

Tips and Guidance for Faculty teaching remotely

3/25/2020

To: Baruch Faculty

From: Patricia Fleming, Director of Student Disability Services

What follows are tips and guidelines for faculty teaching remotely during this extraordinary semester. The advice relates to teaching ALL students, not just those with disabilities. I am certain you will find it useful.

Mental Health

- The current uncertainty and change may precipitate new mental health challenges in your students. Throughout this semester, continue to refer students to Counseling@baruch.cuny.edu and disability.services@baruch.cuny.edu and deanofstudents@baruch.cuny.edu. Many students with mental health challenges have never requested or used accommodations, while others may have hidden medical conditions.
- Be mindful of social isolation and ask students how they are doing.
- Encourage students to stay engaged with family and friends, and to check in with each other
- Anxiety can impact attention. Consider building time and redundancy into the curriculum.
- Begin class by asking how everyone is doing.
- Don't engage in private consultation with individual students that you would not extend to all students who seek your support.
- Don't ignore expressed student needs that fall outside your immediate duties as instructor. Refer them to Student Support Services.
- Reach out to students who were attending on-campus classes but are missing virtual classes. This may be a sign they are experiencing accessibility or other challenges.

Online Basics

- An important difference when teaching online instead of face-to-face is that you can no longer rely on being in the same place at the same time to convey important information. Stay in close communication with your students. Use multiple modes of communication.
- Blackboard is fundamentally user-friendly, BUT students who have never used it before vary in their skill level. Please check in with your students who may be struggling with technology.
- Please be aware that student accommodation needs may change with different modalities of instruction.
- If you choose to administer your exams in BB, you will set exam times. These need to be extended for students with accommodations.
- Consider choosing different methods of assessment which are NOT exam based.

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- Some students may be unfamiliar with taking tests online, which elevates their stress. Immediate communication is critical.
- It is important to let your students know how questions to instructors should be addressed during an online quiz/test.
- Many of you may be scanning material (textbook pages, articles, PDF, etc.) for students who do not have their notebooks or books. Many students will use screen reading software to access digital text. Use clear copies and scan in a straight vertical orientation.
- Remember the Principles of Universal Design for Learning: Provide multiple means of Representation; Action and Expression; and Engagement.
- For assignments that may be challenging (given the platform), consider Alternate Assignments that demonstrate knowledge of the content.
- Provide as much written notes to students as is possible (PDF format)
- Remind students to engage in their courses EVERY day. Because the content may be delivered in a method they are not used to, they may need to spend more time learning the content than they usually require.
- Fast paced classes may be problematic for: Students who speak English as an additional language, students in areas with slow Wi-Fi, and students with learning disabilities. Consider pacing your instruction and check in with your students to see how the pacing is working.
- In a synchronous class, encourage all students to self-identify (Hi, this is _____ speaking) as they begin comments.
- Consider recording your sessions so students who aren't able to join in real time can access later.
- When looking for and selecting multimedia for a course, choose videos that are already accurately captioned whenever possible. Note that "automatic" captioning is only about 80% accurate.
- You may consider assigning a student to take notes for the class in Google docs or similar platforms. This will help others focus while one person documents what was said.
- Don't assume that all students can see or make the same sense of your visual display as you intend. Because students use different devices, your verbal descriptions matter.

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- Keep things mobile friendly, students may only have a mobile device available. PDF's are easier to read on phones and tablets.
- Keep the file size small, and remember videos take lots of bandwidth.
- Be flexible and adjust deadlines and strategies to create an inclusive learning environment.
- Determine and provide a reasonable extended timeline for completing the work.

And finally, because I am the Director of Student Disability Services:

Tips on Accessible Learning (right click an Open Hyperlink)

https://help.blackboard.com/Learn/Administrator/Hosting/Accessibility/Accessibility_Features

Please work with Student Disability Services if you have questions.

Disability.services@baruch.cuny.edu