meet with friends that I normally studied with on Zoom in order to still study with friends from a distance."</p>