Preparing to Teach a Hybrid Course

UNIVERSITY OF MIAMI

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Introduction

To promote a safe and healthy campus environment that incorporates social distancing precautions while allowing students to return to classrooms, many classes at the University of Miami will be transitioning to a "hybrid" format. This format mixes in-person classroom teaching with live videoconferencing, with groups of students rotating who attends in-person.

For instance, a Monday/Wednesday/Friday class with an enrollment of 30 students may have one group of 10 students attend in-person every Monday, another group every Wednesday, and another group on Fridays; the students not present in the room join the class remotely (via Zoom or Blackboard Collaborate Ultra). Having fewer students in a classroom that would normally accommodate all 30 students allows for social distancing measures.

However, this teaching format introduces a number of new complexities, challenges, and opportunities. This guide is intended to provide some teaching guidance regarding how to make the best of this new (and possibly challenging) teaching method and help you ensure a smooth teaching and learning experience this semester. Some of the logistical choices you'll need to make will have direct impact on the learning experiences of students, and you may want to ask students for their own input as to what would work best for them.

Additionally, the appendix to this guide includes technical guidance and links that compliment this document's teaching guidance, and the last page contains a helpful checklist for recommended steps to take before, during, and after class.

What should I do before my first class?

There are a number of steps you can take to ensure a smooth start to class. The more comfortable you are with the technology, the more time and energy you can dedicate to your teaching rather than technical troubleshooting.

- First, select a videoconferencing platform that you will use to connect with the students who attend your class remotely. Zoom is a good choice for beginners unless you're already comfortable with something else, like Blackboard Collaborate Ultra. If you need assistance selecting a technology platform, contact Academic Technologies (academictechnologies@miami.edu) to discuss possibilities.
- Arrive early to your first class to make sure all of the technology is working properly and ready to go. Many UM classrooms have been outfitted with necessary equipment for faculty to teach hybrid courses, including freestanding webcams that connect with the room's computer or your own laptop.
- Develop a videoconferencing etiquette summary for your students so they know to keep their microphone off when not speaking, talk to others from their remote learning

environment while on the microphone, or inadvertently create other disruptions. You may also want to co-create these guidelines with students during your first week so that they feel actively connected to the process – what mutual expectations are important to them as participants?
- Have a backup plan in case there are connectivity or technical issues. This could include having multiple options to connect to a session (e.g. another computer, mobile device, or tablet), or using alternative collaboration tools such as Blackboard or Google Drive to have students work "asynchronously" (offline).
- You may want to share your syllabus with students before your first session, which should include your logistics and expectations for a hybrid classroom.
- Make sure you have technical support contacts on hand in case of any issues during your class session; these are located at the end of this document.

How do I share materials with students, such as handouts and presentation slides?

- Presentation slides (PowerPoint, Google Slides, etc.) don't always translate well to remote students over the camera, so you'll want the camera focused on you as the speaker, not necessarily on the whole front of the classroom. You can use Zoom to share your screen as you present, but also consider making any slides available to all students before the session or posting a link to an online document through the chat feature.
- Any paper-based handouts, like worksheets, should also be made available online via Blackboard before the session. Not only is this good for your remote students, it's also good for the environment!
- It's also a good idea to use Blackboard to share the videoconferencing details, such as the Zoom link. That way, students attending remotely know exactly how to join the class session every time.

What is the best way to set up the classroom?

University of Miami classrooms that have already been outfitted with a freestanding webcam have already been arranged in the optimal default setup, but some adjustments may be necessary to create the best experience for your remote students.

- Position the camera so that it is facing you and frames you while you teach. If you tend to move around while teaching, you may need to set the camera back, but make sure the audio still picks up your voice properly.
- Depending on the layout of your classroom and the time and day of your class, you may want to adjust the window shades to optimize light. If at all possible, make sure light

sources are facing you and not behind you since webcams don't handle sharp contrast well.
- If you are planning any kind of class discussion, make sure that your in-person students are positioned so facing the webcam. You might need to re-arrange the chairs, if social distancing guidelines allow.

How do I ensure all students feel involved and engaged in the classroom?

Even though some students are with you in-person and some are joining remotely, those attending remotely need not be passive observers in the hybrid class. Remote students can feel isolated and less involved, so it's important to acknowledge them and involve them in the classroom experience.

- At the start of each class, consider being deliberate in acknowledging the remote group's presence and extending them a special welcome.
- Remind your remote students that their involvement is invited and encouraged, including asking and answering questions. You may want to have remote students post questions in the chat or use the "raise hand" function in the videoconferencing platform to indicate that they want to speak.
- Consider assigning (on a rotating basis) one of your in-person students to monitor the chat or "raised hands" of the videoconferencing platform. You can check in with this student periodically to see if there are any questions from the remote group.
- When soliciting input from the class, consider alternating between in-person students and remote students.
- With social distancing measures, it may be difficult to hear questions or contributions from students in the back of large auditorium-style classrooms. One solution is to invite these contributions over text chat in your videoconferencing platform (e.g. Zoom) in the same manner as your remote students.
- Remember that if a student's webcam is disabled, that doesn't always mean they're not paying attention. Some students might be joining class from a home office with others in the background that they prefer not to share, or have disabled their cameras to optimize limited bandwidth. Authentic participation is a better indication of engagement than having a webcam on. If you're concerned about a student's engagement, it might be better to discuss individually with them after class.
- At the end of class, acknowledge the remote students and confirm when they can exit the Zoom or Blackboard Collaborate Ultra session. Before ending the remote session, check to see if any Zoom students want to stay after class to ask any questions (and, if so, turn off recording).

How do I encourage collaboration and teams among all the students in class?

Collaborative learning opportunities, or assignments where students work in groups toward a common goal, can lead to greater academic achievement and more positive attitudes toward learning (Terenzini, Cabrera, Colbeck, Parente, & Bjorklund, 2001; Springer, Stanne, & Donovan, 1999), and hybrid teaching creates unique challenges and opportunities for assigning group work.

- When creating assignment groups, consider the logistics of either grouping together students who are in the same in-class session or deliberately mixing students from different sessions.
- Students who are not in the same in-person sessions *can* work together, and this is a good way to promote a learning community among all the students in your class (and break down the barriers between the session groups). Leijon and Lundgren (2019) suggested that a liminal learning space can exist between in-person groups and remote groups; students can use Blackboard or Google Docs to work asynchronously (not at the same time), or their own Zoom rooms to hold live meetings outside of (or even during) class time.
- Alternatively, using your existing session groups (Monday group, Wednesday group, etc.) might make logistical sense for creating student groups, especially if you want to use in-class time to work with the groups. For example, one in-person session group of 10 students could be split into two project groups of 5 students each. This makes group presentations easier (see How do I manage student presentations? below), but social distancing measures may make in-class group work problematic.

How can I share board work or handwriting?

If you rely heavily on writing out work on the board while teaching (math or science problems, sentence diagramming, etc.), there are a few ways you can do this in a hybrid class.

- One option is to point the webcam at the board (instead of you). This is fairly easy, but you'll want to make sure that your remote students can see what you're writing on the board clearly.
- If your classroom is equipped with a document camera, you may be able to use that as the "webcam" instead of your normal camera. Your in-person students would see your handwriting on the projector screen, and your remote students would see your handwriting via screen-sharing on your videoconferencing platform (e.g. Zoom). This solution will likely be more effective for your remote students, with a higher quality

image, but it is more difficult to set up. It's a good idea to test this setup before a class session that needs it.
● The third option is to use the whiteboard or annotation tools in your chosen videoconferencing platform (while projecting to your in-person students). This is generally less intuitive than using a physical whiteboard or document camera, but might be a good option for some instructors.

How do I handle exams?

Managing tests and exams is more complex when some students are in-person and the others remote, but there are a few adjustments you can make to effectively assess your students' learning.

● Whenever possible, consider other ways of assessing students' learning. Authentic projects for written assignments such as research papers or position papers may be more effective at soliciting higher order thinking.
● More frequent, lower-stakes assessment may give you a better indication of how your students are doing than fewer, high-stakes exams. This allows you to review concepts that students have struggled with before moving on.
● Open-book exams are also a good option, especially when students are asked to apply knowledge and synthesize concepts rather than recall facts.
● If you plan to give high-stakes closed-book exams in your hybrid class, the simplest solution is to use a Blackboard to deliver them online outside of class time. To mitigate issues relating to academic dishonesty, you can incorporate virtual proctoring with [Respondus LockDown and Respondus Monitor](#) or use randomized questions from large question pools.
● Online exams also mitigate the use of paper and may help prevent the transmission of disease, since having multiple people handling paper exams may spread pathogens.
● If you prefer to give the exams in-person, consider what activities your remote groups will do offline (e.g., discussion boards) as you give the exam to each session. You'll likely to consider different forms on the exams with similar questions, since your earlier session groups may discuss their experience with students taking it after them.
● Unless there is no other choice, it's not recommended to give exams to the remote and in-person groups at the same time; the in-person students may feel as though they are taking the exam at a disadvantage.

How do I manage student presentations?

Having individual students or groups present or peer-teach to the class can be an effective and meaningful way to have them engage with the course materials and learn from each other (Joughin, 2007), and hybrid classes can make use of these as well.

- If you want to include peer presentations, consider assigning presentation dates based on when the students can present in-person, that is, align presentation time slots with the in-class rotation.
- As with your own presentations, have students share their slide decks before their presenting. In-person and remote students watching the presentation should also be encouraged to ask questions and share thoughts.

What about my hands-on experiences, like labs?

Some classes may incorporate particular aspects that are best suited for an in-person session, like labs. Since these are experiences that you'll want all of your students to have–not just one session's in-person group–this will necessitate some clever timing and adjustments.

- One option is to repeat the hands-on session for each group while they're in class. Meanwhile, instead of tuning in live via videoconference, the remote groups are given an asynchronous (not live) activity, like a discussion board assignment or individual activity. When all of the students have participated in the hands-on session, you can resume the hybrid teaching–which is a good time to debrief about any differences between the groups' experiences.
- Another option you may want to try is called a "fishbowl"; while conducting an activity with the in-person group, the remote group is assigned to observe the activity and to reflect on and report their observations (Miller & Benz, 2008). This should be done with low-stakes activities in the interest of ensuring equitable learning experiences.
- There are many more possibilities for replacing, replicating, or simulating hands-on activities that will heavily depend on the course subject and objectives. If you'd like to discuss your course and some options, please contact Academic Technologies (academictechnologies@miami.edu).

Should I record my class sessions?

Hybrid classes that use videoconferencing to include remote students present a unique opportunity to record your class sessions.

- In general, recording your class sessions with your videoconferencing platform (i.e. Zoom or Blackboard Collaborate Ultra) is recommended. Recordings are helpful for students who want to review past sessions, for students who are unable to attend class because of medical reasons, or students who are unable to attend because of travel-related issues.
- Session recordings can easily be shared with students in Blackboard (see Recording a Session in the Appendix).
- If you are teaching a class that deals with sensitive topics, and the possibility exists that students will be uncomfortable sharing their perspectives because of the session

recording, disable recording. While recording is helpful for students, don't sacrifice the learning experience for the sake of the recording.
● Keep in mind that class recordings that contain student contributions may constitute educational records under FERPA. For more information, refer to Virtual and Other Classroom Recording and Student Privacy (FERPA).

How do I support fully online students in my hybrid course?

For the fall semester of 2020, the University of Miami has offered students the option to attend all of their classes remotely to accommodate those who are unable to come to campus. Students who have opted for a fully online semester will be enrolled in a separate section of your course.

● Submit a request to the Learning Platforms Team to merge your hybrid section with your online section so that all of your students will have access to the same materials (without the need for you to upload twice)
● Make the expectations for participation clear for your remote students, such as informing them that they will be required to attend remotely via Zoom.
● Consider recording your class sessions for your remote students (see Should I record my class sessions?).
● Give thought to which activities (lab work, hands-on activities, discussion activities projects, group work, research, quizzes, exams, etc.) can be done with no modifications for fully online students, with some modifications, or those for which alternatives will have to be determined.
● For class activities that can't be done effectively online, consider equivalent ways to achieve the same learning objectives, similar to what you would do if a student were absent or trying to fulfill requirements to convert an "incomplete" grade to a letter grade.
● Remember that students electing to take the semester fully online cannot be penalized for this option and should be able to engage in as equivalent a learning experience to that of your in-person students as possible.
● If you'd like to discuss options for your fully online students, please contact Academic Technologies (academictechnologies@miami.edu).

How can I manage my office hours?

Hybrid teaching changes the out-of-class experience for students as well. The idea of a student sticking around after class to ask clarifying questions is suddenly a little more complex.

- At the close of your class session, check in with the remote group to see if anyone wants to stay longer to ask questions or discuss topics with you. If so, remember to stop recording the session before chatting with the student.
- Another possible solution is to host "virtual" office hours where any student can meet with you remotely outside of class time. For consistency's sake, consider using the same videoconferencing platform that you use with your remote students (if you use Zoom in class, use Zoom for office hours).
- Some faculty members may want to keep a set schedule for virtual office hours. An open meeting allows all students to join, which could lead to productive discussions about similar issues. Or, using a waiting room feature (like that in Zoom) will allow you to manage who you meet with at a given time.
- Other faculty members might prefer to schedule individual appointments with their students. Scheduling tools like Calendly, which integrates with Microsoft Outlook, are a good option for giving students opportunities to schedule meetings with you (note that Calendly's Zoom integration, a paid feature, is not supported at UM).

What is this HyFlex thing I keep hearing about?

You may have heard of or read about HyFlex, a similar classroom setup as our "hybrid" experience.

- In HyFlex, which was developed pre-COVID-19, students have the option to choose how they engage with the class–some may choose to attend in-person, some may join online, and some may alternate (Leijon & Lundgren, 2019; "7 things you should know about the HyFlex course model," 2010).
- The main difference between our hybrid model and HyFlex is that your students will be assigned to rotating groups, rather than students choosing how they attend each class session. This ensures that the in-person attendance to your classes remains low enough to ensure social distancing (in a HyFlex class, 25 students might attend in-person and 5 attend remotely–or vice versa).
- That said, some teaching advice for HyFlex might apply to your hybrid teaching. Keep an eye out for HyFlex resources and teaching tips. You might find a thing or two that works for you!

How do I accommodate students with disabilities?

Some students may require accommodations to tests or other aspects of their remote learning experience because of a documented disability, such as extended time on tests and quizzes.

- If you have any students who require accommodations in your hybrid, you are encouraged to work with the Office of Disability Services (disabilityservices@miami.edu)

in the Camner Center to ensure that they are engaging in equitable learning opportunities.
- Disability Services has issued specific guidance to University of Miami faculty members regarding the accommodation request process, the types of accommodations, and engaging in communicating with students regarding their accommodations.

How do I (and my students) find additional support?

For additional guidance relating to teaching hybrid classes, feel free to reach out to Learning Innovation and Faculty Engagement at academictechnologies@miami.edu. The team is ready to help you create an effective and engaging learning experience for your students.

For additional support, these teams are ready to help you or your students:

- The Learning Platforms Team (LPT) supports faculty with the use of Blackboard, Collaborate Ultra, and a variety of teaching-related technologies.
- University of Miami Information Technology (UMIT) faculty with the use of Zoom and any hardware that is used in the classroom to support teaching and learning.
- Student Technology Help Desk (STHD) supports student technology needs.
- The Camner Center for Academic Resources provides online tutoring support to students' academic achievement.
- The Writing Center provides online help to students working on papers for a course, theses and dissertations, personal statements, business letters and resumes, grant proposals, articles for publication, and personal writing projects.
- The Math Lab provides specialized online math tutoring to any student enrolled in an undergraduate math course.
- The Modern Languages Lab supports undergraduate students with online help for assignments and essay projects from courses in Spanish, French, Portuguese, Arabic, and Chinese.

References and Additional Resources

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Appendix: Technical Guides

This appendix includes some helpful technical guides to accompany the teaching advice provided in the previous sections. University of Miami faculty members have access to two desktop videoconferencing platforms that can be used in hybrid classes: Zoom and Blackboard Collaborate Ultra. Both tools provide features for screen sharing, chat, breakout rooms, annotate, file sharing, and more.

Zoom

To activate your Zoom account, sign into zoom.miami.edu using your CaneID and password. You will also need to download the Zoom Desktop client onto your device by visiting zoom.us/download.

- Getting Started with Zoom
- Learning Platforms Team: Zoom

- [Learn How to Use Zoom in Blackboard](#)
- [Zoombombing Resources](#)

Blackboard Collaborate Ultra

Blackboard Collaborate Ultra is already available to faculty through their Blackboard course site. For easy access, click on *Course Tools* on the left side of the Course Menu and expand it so that the option *Blackboard Collaborate Ultra* appears. You can click on it and add it to your Blackboard course's menu bar.

- [Get Started with Collaborate Ultra](#)
- [Learning Platforms Team: Collaborate Ultra](#)
- [Blackboard Collaborate Ultra LPT Wiki](#)

Creating a Remote Class Session

You can create a class session for your remote students in several ways. If you have Zoom or Blackboard Collaborate Ultra already integrated within your Blackboard course, you can schedule all upcoming classroom sessions there. If you create a meeting with Zoom within the desktop app, you can also use Blackboard to post the link so that it is available for all students.

- [How to use Zoom in Blackboard](#)
- [Schedule Sessions Blackboard Collaborate Ultra](#)

Recording a Session

Zoom and Blackboard Collaborate Ultra allow you to record all sessions and download them either on a computer or through the cloud (Blackboard Collaborate Ultra automatically saves to Blackboard). This feature can also be used to pre-record lectures for students to watch at their own pace. Keep in mind that recordings may take up to 24 hours to process.
- [Zoom recording](#)
- [Blackboard Collaborate Ultra recording](#)

Although synchronous meetings in Blackboard Collaborate Ultra and Zoom can be recorded for future reference, session recordings may constitute protected educational records per FERPA. For more information, refer to [Virtual and Other Classroom Recording and Student Privacy (FERPA)](#).

Screen/File Share

During a class session, you can use your videoconferencing platform to share content to your remote students, such as:

- Specific window/tab
- Entire desktop screen
- Specific application (e.g. PowerPoint slides)
- Phone/Tablet screen (if connected/on)
- Whiteboard
- Uploaded document files

Keep in mind that your other tabs, bookmarks, or applications not related to your presentation might serve as a distraction–or expose personal materials to students that you'd rather them not see.

- [Zoom screen share](#)
- [Blackboard Collaborate Ultra share content](#)

Chat

You can use the chat function in Zoom or Blackboard Collaborate Ultra to allow students to ask questions in real time during class. You can also download the chat and review unanswered questions at a later time or send to students as notes/review.

- [Zoom chat](#)
- [Blackboard Collaborate Ultra chat](#)

Polling

You can use the polling features to ask questions, start classroom discussion, assess student knowledge, or allow for anonymous feedback. You can also set up polls prior to class start time and also download them to see remote student's responses.

- [Zoom polls](#)
- [Blackboard Collaborate Ultra polls](#)

With these polling tools, only the remote students will be able to respond. Other polling platforms, such as [PollEverywhere](#) or [iClicker/ReefPolling](#), will allow you to include both your remote students and your in-person students in the same poll.

Breakout Groups

Breakout groups can be used to foster student-student interaction through discussion, group projects, or review sessions. You can drop in at any point to monitor progress or provide guidance to each group.
- [Zoom breakout rooms](#)
- [Blackboard Collaborate Ultra breakout groups](#)

Annotation/Whiteboard

Zoom and Blackboard Collaborate Ultra have basic annotation tools (text box, free form draw,, shapes, and highlighter) that you can use to guide students or explain a concept. Access these tools by selecting the Annotate option when you're sharing your screen. You can also use the Whiteboard feature to have faculty and students annotate on a blank page. This feature allows you to incorporate "boardwork" that so in-person and remote students can see.

- [Zoom annotation tools](#)
- [Zoom Whiteboard](#)
- [Blackboard Collaborate Ultra annotation tools](#)
- [Blackboard Collaborate Ultra Whiteboard](#)

Notes and License

This document is based on Allan Gyorke's 2006 *Faculty Guide to Teaching Through Videoconferencing*, and it is our hope that it holds up as a suitable spiritual successor for today's difficult times. Tremendous thanks are owed to the many University of Miami faculty members who provided input and insight toward the refinement of this document (Magdalena Balcerak Jackson, Logan Connors, Shirley Dennis, Tracy Devine Guzmán, Kevin Finn, Ager Gondra, April Mann, Maha McCain, Ann Olazabal, Maria Stampino, Rechna Varma, Kenneth Voss, and Barbara Whitlock).

Helpful Hybrid Class Checklists

Before Class

- ❏ Share materials (slides, handouts, etc.) on Blackboard so that remote students have access to them.
- ❏ Arrive to the classroom early (~15 minutes) to make sure the hardware and software is ready to go.
- ❏ Connect the camera and microphone you'll be using.
- ❏ Optimize the lighting and other room conditions for the Zoom session.
- ❏ Start the Zoom session at least 5 minutes before class. After the first few students connect, make sure they can see and hear you.

Starting Class

- ❏ Assign a student to monitor the Zoom window for "raised hands" or contributions/questions via chat.
- ❏ If you are recording the class session, remind all students that the session will be recording before starting to record.
- ❏ Acknowledge and welcome your students attending remotely.

During Class

- ❏ As needed, adjust the webcam to face the focal point of attention (you, the whiteboard, a demonstration, etc.).
- ❏ Periodically check in with the student assigned to monitor the Zoom to address any questions or contributions (or technical issues).
- ❏ Alternate between in-person students and remote students when soliciting input from the class.

Ending Class

- ❏ Remind the class of which assigned group will be in attendance in the next session.
- ❏ Refer students to any materials hosted in Blackboard in preparation for the next session.
- ❏ Acknowledge the remote students in closing the class and confirm when they can exit the Zoom session.
- ❏ Before ending the Zoom session, check to see if any Zoom students want to stay after class to ask any questions. If so, disable recording.