

Advice and support to faculty teaching students in different time zones

Planning for the remainder of the Fall 2020 term

You may be teaching students in a classroom, in their dorms, across the US, and all across the globe— all in the same course! Accommodating the needs of all of these students is difficult, with local students perhaps wanting face-to-face time, students in their dorms and the EST desiring synchronous sessions, and students 12-13 hours ahead having a difficult time participating in synchronous sessions.

This guide is designed to help you think specifically about ways to ensure that students across different time zones can be successful in your course. Critical to their success will be making sure they have access to course materials, lectures, and discussions at times when it is easiest for them to learn.

Establish and maintain good communication with your students

By now, you have likely established an effective means of communication with all of your students. If you are experiencing challenges, consider the following:

- Make sure your students understand your expectations for attending your course(s) and participating.
 - If you allow students to participate fully asynchronously, you should confirm that they are accessing— and understanding— course materials or recorded lectures; consider using surveys or low stakes assessments (quizzes or a 3-minute paper assignment for feedback on what to start, keep, or stop doing.)
- When considering office hour times, make sure you reserve some time for students in distant time zones. For example, a student living in a time zone twelve hours ahead of EST may be able to attend a 10 am office hour, but would have difficulty attending an afternoon session.
- Provide clear instructions for course assignments. Before COVID, students could rely on each other to help understand assignment expectations. Take extra care to explain expectations and provide opportunities for students to seek clarification.
 - Consider sharing students' questions— and your answers to them— with your whole class, anonymously. Students often have the same questions.

- It is more important than ever before to use Canvas to [post your syllabus](#), netiquette expectations, assignment due dates, and other important information.
- Students who are at a distance may have a more difficult time asking for help and connecting with you and other students than those who are in Cleveland.
 - Anonymously survey your students and ask them for input on how to improve their learning experience. Their suggestions may be easy to implement.

Lectures and class activities

- **Lectures:** Consider recording lectures (or other videos) and making them available asynchronously for **all** students who cannot join your course synchronously. If your lectures run longer than 15 minutes, consider breaking them into shorter segments, or adding some form of student engagement within the lecture recording to break it up. To confirm that students watch and understand the videos, consider [adding some questions in Echo360](#) or in a low-stakes assessment in Canvas.
 - Preemptive questions help students anticipate material and test previous knowledge/assumptions before watching the video.
 - Knowledge check questions asked after concepts have been presented help students process information and check their understanding.
- **Class discussions:** Canvas discussion boards are great for asking students to reflect on concepts presented during lectures within 24 hours of a lecture being provided.
 - Consider requiring responses to other students' posts.
 - Your level of participation in Canvas discussion boards can vary to support the experience: you may wish to monitor but not respond, comment and clarify as needed, or be an active participant.

Assignments

- Keep time zone differences in mind when creating and considering assignment due dates. You can create multiple due date times for international students if the time of submission is important.
- Canvas can help mitigate time zone challenges!
 - Make use of differentiated release times and due dates.
 - Use Canvas to collect submissions, but have a back-up submission method identified if there are challenges with using Canvas for a particular assignment or learner.
 - Consult TLT's [Using Canvas for Learning Guide](#) for some examples of asynchronous activities.

- Communicate your expectations for assignments clearly and in advance to your students. A reminder via email or a Canvas announcement will reinforce your expectations, even if they are already listed in the syllabus.
- **Group/pair assignments:** Facilitate a method of choosing partners/groups to allow students in different time zones to participate fully. If they are in different time zones, they may need to use different communication tools than those in the same or a similar time zone (e.g., email, Canvas Group discussion board, Zoom.)
- **Presentations:** Consider allowing students to record their presentations using Zoom or Echo360 to submit to you and the class for feedback using a rubric. This can be done via a Canvas assignment or a discussion board.
- **Readings:** Provide students with key questions to ask themselves while reading the text. This will help them focus on important points.

Assessments

- Create Assessments using Canvas to take advantage of the following:
 - Set up different testing times to accommodate international students.
 - Use quiz banks and shuffle options to build different versions of assessments.
 - Create question groups for randomization of exam questions.
- Prepare a back-up plan if there are unforeseen problems.
 - Is there a version of the assessment that the student can take if they have issues while taking the exam?
 - With whom and how should the student communicate should any issues occur during the exam?
 - Is there a way to provide support to the student if there are issues?
 - Extend the due date? Different assessment option? A different time to retake the exam?

Resources on these topics from other universities

- [Strategies for Teaching Students in Different Time Zones](#) - Carnegie Mellon University
- [Asynchronous Learning Across Time Zones](#) - Columbia University
- [Course Workload Estimator](#) - Rice University
- [Students Abroad - COVID Resources](#) - University of San Francisco
- [Getting & Staying Connected with International Students](#) - Cornell University