Overview

In the event of campus closure due to inclement weather, natural disasters, or other emergencies, faculty are encouraged to continue classes online. There are a variety of methods to host classes and keep students engaged to keep classes on schedule.

If the campus is closed and a faculty member wants to hold a class online that normally meets in person, the faculty member should notify his or her students directly.

When planning these activities, be aware that the conditions can impact faculty, staff, and students and their dependents in different ways depending on where they live and what commitments they have.

Campus Policy

All faculty are encouraged to identify alternative delivery methods or class activities that can be implemented in the event of weather-related or other emergency closures. Departments may have different stipulations regarding online classes and inclement weather. We recommend that you check in with your dean or department chair to see if there are additional requirements.

Why do this?

Although the prospect of a snow day may hold some appeal, there are good reasons to offer an alternative class. Your department’s policy may require it, your students may want it, or you may want to avoid cutting parts of your syllabus or having to condense topics. Reorganizing class for a snow day offers an opportunity to try something new in your course, and possibly something better.

Ideas for Online Class Activities

There are a few easy ways to conduct classes online that provide the equivalent of a classroom experience or a means to assign work. A more detailed description of the programs is down below.

- Flip your classroom during the closure and create a video lecture at home with Panopto and post it in Canvas for students to watch.
- Host a synchronous (real time) class meeting in Zoom and record it for anyone who misses the session. If you flipped your classroom, this could be a webinar to discuss the lecture.
- Create classroom activities that can be completed remotely, such as:
  - Create online quizzes in Canvas
  - Have online discussions in Canvas or have timed discussions on your recorded lecture
  - Use collaboration tools for activities:
    - Flipgrid (Instructors post discussion prompts and students respond with short videos)
    - Padlet (Instructors and students can collaborate together on boards, documents, and webpages that are easy to read and fun to contribute to)
    - Teams (a Microsoft Business collaboration tool that includes the ability to chat, share files, make video calls, etc.)
    - If you were planning on having student presentations, have them create their own videos using a tool like Panopto and share them in Canvas

Overview of Zoom and Panopto for Classes during a Closure

Recording a Lecture (Panopto)

To record a lecture, Panopto allows users to easily record their screen and/or sell on their computer then upload and stream the content.

Panopto Quick Start Videos
Be mindful that everyone’s situation is different and some students may not have the same access to online resources as you. While we hope to keep classes on schedule, your own and your students’ safety comes first.

Real Time Class Meetings (Zoom)

Zoom is a program/app used as a meeting place for people who may be in different locations to call in a shared space. It allows online instructional classroom meetings where students would be able to join the call even if they are snowed in. It’s an easy way to keep your class on track with lectures when campus is closed.

View ETM’s wiki guide on Setting up Zoom
View CIS’s Help Pages about Zoom

We’re happy to talk about good practices for the mechanics using Zoom and to discuss how it works in different class settings. A fully online session will run differently than a mixed mode session which would include students on campus in class and those online.

Tips for Using Zoom

1. Connectivity problems happen – let students know that that’s ok and they should just rejoin as they can.
2. If you have access to a microphone or headset use it – it’ll nearly always be better audio than your computer’s built in options.
3. Control background noise and disruption by asking students to stay muted unless they are going to speak. Encourage them to use earbuds or headphones and refrain from typing on the laptop unless they are muted.
4. Consider using the text-messaging tool built into Zoom or keeping the video feed off. This saves internet bandwidth and allows participants to listen comfortably without worrying about their appearance.
5. If you’re running a session with students on campus and online, designate someone in the room with you to be actively monitoring and engaging with the online students in the chat.
   a. This is a good way to make sure the online students have a voice without you trying to do everything at once
6. For synchronous (real time) online sessions – be aware that you’re often being invited into a student’s home and be understanding.
   a. Although we’d suggest that you recommend students to find a quiet space and set aside the time, they (and you) may not always be able to control interruptions by roommates, spouses, children, and pets.
   b. Especially with snow days, I’d suggest recording live sessions so that students can rewatch what they missed if they need to leave the session for a while.

Zoom Quick Start Videos