

Faculty Information Session Q+As: June 30, 2020

Note: In an effort to be timely and as concise as possible, we selected representative questions from the many submitted.

How will laboratories work for remote students?

The Faculty and Academic Affairs group of UVMStrong prepared guidance for deans, department chairs, and program directors for how to deliver lab, studio, practicum, and internship courses in the fall 2020 semester. Decisions for how laboratories will work remotely will be made by the instructional team in consultation with the unit chair.

Are we prohibited from using zoom? It is important for us, as a class, to see each other.

Students have indicated that they strongly prefer a common platform for their courses. The university supports Microsoft Teams and makes it available to all UVM faculty, staff and students. Help and guidance for using Teams is readily available and routinely updated.

The two most requested features (gallery view allowing you to see 49 people at once) and breakout rooms are both coming to Teams and are expected to be in place before the fall semester. The timeline for these and other upcoming features are described in the following Microsoft blog post: [Teams Meetings Announcements](#)

What tentative plans do you have for large lecture courses?

In order to enforce social distancing guidelines the capacity of all large lecture venues has been reduced significantly. While decisions for course modality are being made by chairs and deans in consultation with the faculty, it is not likely these courses will be offered in-person. Faculty will know of their course designation in mid-July.

Are the students truly aware of the intricacies of HyFlex socially distanced in-class delivery for Fall? If so, could you do a course specific survey on modalities students are comfortable in just the way the faculty did?

The university is not recommending the HyFlex course model.

Regarding the students who will be offered the option of taking classes remotely, will they be offered separate remote courses or are faculty who are teaching 100% in-person going to be expected to teach these individuals remotely in addition to the in-person class?

Faculty will not be asked to teach the same class in two different modes, but some faculty will be teaching in mixed or hybrid modes of delivery. Classrooms will be upgraded with technology to allow lectures to be recorded or live streamed.

Most faculty have requested “mixed modes.” So far we have heard options for tech-enhanced classrooms for simultaneous in-person and remote students, as well as meeting with half of our students each class meeting. Are other hybrid models also being considered?

Faculty can implement hybrid course models they are comfortable with and that can improve the students' learning experience. The UVMStrong Faculty and Academic Affairs working group will be

providing guidelines and recommendations to instructors choosing the hybrid/mixed course modality. Additionally, CTL can help you work out the best solution for your class. For faculty who will be teaching to students in class while others are joining remotely, there will be trained students in most classrooms helping with the technical side.

Has a classroom-sharing model been explored? By that, I mean hybrid classes that meet only once a week (say, T) in a larger room, while another in the same time slot gets the room the other day (say, R). A colleague and I with the same schedule would love to share our rooms: I would have M, and he wants WF. This has worked well at other institutions.

Arranging for shared schedules between similar class sizes in the same time slot is only possible with careful coordination with the Registrar's office, due to the complexities of redoing the SOC with minimal disruption to original meeting patterns/times.

What supports will be provided to students if they miss weeks of classes due to contracting Covid?

Instructors should work with the student and their dean's office to make the necessary arrangements and accommodations for the student to complete the course.

After hearing Thomas say he will be giving an exam prior to Thanksgiving, I am worried that students will be overwhelmed with exams/assessments in the final days before break. Has this been considered?

What was conveyed was an individual instructor choice and not a broad recommendation. Faculty should carefully consider (and communicate to their students) their choices and be mindful of how their choices would impact the student experience.

Are faculty still required to hold office hours? I'm not sure if I can stay 6 feet apart from a student considering the size of my office.

Office hours are required and will be conducted through Teams. Locally controlled rooms that have not been assigned for general instruction may also be available for office hours, as decided and arranged by the department.

Has anyone considered the repercussions for trust and retention of students if getting them on campus paying room and board this fall results in student deaths and serious illness?

We must as an institution look at the health and safety challenges posed to our community by the pandemic holistically. For some of our community members, campus will be the safest place for them in the fall. The university is taking every safety precaution recommended by the CDC and following the strict guidelines of the Vermont Department of Health and Governor Scott. To assume that all students can afford to take a break from instruction, or that all students have safe and high quality conditions for remote learning at home would be to ignore what we already know about our student population, including many of our low income and international students.

For other students, being on campus is not the right choice. The at-home option being offered to students and families in a communication today allows them to weigh the state-mandated safety measures, including mandatory twice a week testing and daily health and temperature checks for students, against their own situation. We do anticipate that many students will feel comfortable returning to campus, but that others will choose to learn from home, helping to lower the overall density of students on campus and in residence halls.

[A new study from Cornell](#) presents evidence that given the desire of students to be local, regardless of instructional mode of their classes (something we also saw in the spring semester), on-campus instruction with safeguards such as mandatory testing in place will result in less spread of Covid-19 than a situation in which students live locally but have only remote instructions and do not need to participate in testing. This is just one example of the fast-moving flow of information and modeling that is shaping the way institutions across the country are making decisions regarding fall semester.

How will course evals be used for this semester? I imagine some students will be unhappy with whichever mode we choose if they want an all in-person course.

Faculty can capitalize on describing the instructional changes they made to remote, hybrid and online instruction and the trainings they engaged in to support student learning. Chairs and deans are currently able to consider the trainings and adjustments faculty made in their portfolios to consider in their overall teaching.

Would expectation for class be to be taught both in person and fully remote? Or would the student be expected to disenroll and take at another time.

The expectation will be for courses to be taught in the modality designated in the Schedule of Courses.

How will more faculty who teach, the full Faculty Senate, and the Faculty Union be incorporated as full partners in the deliberations concerning planning and preparation for the fall?

The university has followed the Faculty Senate leadership's preference for consulting with the Executive Council on the wide range of decisions that are being made daily as part of UVM's pandemic response and fall planning. All of the UVMStrong working groups have faculty members, who are equal partners in these working groups, along with staff and administrators. In addition to drawing on faculty expertise, we rely on these faculty to bring in a range of additional faculty voices. The working groups cannot be significantly expanded and still serve their function, but we do rely on a number of other ad hoc groups working "on the ground" to problem-solve and develop implementation plans. We have also formed a small faculty working group that has been problem-solving with ETS and CTL to develop a set of best practices for teaching in the fall classroom setup, and will be seeking additional faculty volunteers for this group. Social distancing guidelines will limit the size of that group, as they work on campus in different classrooms, but we do expect to ask for two or three more faculty volunteers to serve as peer leaders as we move towards fall. Finally, all faculty were given the opportunity to indicate their preferred or acceptable modes of teaching for the fall semester. The information from the questionnaire served as the basis of conversations between faculty and their chairs concerning planning and preparation for the fall.

How will the experience of teaching faculty be factored into the ongoing evaluation of how things are going as conditions change (in whatever ways) in the fall? In other words, how will faculty—as committee members, or via faculty governance systems and UA negotiations—be involved in steering the course of the university's academic affairs?

See answer to the previous question.

If students will be given the option to take all courses online, are faculty essentially being forced to adopt a HyFlex model of instruction?

Not all courses will be available for students who select the at-home option.

We are open to many pedagogical solutions as long as faculty are offering a high-quality educational experience. We encourage faculty to work with CTL to find creative pedagogical pathways to achieving the class experience you want for your students.

Will all classes, no matter their normal delivery mode, need to be offered in an online version?

All classes will be switching to remote after Thanksgiving.

What provisions are being made for students whose underlying conditions put them at higher risk?

Students have been given the option to do the semester at home.

When will faculty have the opportunity to practice using the live streaming technology? It's imperative for us to have the ability to practice before classes start.

We fully agree that practice time is critical and ample time will be dedicated to this during the week of August 24. Earlier dates may be available and we will update the plan as the technology arrives and the classrooms are ready.

I know that the vast majority of students have laptops, powerful phones, etc., that are not required. How do we plan to support students of modest means who've historically used lab computers—and what happens if and when they are sent home?

We faced this issue in the spring and created a small pool of loaner laptops for student use. We were able to meet all the identified demand and are prepared to do the same this fall. Additionally, we will be introducing technology that will make specialized applications (typically available only in computer labs) accessible to students using their own devices. This step should also reduce the need for student access to physical computer labs.

Will all of the rooms have recording / live streaming capabilities? Or will it just be the GP rooms? If it's the latter, how will we teach synchronously if we are in a smaller classroom?

All GP rooms will have recording / live streaming capabilities and we are working to upgrade all the non-GP spaces will too. The non-GP spaces are more challenging because they don't all have the same baseline technology. We're working with each of the dean's offices to identify the priority spaces with the goal of configuring them to have the same recording / live streaming capabilities as the GP classrooms.

Would it be a good idea to use graduate students and faculty that are used to working with OSHA guidelines and Risk Management in experimental labs to communicate how one can implement the self-discipline of obeying federal regulation in workplaces?

All members of the faculty and staff are required to complete VOSHA training before returning to campus.

What if we get sick?

Employees who get sick should report this information using the [employee tracking form](#). In addition, follow the process outlined in the VOSHA training and seek medical care.

Can students refuse to attend class if they believe the instructor is showing symptoms?

Anyone showing symptoms is required to report them and self-quarantine. Students can file a health and safety report as outlined in VOSHA

How can the library open up safely?

A detailed plan which will include social distancing, crowd control, disinfection protocols and curbside pick-up is being developed for the libraries.

Have you considered having students (perhaps those that are studying public health and other related fields) take on any leadership roles and/or support efforts on campus to do contact tracing, etc.?

We would welcome any students studying public health and other similar fields who are interested in a role with the university's response to contact their advisor and Gary Derr.

The Covid testing Gary mentioned—does this mean serology or PCR (i.e. exposure or current infection)? And would this include contact tracing as well?

The testing is PCR and it will include contact tracing.

You talk about using apps for screening. What about students or faculty who do not have a smart phone?

The screening process will be available through multiple means, not just an app.