

This message is sent to all UConn faculty and graduate students on behalf of Peter Diplock, Associate Vice Provost of the Center for Excellence in Teaching and Learning.

Dear Colleagues,

I hope this communication finds you well and looking forward to the start of a new academic year!

I am reaching out to provide a CETL perspective on the state of teaching preparedness and to provide additional resources for your consideration. The list below provides a selection of curated highlights for your consideration.

I also thought it might be useful for you to have a sense of the collective university-wide effort to prepare for an unprecedented fall semester, and the unparalleled level of commitment demonstrated by our faculty and graduate TA instructors to acquire the knowledge and skills necessary to be effective in the multi-modal teaching and learning COVID-19 environment.

In the last six weeks we have seen more than 700 faculty and graduate TA instructors complete the week-long Preparing for Distance Education course. In the last four months we have seen 7,000 registrations from more than 2,200 individuals across all CETL teaching and educational technology workshops. There have also been many faculty and graduate TA instructors-led, department level, and school/college wide initiatives to address unique discipline specific or context specific (i.e. lab, performance, field-based, and clinical courses) challenges. And, there is still time for additional training in the next few weeks as we plan to continue to offer our [most popular workshops](#) and 30 minute [one on one consultations](#) for more focused needs.

Sincerely,
Peter

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Resources for Fall Semester Teaching Preparation

- **HuskyCT**
 - Every lecture and discussion course this fall semester has a HuskyCT course site already created. If you need HuskyCT assistance for your course please contact edtech@uconn.edu or attend one of the many [workshops](#) being offered in August.
- **Syllabi resources**

- Faculty and graduate TA instructors should review fall 2020 draft language for syllabi in this [shared Google doc from CETL](#) available for all instructors to use as a template
 - Faculty and graduate TA instructors should post and display their syllabus in their HuskyCT course site
 - Faculty and graduate TA instructors are also encouraged to provide a link to their syllabus in StudentAdmin by filling out this form: <https://ecampus.uconn.edu/syllabuslink/>
- **Student communication/engagement**
 - Creating engaging instruction, meaningful work, a sense of classroom community, and structure are critical whether the class be in person, hybrid, or remote. Learn about student desires for courses in this recent article, [What Incoming First-Year Students Want Online Learning to Be](#) or [schedule an appointment](#) with CETL staff to develop strategies for your course.
 - Faculty and graduate TA instructors teaching online and distance learning are encouraged to find ways to engage and connect with students, and promote active student-to-student interactions early in the semester to promote student feelings of engagement and connectedness. Starting the semester remotely and teaching online for the entire semester will require innovative approaches that sustain student motivation.
 - Faculty and graduate TA instructors should specify and clarify office hour protocols and their availability to meet with students.
 - Faculty and graduate TA instructors are encouraged to email their students, open their HuskyCT site early, or take other measures to assist their students in understanding what their course structure will be prior to the start of the semester. The structure of each course will be unique this fall and providing students with information earlier will assist them in preparing effectively.
 - All faculty and graduate TA instructors should develop a strategy to engage students who will not be able to attend class because of illness. This includes utilizing [Kaltura lecture capture](#) to record and then upload lectures. If you need training on Kaltura, please register for a workshop at https://fins.uconn.edu/upcoming_workshops.php
- **Accessibility:**
 - Although ideally all video content should be captioned, video content on a password-protected site, such as HuskyCT, is not required to be captioned unless the faculty or graduate TA instructor is notified by the Center for Students with Disabilities.
 - Captioning is available for any video through Kaltura but it is critical for faculty and graduate TA instructors to review and correct the captioning to ensure accuracy.
 - ITS also offers a [fee for service captioning option](#)
- **Assessment**
 - Faculty and graduate TA instructors are encouraged to develop a thoughtful assessment strategy aligned with their learning objectives and teaching modality. This includes remote assessment methods throughout the semester, and all final assessments which will be remote after the Thanksgiving recess. [Workshops](#) are offered that explore alternative assessment strategies and methods.

- **Technology**
 - ITS has made recommendations on [minimum technology requirements](#). If faculty and graduate TA instructors need laptops, headsets, or microphones, ITS recommends reaching out to your department IT staff and they will coordinate with ITS.
 - Be prepared for equipment and technical issues and tell students what the back-up plan is if lecture capture, recording, synchronous class time, etc. do not work out as planned.

- **COVID-19 considerations**
 - Acknowledge to yourself and to your students that these are difficult times. Be sensitive to student circumstances and learning environments. Work to reduce your own and your students' stress and improve mental health.
 - All faculty and graduate TA instructors should prepare for the possibility that the university may return to entirely remote learning at some point in the semester if public health conditions deteriorate significantly. Faculty and graduate TA instructors should have a back-up plan for completing the semester, which ensures continued structure, student engagement, and community in case this should occur.
 - All courses will be taught remotely following the Thanksgiving recess. Faculty and graduate TA instructors should be planning for how to continue to teach during this remote period and sharing that plan with students as soon as possible.
 - Faculty and graduate TA instructors should develop contingency plans to put in place should they get ill or test positive for COVID-19 during the semester (e.g. use the buddy system to identify a colleague who is aware of the syllabus and course plan and could step in and help support if needed).

- **Distance Learning (DL) tips and reminders**
 - If you are teaching synchronously, make sure to record all lectures. This can be done whether using [Webex](#) or [Collaborate](#).
 - Be sensitive to possible time differences. You may have international students enrolled in your classes. For example, students in China have a 12-hour time difference.
 - If you plan to administer exams please do so during the time allotted for your course in StudentAdmin/Peoplesoft. Moving exams outside your scheduled class time can create time conflicts for students.
 - Consider coming to campus to utilize technology in the classrooms to teach from. Please follow the University [mandates for testing](#) and be sure to reserve a classroom for your desired time.
 - CETL continues to offer their Preparing for Distance Education course if you need guidance on course planning. To register: https://fins.uconn.edu/upcoming_certificates.php

- **Online (www) tips and reminders**
 - Courses listed as www/online at UConn come with the expectation that the course has been designed to be taught entirely or mostly asynchronous (with judicious use of synchronous meetings, such as scheduled meetings to support students or student to student virtual meetings). If your course is to be delivered synchronously or mostly

synchronously, reach out to the Registrar's Office to have it relisted as Distance Learning.

- Faculty and graduate TA instructors using pre-recorded lecture videos are encouraged to modularize or chunk video length to shorter segments. Research suggests ~6- to 10-minute chunks are optimum.
- **In-person, hybrid/blended, or split with some on-campus presence**
 - To reduce SARS-Cov-2 transmission and to improve contact tracing, all faculty and graduate TA instructors teaching in-person modalities are encouraged to assign seating to ensure that students occupy seating according to each classroom's new lower density COVID configuration. Diagrams will be posted in each classroom and faculty and graduate TA instructors will receive a pdf copy via email prior to the start of the semester. Encouraging students to remain in their assigned seats throughout the semester will also promote learning students names more quickly.
 - Faculty and graduate TA instructors teaching hybrid/blended and split courses are reminded to provide all enrolled students with additional clarity about precisely when they need to be in-class versus online.
 - Prior to the beginning of the semester, faculty and graduate TA instructors teaching in person will be provided with a Personal Teaching Equipment kit that will include microphone covers, dry erase markers/eraser, and a clear mask that can be worn so students can see non-verbal expressions.
 - Classrooms at Storrs and the regional campuses are outfitted with [self-service Kaltura desktop lecture capture](#). Please be aware that only content projected to the screen and voice captured through the microphone will be recorded. Content written on the white board or other spaces will not be recorded.
 - While some faculty and graduate TA instructors may choose to do so, they are under no obligation to simultaneously teach students in-person and remotely synchronously at the same time for the entire semester. For those who plan to teach in person and synchronously simultaneously, faculty and graduate TA instructors should ensure they are in a classroom equipped to do so. Classrooms with live-streaming allows the faculty and graduate TA instructors to stream the content but not receive student responses; classrooms with video conferencing allow faculty and graduate TA instructors to stream but also engage the students in the conversation. For an updated list of available technology in each classroom: <https://classrooms.uconn.edu/classroom/>.