

How to Make Your Pivot to Remote Teaching Less Brutal

1. Set Realistic Expectations for Yourself and Your Students

We are all trying our best to make things work for the students, and we will get through it together if we don't distract ourselves with unrealistic expectations of trying to replicate the optimal college experience. It's OK to not know what you're doing. Don't overload your own capacity, as this is hard work that we're doing right now.

Keep it as simple, and accessible, as you can. A sudden move from in-person to distance learning is disruptive enough—there's no need to add to it by introducing complicated, unnecessary tools and procedures.

Start with what you've already been doing online as a regular part of your course: ACC email, Moodle, and perhaps Zoom. Those are your foundation for going forward. If you add new digital tools, be sure to provide your students with guidance (detailed screenshot instructions, brief tutorial videos) as to how to use them.

Be mindful that not all of your students will have access to high-speed internet if they're not on the campus, and some will likely be using their phones as their primary digital device. At the very least, ensure that what you're doing is mobile-friendly.

2. Manage Your Time and Energy

Teaching in person has built-in times where your mind can relax and re-set. With teaching remotely, it's important to manage your time and energy so that you don't burn out. One technique that can help you stay focused is the Pomodoro Technique.

Pomodoro Technique

This technique makes use of a timer. You set the timer to work for 25 minutes and work, and then take a five-minute break once you've finished. Then you reset the timer. Once you've done four sessions, you take a longer break for 20 or 30 minutes. Focusing on the amount of time working rather on one huge project after the next helps you not to feel overwhelmed.

This is useful advice for your students, who will also have to manage their time and energy differently.

3. Grading

You have some options around grading. You are able to use your professional judgement, and based on the program and context, award course grades based on marks earned so far in the course, based on current student standing.

Deans can approve changes to grading schemes. For example, you could use pass/fail or successful/unsuccessful instead of traditional grades. If you feel this would work for your course, seek approval to do so.

Deans can also approve waiving the course requirement altogether.

4. Final Evaluations

Avoid exams unless absolutely, completely necessary.

Distance Exams: Any college requirement for distance exams to proctored is suspended, except where there are regulatory requirements, such as in the School of Nursing. Interpretation of those regulatory requirements must be approved by the Dean. Faculty should prioritize other assessment strategies, including open book exams or alternative means.

Large groups of college final exams will not be allowed to be written in-person.

Final exams can be substituted with alternative assessments, such as take-home open book exam, a project or paper, or built as a set of questions in Moodle.

Accommodations need to be coordinated the Student Accessibility Coordinator, Lynn Andrews. You can reach her at (204) 725-8700 ext 6052 or Andrewsl2@assiniboine.net.

5. Give Your Students Structure and Clear Direction

Your students are likely feeling anxious and confused right now, and we should keep that in mind. They may not be the best version of themselves. Let's help them focus on positive, professional behaviours and attitudes.

Remember, this is stressful for everyone. Anxiety and fear can show up in many ways in students. Some of the more common indicators can be found in the **4 F's (Freeze, Fight, Flight, Fawn)**.

Freeze: If you experience a student who agrees to the tasks, group work and assignments and then doesn't follow through, they may be freezing due to stress.

Reaching out and clarifying with them "You've indicated xyz would be okay and that you can complete the work, but I notice you are not handing things in. Is working from home harder than you originally thought? How can I help?"

Fight: If a student becomes argumentative, refuses to work, or complains, they may be experiencing the fight stress response. Don't take the reaction personally. Acknowledge that this is a difficult situation for everyone and ask what could be better to help us all in this stressful time.

Flight: If a student disappears from your course, they may be experiencing the flight response. Reach out to them and express your concern. If they do not respond, please let your Student Success Advisor know so they can continue to try and connect with them.

Fawn: If a student volunteers to help with everything and appears to be wearing themselves out, they might be experiencing the fawn stress response. Set limits with them and let them know there is a plan in place and supports available for people to complete their studies. They do not need to do everything for everyone.

Concrete communication with clear directions, rubrics for marking, and step-by-step procedures to complete assignments, assessments and projects will help students focus and quiet stress responses.

If you would like to create learning aids or develop assignments and other assessments please reach out to CLI as soon as possible.

6. Create Space for Conflicting Time Pressures

Students who have children in the K-12 system may now be impacted and attendance may be interrupted because of childcare responsibilities. We encourage you to choose asynchronous teaching - meaning recording your lectures and letting your students complete course work in their own time.

Don't stress attendance: we can moderate expectations in terms of our interpretation of student attendance policies and our expectations of students' ability to focus and keep track of a changing academic environment.

Attendance expectations are to be modified and relaxed; students are not required to provide doctor's notes for absences to avoid pressure on the health care system.

7. Remember You Are Part of a Team

The Centre for Learning Innovation is here to support you. We strongly suggest actively maintaining contact with your Faculty Development Coaches during this time.

Keep in touch with your colleagues, who are in the same situation you are. And keep in touch with your colleagues, Dean, Chairs and Student Success Advisors. Together you can continue to develop creative and robust learning experiences for the students and each other.

If you are concerned about a student, reach out to the supports available through your Chair and Student Success Advisor. If you have amazing stories to share about new teaching methodologies and experiences, share them with CLI. We are all in this together and together we will succeed.

And lastly, ask for help when you need it.

Adapted from "How to Make Your Online Pivot Less Brutal" by Kevin Gannon:
<https://www.chronicle.com/article/How-to-Make-Your-Online-Pivot/248239?fbclid=IwAR0t2HWsZ-qGy23uhq76nAqCctOBTkKO76-6XKlccowSV36Ducbeo4OmKcA>