ACADEMIC CONTINUITY PLAN

There are many types of disruptions that can significantly threaten the continuity of services at UAB (University). This plan addresses disruption to the academic, non-clinical activities of the University due to the outbreak of an infectious disease (“Infectious Disease”). The University must be prepared to manage the impact of such an outbreak, maintain the safety of the University community, and continue its operations as best as possible. To prepare for the most severe health scenario that affects the campus community, the campus may need to suspend in-person classes and close the campus for some number of days, weeks, or months until the transmission rate of the virus begins to subside. At UAB, there may be a different plan for clinical healthcare operations. This Academic Continuity Plan addresses the modifications we may need to make to our operations in the event of a significant academic disruption caused by the outbreak of an Infectious Disease. Separate direction will be provided by the Office of Student Affairs as to the availability of student housing and other student services. As described below, these modifications include both steps taken prior to any decision to suspend in-person classes as well as steps taken after such a decision has been made. This plan is intended to be a working document to be modified as needed in response to changing conditions or circumstances.

PRINCIPLES

The following are the general principles used to guide any modifications to regular academic operations:

- **Health and Safety.** During an outbreak of an Infectious Disease, the first principle is safeguarding the health and safety of students, faculty, and staff. Academic policies should be flexible to accommodate this primary goal.

- **Serving Students.** Students who are unable to participate in academic activities or complete academic requirements due to a significant academic disruption should have reasonable alternatives to complete the work, and should have reasonable extensions of deadlines and access to other remedies. Students are expected to follow published directives from public health officials.

- **Transparency for students, faculty, and staff.** Students, faculty, and staff should be informed in a timely manner of changed requirements, changes to academic activities, and policies and procedures during and after a significant disruption of academic activities to the greatest extent possible. Stay informed by regularly checking the UAB website for COVID-19 resources.

- **Academic integrity.** Standards of evaluation should not be reduced due to a significant disruption.

- **Privacy.** Privacy standards should be met whenever possible, including standards with respect to the privacy of educational records such as student grades.

- **Presumption of Continuation of Teaching.** Instructors will use their best efforts to continue instruction, using the resources described below, and (unless express guidance provided to do so) not simply assign Incompletes or assign grades in place at the time the suspension begins.
MODIFICATIONS PRIOR TO ANY DECISION TO SUSPEND CLASSES

Prior to any suspension of classes, the foregoing principles should guide instructor actions. For example, recognizing that students may reasonably be concerned about the effects of a virus even while classes are being held, instructors should consider the following:

- Amending syllabi to include a statement regarding what students should do in the event that a class must move to an alternative format or a faculty member is absent due to illness;
- Relaxing attendance policies where attendance affects grades (and reporting drop-offs in attendance, including online usage where applicable);
- Providing remote or online alternatives for participation points, or waiving those points from final grades;
- Allowing remote submission of assignments through Canvas or UAB email;
- Providing options to make up missed exams and assignments;
- Communicating often with students about policies responding to the virus (including by providing a link to the [UAB website on COVID-19 resources](http://example.com)), using the channels normally used, such as how the instructor will communicate with students if not in class and about the other adjustments to be made to the course; and
- Following the suggestions below under “Student Illness.”

SUSPENSION OF IN-PERSON CLASSES

UAB may make a decision to suspend in-person classes and/or other public gatherings and may place limits on campus business to help prevent the person-to-person spread of an Infectious Disease. There may be differing directives depending on the degree of containment of the disease. The University may be directed by the UA System or by local, state, or federal authorities to close or modify normal operations of the campus. The decision to suspend in-person classes and/or close the University will be made by the President of UAB, consistent with direction from the UA System. Any such decision will be based upon criteria including the following:

- World Health Organization declaration of Phase 6-Pandemic period;
- Increased and sustained transmission in the general U.S. population;
- Confirmation of a high rate of infectivity, morbidity, and/or mortality in Birmingham or the Birmingham region;
- Rate/speed of disease spreading;
- Local or state public health recommendations to curtail or cancel public activities in the county or state;
- Falling class attendance, students leaving campus;
- Rising faculty and staff absenteeism;
- Other state university closings/school systems closing; and
- Transportation systems closing/curtailing travel.

USE OF ONLINE RESOURCES AFTER SUSPENSION OF CLASSES
If in-person classes are suspended, every reasonable effort should be made to continue academic activity. The following suggestions are in no way intended to diminish the role of faculty with respect to the content and grading of their courses. With the foregoing principles in mind, instructors should use the resources suggested at the Teaching Remotely at UAB website of the Division of eLearning and Professional Studies, including:

- Communicating using Canvas Announcements and Canvas Discussions,
- Providing content in Canvas Syllabus and in the Canvas Modules,
- Teaching live through Zoom (available inside Canvas),
- Pre-recording lecture videos through Kaltura (available inside Canvas),
- Assessing student work through Canvas Assignments, Canvas Discussions, and Canvas Quizzes,
- Using the Respondus Lockdown Browser & Monitor (recommended for low-stakes exams) or ProctorU (recommended for higher stakes exams),
- Using SpeedGrader (available inside Canvas) to quickly grade Assignments,
- Getting help from professionals in the Division of eLearning and Professional Studies, and
- Using the UAB IT Remote Working Toolkit to work from a remote office.

While we recommend instructors take advantage of Canvas, Zoom, and Kaltura, as described above, the Teaching Remotely at UAB website also provides some lower-tech options for continuing our teaching offerings, including:

- Sending emails using BlazerNet and Outlook utilizing your uab.edu email address,
- Providing files attached to emails,
- Providing files attached to Box or by using OneDrive,
- Substituting PowerPoint files for lectures using Box or OneDrive,
- Allowing submission of assignments from students via email,
- Using free desktop capture software to record voice and screen content,
- Using Zoom to make a recording of a lecture, and then sharing via email,
- Scheduling meetings using Zoom, and
- Using Canvas chat function.

OTHER CONTINUITY CONSIDERATIONS

It may also be necessary to reconceptualize how out-of-classroom learning activities are conducted. Be flexible and creative.

Laboratory Work

For laboratory work, consider providing hypothetical raw data and ask students to analyze the data. Search for relevant online videos such as from Khan Academy, demonstrating laboratory work. For language laboratories, search for language learning websites. Consider hosting a Zoom meeting and creating breakout rooms where students can complete speaking or presentation
assignments. Begin making videos and other alternative learning activities now in anticipation of labs not being available later.

In the case of laboratory research requiring continued physical presence by students in labs (e.g., work with living organisms), follow the same directives for other researchers at UAB found at https://www.uab.edu/research/home/business-continuity-plan. Individual labs will likely develop their own protocols to identify where ongoing attention may be required, such as for ongoing experiments, for cell culture maintenance and for animal studies, and these protocols should be applied to students. It may be that labs will identify other personnel to safely perform essential activities. Monitor the website of the Office of Vice President for Research for further guidance. Create online activities similar to those which the students would have experienced as part of the lab activities.

**Clinical Health Care Settings**

Schools with students in clinical health care settings should not engage in the care of people with a known or suspected Infectious Disease. While we understand that it is impossible to completely prevent risk of exposure, refrain from caring for people with typical symptoms & signs and recent travel (within the last two weeks) to known affected countries, or exposure to others with the disease. Faculty should be made aware of student exemption for the care of people with known or suspected Infectious Disease.

**Proficiency and Prerequisite Preparation**

Schools with proficiency requirements (such as proficiency exams and required clinical experiences), or with other prerequisites (including internships), will have to determine grading in courses related to such activities on a case-by-case basis in accordance to curriculum necessity and in consultation with their accrediting bodies if needed.

**Internships and Student Teaching**

In the case of internships for course credit and/or necessary for graduation or certification (e.g., student teaching), seek guidance from accrediting bodies, professional associations, and government regulators on whether waivers or delays might be possible for such requirements or whether online learning activities may be substituted for in-person activities. Create online activities similar to those which the students would be required to participate in as part of the internship.

**WORKLOAD AND GRADING MODIFICATIONS**

In the case of an actual suspension of classes during the course of a semester in the academic calendar (excluding professional schools), the timing of the suspension will influence options for the completion of academic courses.

- **Weeks 1-4** – if students will miss time in the first few weeks, consider adjusting workload in the course by altering assignments without making up in-person class time. Consider how activities and assignments on Canvas or the other resources noted above might be used to replace lost class time.
- **Weeks 5-8** – interruption coming at mid-term will require exam flexibility on the part of faculty and make-up exams or alternative assessments. Faculty should record an approximate grade to date in Canvas.
- **Weeks 9-Finals (We are currently in Week 9 of the Spring 2020 semester)** – Faculty and units may need to redefine what it takes for a course to be considered completed in light of performance to date in this scenario. If there are projects that are not completed, consider whether deadlines can be extended and still get grades out by the end of the defined term. Consider any requirements for the assignment of permanent grades (such as where degrees must be completed in order to obtain particular employment). Faculty should also record an approximate grade to date in Canvas.

Emergency grade submissions may be necessary in the event there is a closure of the University at any time prior to the end of a semester. This will be most likely to occur if an Infectious Disease occurs in the last third of the semester.

**REPLACEMENT OF INSTRUCTORS OF RECORD**

Either before a suspension of classes or after a suspension, it may be necessary to replace an instructor of record for a course due to illness of the instructor, due to the instructor serving as a caretaker for someone else, or due to other factors caused by the Infectious Disease outbreak. UAB defines an “instructor of record” as an individual designated by the academic unit as responsible for a course, including development of the design, delivery, assignments, and grades. If an instructor of record is not expected to be able to continue teaching for over a week or before final grades are due as a result of an outbreak, the chair/dean or their designee may appoint a replacement instructor of record to take on the duties of teaching and grading.

**STUDENT ILLNESS**

Modifications to normal policies on student absences may be necessary both prior to and during suspension of classes.

- While classes are still being held, students who are ill should be encouraged not to attend classes to reduce the transmission of the illness.
- Both before and after suspension of classes, faculty should excuse absences during an outbreak of an Infectious Disease. Determining which students are ill will be difficult to impossible to determine. Students can be contagious before they have symptoms and may not be able to provide documentation of their illness. There may be no formal testing for the Infectious Disease unless patients are hospitalized or have specific risk factors. Because individuals will be encouraged to isolate themselves to prevent transmission, it may not be possible to provide documentation of specific illness. Normal absence policies should be adjusted to reflect this change. Students may also be taking care of others who are ill with the Infectious Disease.
- Students are responsible for making up required missed work (after any adjustments are made to work assigned, as described above).
- Faculty should arrange for alternate exam dates in the event a student is ill or is caring for someone who is ill. Either a make-up exam or an alternate assessment should be
administered as soon as possible. If the student is ill or is caring for someone who is ill at the time of the final exam, the instructor should determine if the student can take the final exam before grades are due. Failing that, the instructor should assign an Incomplete grade if the University completes the semester. If the semester is shortened, refer to the Workload and Grading Modifications above.

**STUDENTS REGISTERED WITH DSS**

There are students registered with Disability Support Services (DSS) who require accommodations which have been tailored to meet their needs in the traditional “in-class” setting. In the event that the university decides to move toward a plan of “online only” classes, DSS will be available to consult with faculty to ensure students continue to have an accessible experience at UAB. Please note, if the University has not made this change in format, but an individual instructor chooses to change their course to “online”, it is critical that faculty who have students utilizing certain accommodations, contact DSS to consult. For example, students with hearing loss who utilized interpreting services or captioning services in the classroom, will need an accessible “online” version of the course. For example, if an instructor is using Zoom to conduct their class, and a student requires interpreting or captioning services, the instructor will need to work with DSS so we can ensure these accessibility features are included in the delivered format. For questions, please contact Disability Support Services at 205.934.4205 or dss@uab.edu.

**FACULTY WORKING REMOTELY**

The [Teaching Remotely at UAB Website](#) provides guidance for helping faculty get their work done for UAB remotely. UAB IT offers tools to help empower success, no matter where you need to work.

**FACULTY ABSENCE**

- Faculty who are ill should be encouraged not to come to campus to reduce the transmission of the illness.
- A faculty member who is infected with an Infectious Disease or who is caring for someone who is ill should notify their chair about the illness and apprise the chair about the alternate plans that the faculty member has developed to facilitate teaching and learning, using the foregoing guidance.
- The faculty member should also notify students about their absence and the alternate plan to continue instruction.
- Faculty should be following normal policies on reporting leave, including using the eLAS system.

**SUPPORT STAFF**

In cases where online teaching might require support from non-faculty support staff, it may be necessary to provide equipment for certain such staff so that they can work remotely, or could come to campus on a limited basis (unless there is guidance to the contrary).
COMMENCEMENT

Decisions about whether to hold commencement exercises or the honors convocation will be made separately from the decision to suspend in-person classes. Alternatives include holding the ceremonies but without the graduates physically attending and streaming (and recording the ceremonies), as well as holding a “virtual” exercise.

EXTERNAL RESOURCES

There are numerous external resources, often discipline-specific, for effective online teaching. Faculty are encouraged to locate, use, and share with colleagues external resources from other institutions or from professional associations and similar organizations, consistent with the above Principles.