AY 2020–21 ACADEMIC INSTRUCTION:
GUIDANCE FOR COLLEGES, SCHOOLS, DEPARTMENTS, AND PROGRAMS
FROM THE ACADEMIC INSTRUCTION IMPLEMENTATION TEAM

Edition 8: December 7, 2020

Topics: Finishing the Fall Semester; Planning and Support for Spring 2021 and Beyond

Relevant Due Dates for Chairs and Directors: None in This Edition

Update from the Academic Instruction implementation team

Thanks to all for reading these Academic Instruction Implementation guidance editions so far in 2020. This edition is the last one planned for the fall semester.

Please email this entire edition of guidance to your faculty, your graduate students with teaching appointments, and your academic support staff.

Past and current editions of Academic Instruction guidance and their supporting materials are available [on the Academic Affairs website](#).

What's in this edition of guidance, and what's coming next

This edition of guidance focuses on finishing the fall semester, planning for spring 2021, and resources available for pedagogy and instructional technology for spring 2021. It also addresses preliminary planning for summer and fall 2021.

New editions of guidance will be published in spring 2021 as needed to guide faculty, staff, and students in any necessary changes to spring 2021 instruction and in planning for future academic terms.

Please continue to send questions, requests for clarification, and requests for further guidance. Your communications are welcome and help shape our decisions about instruction and instructional support and our recommendations to campus leadership. Individual faculty and other instructional personnel should direct questions to their chairs and directors. Chairs, directors and school/college administrators should send all queries and requests regarding Academic Instruction implementation to [Katherine Eggert](#), Senior Vice Provost for Academic Planning and Assessment.

Update: COVID-19 conditions and the start of the spring 2021 semester

Campus leadership is closely monitoring the course of the pandemic. The epidemiological models are showing that the current nationwide upswing in COVID-19 cases will likely continue into early January. In addition, Colorado's recently instituted COVID-19 dial represents more stages and metrics of COVID-19 spread and specifies more narrowly what activities can and can't take place in a county at each stage.

We know that faculty, along with staff, students, and families, need as much advance notice as possible so they can make plans. While certainty is never achievable during a pandemic, one of the lessons we have learned in 2020 is the importance of providing as much clarity and consistency as possible. We must avoid the whiplash we have all been feeling this fall semester. To that end, any decision regarding instruction mode for the start of the spring 2021 semester will be made well in advance of that start.

At this time, no changes in the spring 2021 academic calendar are anticipated, regardless of whether the campus begins in all-remote mode.

Tell your faculty, staff and students: finishing the fall semester

Conducting exams

- Please refer to Academic Instruction Guidance Edition #7 for guidance on conducting fall 2021 final exams. Note that different guidance on the time frame for a final exam applies, depending on whether your class is synchronous (in person or remote) or asynchronous (online).
- The Center for Teaching and Learning and the Office of Information Technology have posted guidance and best practices for conducting remote exams. Remember especially to:
    - Design the length and time frame of the exam to accommodate students whose access to the internet is unreliable
    - Provide a means by which students can contact you or a TA during the exam to report on issues with internet, Canvas, or Proctorio access; adjust their allotted exam time if necessary
    - Distinguish between time allocated for taking the exam from time needed to deal with the delivery mode (such as converting a file format or uploading answers at the end)
- OIT meets regularly with Canvas and Proctorio to ensure that their systems are stable, particularly during peak times such as final exams. Both companies have indicated that their systems are prepared to handle the extra stress during the exam period; however, service degradations can happen. If students experience technical issues during an exam, please advise them to contact:
    - Proctorio's 24/7 support online via chat, or by phone at 866-948-9248
    - The IT Service Center at oithelp@colorado.edu or 303-735-4357 for Canvas support
    If a major service disruption should happen, OIT will communicate it via the Service Alerts webpage. Service disruptions are also posted on the Canvas status page and Proctorio status page.

Snow days

- During the period that all teaching and exams are remote/online, no classes or exams will be canceled due to a snow event impacting campus. All faculty and students will continue with

remote/online teaching and learning regardless of the situation in Boulder and along the Front Range.

- Staff guidelines for snow days are unchanged. For more information, see the [Inclement Weather Guidance](#) page.

Building access, study spaces, and tents

- With the shift to remote teaching and learning, the campus has begun operating under enhanced building access protocols, [as detailed in CU Boulder Today](#).
- Students may continue to [book study spaces through "Find Your Study Spot"](#). Bookings are limited to the Engineering Center, the CASE building, and SEEC. Students may also reserve seats in Norlin Commons, using the [Libraries' reservation system](#).
- During the final exam period (Tuesday, Dec. 9–Sunday, Dec. 13), the Engineering Center and SEEC will be open for study space bookings every day from 7 a.m.–10 p.m. The CASE building will be open for study space bookings Tuesday–Friday from 7a.m.–10 p.m., but will be closed Saturday and Sunday.
- Hours for [the Rec Center](#), [the UMC](#), and [the Libraries](#) are published on their websites.
- All tents for student use have been removed. Use of tents in spring 2021 will be evaluated, but tents are not expected to be put in place any time before April due to cold and snow.

Research and libraries

- The Research and Innovation Office has [updated the campus on research operations](#) while Boulder County is on "level red" according to the state COVID-19 dial. Their message also contains guidance about how research may be affected by a stay-at-home order, if one is forthcoming.
- The University Libraries are continuing to offer contactless hold pickup of research materials. Check the [Libraries COVID-19 webpage](#) for services and updates.

Covid-19 testing

- See the campus [COVID-19 Symptoms and Testing](#) web page for availability and locations of campus COVID-19 testing for faculty, staff, and students.
- Through Friday, Jan. 8, 2021, CU Boulder faculty, staff and students with a Buff OneCard can [bring their immediate family/members of their household](#) to participate in the campus surveillance/monitoring program. All participants must be asymptomatic and arrive at the testing site accompanied by their immediate family/member of their household with a Buff OneCard.

Remind your faculty: planning spring 2021 course syllabi

Please refer to [Academic Instruction Guidance Edition #7](#) for important guidance for planning your spring 2021 syllabus. Some highlights:

- Instruction modes:

  - Unless public health conditions require the entire campus to go remote, all classes must be taught in the instruction mode advertised, whether in person, remote, online, or hybrid.
  - Hybrid courses are defined more narrowly as either (a) simultaneously offered in person and remotely; or (b) following a consistent meeting pattern with frequent and regular in-person class sessions.

- Academic calendar:

  - Classes begin Thursday, Jan. 14. The next day, Friday, Jan. 15, uses Wednesday meeting patterns. The Registrar is planning a series of communication and reminders on this, but instructors in classes that meet on Wednesdays should also send reminder communications to students about following the Wednesday class meeting schedule on that first Friday, Jan. 15. Here is an example message:

    > *In preparing for our first week of class this semester, remember that on Friday, Jan. 15, classes will follow a Wednesday class meeting schedule due to the adjusted spring semester schedule.*

  - Spring break will not be held; instead, there will be Wellness Days on Wednesday, Feb. 17 and Thursday, March 25. These are break days. No classes will be held, and faculty should not schedule review sessions, makeup classes, and the like on those days. Please also do not have exams or major assignments due the day after a Wellness Day, so that our students can truly take a day off to rest and recharge.
  - The academic calendars for the [Law School](#) and [Continuing Education](#) are slightly different from the rest of campus; please consult the linked web sites for updates.

- Midterm and final exams:
  - Guidance for scheduling and conducting midterm and final exams varies depending on the course instruction mode.

Other syllabus guidance from fall 2020 also applies to spring 2021:

- Syllabus statements:

  - As usual, the Vice Provost for Undergraduate Education will send all instructional personnel the required syllabus statements for spring 2021. These will include updated statements on COVID-19 requirements and student conduct related to COVID-19.

- Attendance policies and medical absences:

  - Student health services on campus—Wardenburg Health Center, Counseling and Psychiatric Services (CAPS), and Student Support and Case Management (SSCM)—no longer provide appointment verifications, also known as "doctor's notes," to students. Requiring doctor's notes puts a strain on campus medical services and forces students to make unnecessary trips to the doctor.

- Rather than requiring doctor's notes, instructors are encouraged to develop attendance policies that do not distinguish between "excused" and "unexcused" absences, and that build in enough flexibility for students who must miss several classes due to quarantine or recovery from COVID-19.

Looking ahead: summer 2021 and fall 2021 academic planning

Summer Session 2021

We currently anticipate a blend of in-person, hybrid, and remote/online course offerings in summer 2021, depending on health and safety considerations.

Summer session main campus enrollments were around 20% higher in 2020 than in 2019. While some of this unprecedented class demand is attributable to the drying up of many summer work and internship opportunities because of the pandemic, the campus's shift to online/remote classes in summer 2020also played a part, since many students who could not normally take in-person summer classes could take these classes online/remotely. For this reason, we encourage deans, chairs, and directors to ensure that remote and online courses remain a robust component of your unit's summer session offerings, if pedagogically feasible, while also offering in-person instruction.

In collaboration with their dean, units should also consider adding summer courses that are in high demand during fall and spring semester, as well as "last mile" courses essential to students' timely graduation.

Fall 2021

The Office of the Registrar has asked departments and programs to submit their fall 2021 classes following the same pattern as spring 2021: a blend of in-person, remote or online, and hybrid courses. This does not mean that the campus has made final decisions about fall 2021 instruction modes. Because we do not yet have information about the availability and distribution of COVID-19 vaccines, we are in a holding pattern during which we are assuming "COVID rules" will pertain until further notice. This includes "COVID rules" pertaining to classroom scheduling, class meeting patterns, instruction modes and passing times between classes.

There will be opportunities in the spring semester for the campus community to weigh in on fall 2021 instruction modes before a final decision is made.

Updates: student support for spring 2021

Advising

Academic advising and coaching support for undergraduate students will continue remotely through spring 2021, and most staff will continue to work from home. Some units may have limited staff on campus. Check with your advising team for details.

First-year cohorts

We will continue to develop the cohort experience through the spring semester. Students will continue to live in residential clusters; however, not all students will be taking courses together as part of that cluster. But all of our colleges, schools, and programs are partnering with Residence Life to offer co-curricular opportunities for students throughout the spring semester.

Student events, student organizations, and academic organizations

Student Affairs is working on increasing opportunities for students and student organizations to gather safely in person in the spring semester, COVID-19 conditions permitting. Academic Affairs is working on parallel guidance to academic units for in-person meetings of academic organizations.

Student mental health and wellness support

The university has increased its investment in mental health and wellness support for students by $1.8 million since the beginning of the pandemic, and resources will continue to grow in spring 2021 and beyond. Additional clinical services will be embedded in colleges and schools, and Health and Wellness Services plans to put a greater focus on providing students of color and other historically underrepresented groups with access to specially trained counselors who are more aware of unique challenges.

Updates: pedagogy support for spring 2021

- The Center for Teaching & Learning provides confidential consultations on a range of topics, such as creating inclusive syllabi, fostering community on Zoom, and effective practices for creating remote and online assessments. CTL staff are always happy to meet with individual instructors or to create workshops tailored to a department's needs.
- The CTL website features an ever-growing body of teaching resources to support campus educators.
- A calendar of spring events, including seminars and workshops, will be published on the CTL website in December. Themes for spring 2021 will be: Assessment, Inclusivity, Innovative Teaching, Teaching Well with Technology, and Wellness.

Updates: classroom technology support for spring 2021

Request a Technology Copilot to facilitate remote student participation in hybrid classes

OIT is happy to announce that The Technology Copilots program has been funded again for the spring 2021 semester. Technology Copilots help instructors set up Zoom before class begins and assist with Zoom during class. They engage with, and represent, remote students in class activities like discussions, questions and breakout sessions. They also help the instructor notice and report technical difficulties, and they advise the instructor on how to share types of content (music, video, equations, etc.) with in-person and remote students simultaneously. This partnership allows the instructor to focus on teaching. Consult the OIT website to learn more about the program or request a Technology Copilot or Technology Copilot training for your teaching assistant or learning assistant.

Canvas and Zoom integration will offer convenience for remote teaching

Starting Dec. 22, both instructors and students will be able to access Zoom directly from Canvas's navigation bar. Students will be able to easily find Zoom meeting links created by their instructors from within Canvas by clicking Zoom in the navbar or from their Canvas calendars. Instructors will be able to efficiently perform most Zoom functions from inside Canvas including scheduling meetings, viewing upcoming meetings, accessing cloud recordings and other Zoom functions. Instructors will also be able to access an attendance report for any Zoom meeting scheduled within the course. Watch for more information about this new integration in the days leading up to the rollout.

Student notification preferences in Canvas will reset for spring 2021

In order to help ensure that students receive important start-of-term messages sent via Canvas, their notification preferences will be reset before the spring 2021 semester. As a result, students will immediately be notified via email of new announcements and messages. Although students can still change the default behavior of notifications, it is recommended that students leave this particular setting in place so they can receive information from their instructors in a timely manner.

Please provide input on instructional printing requirements for students

With the increased use of online tools for teaching, learning, and assessment, OIT has seen a significant decrease in printing across campus at the wepa printing kiosks. OIT is assessing the use of printing for academic purposes and would appreciate your feedback via [OIT's printer usage survey](#).

OIT training on using academic technology effectively for various instruction modes

OIT offers a wide selection of [on-demand or real-time training sessions for campus-supported teaching technologies](#) like iClicker Cloud, remote-capable classrooms, Canvas studio and much more. You can also tap into the expertise of OIT's Learning Technology Consultants to dive into a specific problem, question or solution through [one-on-one consultations](#).

Check for academic technology service problems on OIT's Service Alerts website

With the extra stress put on cloud-based services used for remote learning and working during the pandemic, service degradations can happen. If a tool isn't working as it should, or you're unable to access a tool, please check OIT's [Service Alerts website](#) to see if a problem has been identified. From there, you'll be able to track updates about the issue, and in some cases, learn if there is a workaround.