



**Date:** Feb. 01, 2021

**To:** Talia Bettcher, Academic Senate Chair

**From:** Arash Jamehbozorg, Educational Policy Committee Chair

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**Subject:** EPC Memo: 20-10: Proposed New Policy - Maintaining Educational Continuity in the Context of Campus Emergencies and Disasters - Chapter V of the Faculty Handbook

In response to the COVID-19 emergency and to help faculty better prepare to face similar circumstances, AIRS worked on a new policy during the spring 2020 semester. EPC reviewed and approved the proposal while deciding that it was better to be written as a set of guidelines due to some restricting parts of the proposal. At the start of fall 2020, AIRS started editing the proposal based on EPC's feedback and sent another version to EPC to have the proposal as a new policy rather than guidelines. EPC discussed the new proposal in its meeting during fall 2020, and after some edits, approved the attached new policy.

This policy describes steps that faculty need to adopt in order to preserve the quality of their courses during the transition while helping students in emergencies like the pandemic.

# 1 **Maintaining Educational Continuity in the Context of Campus Emergencies and Disasters**

## 2 **Introduction**

3 Cal State LA rapidly transitioned its face-to-face classes to remote (distributed) alternative instruction in Spring  
4 2020, due to the novel COVID-19 pandemic. This is unlikely to be a singular event: Cal State LA is likely to  
5 experience additional educational disruptions due to epidemics, pandemics, and natural disasters (such as  
6 earthquakes or wildfires, which have caused educational disruptions on sister campuses) in the coming years. This  
7 policy is designed to ensure that educational continuity can be maintained in the face of the current transition and  
8 for future transitions.

9 It is understood by this policy that these rapid transition events are not synonymous with the development,  
10 design, and implementation of fully-online education. This policy actively discourages faculty teaching a course  
11 designated as a face-to-face course as a fully-online course, as students will be expecting a modality that more  
12 closely mirrors a face-to-face educational environment.

13 NOTE: not all students have secure access to Internet services, a high data usage limit, or access to personal  
14 computers. For many of our students, their cellphone might be their primary computing device without access to  
15 campus computer labs. All of the following considerations take this reality into account.

## 16 **In the event of an emergency educational transition**

17 Faculty will be expected to take the following steps during an emergency educational transition. Any faculty  
18 encountering issues with adopting these steps should coordinate with their department chair or program director.

19 1. Place course syllabus and all key course documents (e.g., assignments, reading lists) on the Cal State LA learning  
20 management system (LMS), so that students can access these remotely. If the course has a separate website  
21 and/or publisher content, provide the link(s) to them on the LMS.

22 2. Establish a complete and regularly updated gradebook that meets FERPA requirements. It is strongly  
23 recommended that faculty use the course gradebook in the LMS for this purpose. Grades should be updated  
24 throughout the semester, with a recommendation that this occurs at least every 2-3 weeks or as soon as feasible  
25 after the submission of each assignment. Faculty should also regularly communicate with students about when  
26 students should expect to see their grades updated. This allows students a mechanism to view their course grades  
27 throughout the duration of the transition.

28 3. Classes that meet synchronously may only do so during the published course meeting times in the Class  
29 Schedule and only record attendance during the published course meeting times in the Course Schedule.

30 4. Adjust class participation methods to include asynchronous opportunities so as not to penalize students who are  
31 not able to attend synchronous meetings due to the emergency. Students may become ill or displaced; students  
32 may be front line responders or essential workers; students may be caring for children or other family members.

33 5. Class office hours should continue to be held during the times posted on their class syllabus. Consistent with the  
34 Office Hours policy, office hours during remote instruction should be held, where at all possible, synchronously via  
35 virtual meetings and/or telephone.

36 6. To support students who are unable to attend class sessions, consider recording synchronous class sessions and  
37 uploading these recordings along with any additional material to the LMS.

38 7. Before recording any lectures, explicitly inform students that the lecture, and their participation in the lecture,  
39 will be recorded. This allows students to turn off their video cameras and/or watch the recording as an alternative  
40 to being recorded.

41 8. During any synchronous lectures, the faculty will not penalize students for having their camera (video) turned  
42 off. Not all of our students have access to a camera, and people may be attending in less-than-ideal circumstances  
43 (e.g., at home with pets/family members; issues with the space in which they attend their virtual class). Exceptions  
44 to this include live assessments, evaluations, or class activities that require a live performance or demonstration.

45 9. Instructors should review their lessons, course assignments, and grading policy, based on the learning objectives  
46 for the course and the transition to remote (distributed) alternative instruction. This review should consider that  
47 not all students have secure and/or reliable access to the Internet services, data allowances, and/or computing  
48 devices that allow for streaming long videos or compatibility with some advanced LMS tools. As part of this review,  
49 this policy strongly encourages the use of accepted pedagogical practices to adopt alternatives to timed,  
50 synchronous high-stakes testing.

51 The policy also strongly encourages using the practice of “holding students harmless.” Holding students harmless  
52 refers to any and all changes made individually and institutionally to support students who are struggling due to  
53 circumstances beyond their control. Holding students harmless is not a “pass” to allow students to commit  
54 academic dishonesty – it is the recognition that emergencies of this type were not caused by students, and how  
55 these emergencies change their lives is often beyond their control. It is the advocacy for compassion and working  
56 with students to meet learning objectives within the confines of those circumstances.

57 10. It is strongly encouraged that all faculty avail themselves of the many resources on campus to help transition  
58 courses to remote (distributed) learning, particularly training and support offered by the Center for Effective  
59 Teaching and Learning (CETL).