

Procedures for Course Design and Delivery
College of Health Professions
Effective May 2020

Context

The purpose of this document is to provide guidance to College of Health Professions students, faculty, and staff in the design, implementation, and delivery of traditional (i.e., face-to-face) courses during a public health pandemic. These procedures are immediately applicable to the COVID-19 pandemic, but apply equally to future public health emergencies or a similar nature, should they occur.

Assumptions

The procedures presume several principles, which are described below.

1. NDSU's Mission. We are part of a land grant, student-focused institution. We fulfill that mission, in part, by providing a high quality education to our students. Face-to-face education is important, but only so important as it can reasonably be expected to be the first-best method of educating students.
2. College of Health Profession's Mission. One (if not the) major goal of the College is to educate future health care workers. The vast majority of our graduates must pass licensure, registry, or certification exams to enter into (and continue to develop in) professional practice. Our curricula are heavily rooted in experiential, as well as traditional didactic, learning. Different types of education are best taught using different forms of delivery and using different pedagogical strategies. We interpret a high quality education as the means of instruction that best positions our students to successfully enter the workforce and thrive in that workforce.
3. Reasonable Risk. As a part of its very nature, working in health care entails some level of risk. We acknowledge that the risk is not zero. However, the College is ethically bound to take reasonable steps to ensure that any risk borne by students, faculty, and staff is low and reasonable in nature.
4. Equity. Pandemics do not adhere to socio-economic boundaries. As such, faculty, staff, students, their families, and society in general may bear these risks, and efforts to minimize risk apply to all groups.
5. Voluntariness. North Dakota is an "at will" employment state. College Policy 3.01 requires students to voluntarily commit to all policies and procedures applicable to the delivery of the College's educational programs. This applies not only to any student who declares a major housed in the College of Health Professions, but also any students in other majors completing coursework offered through the auspices of the College of Health Professions. All individuals have the ability to opt out of the College's educational activities, although such a decision may come with voluntary separation for employees or a change in the student's eligibility to complete one of the College's programs (or in a given time frame). In accordance with College Policy 3.03, "The College of Health Professions reserves the right to terminate the enrollment of any student at any time, if the student demonstrates that he or she is unsuited for a professional career and its inherent responsibilities and obligations."

6. Academic Freedom. NDSU Policy 325 states, “Faculty are entitled to freedom in teaching their assigned courses. That freedom includes, but is not limited to, design of pedagogical approach, selection and delivery of course content and reference materials beyond what is considered baseline in their degree program(s). Freedom further extends to conducting of class meetings and demonstrations, creating assignments and examinations to assess student performance, and assigning grades.” As experts in their fields of study and professional practice, faculty and instructional staff are best positioned to discern how to adjust course design, implementation, and delivery, to provide the best education to students.
7. Adherence to Policy. All faculty, staff and students will make every reasonable effort to adhere to existing policies at the University, College, School and/or department level.

Course Design Procedures

1. All instructional staff should prepare to teach their courses in a traditional, face-to-face manner. Instructional staff may choose to keep their existing teaching schedule or split their courses into a series of course sections with lower enrollment per section, holding constant total course enrollment across these sections. Instructors who choose the latter option must inform their direct supervisor of their intent before June 15, 2020 in order to facilitate the scheduling of the smaller enrollment sections.
2. Consistent with College of Health Professions Policy 3.10, “Individual faculty members shall develop an Instructional Continuity Plan for each face-to-face course they teach.” Policy 3.10 provides the essential components of that plan. It should address both disruption of traditional classroom activities, as well as disruptions to specific groups of individuals who participate in the classroom. The plan must be integrated within the course syllabus. Any components of the plan not listed in the syllabus must be displayed prominently on the Course’s Blackboard page on or before the first day of class. **As experts in their area of instruction, faculty have free reign to develop an instructional continuity plan that strikes an optimal balance between the quality of education provided to students while minimizing risks borne by participants in the educational process. Faculty may use any modes of course delivery they deem best suited to support the plan.**
3. Instructional staff may implement the instructional continuity plan **at any point in the semester**, based on the needs of the class and the judgment of the instructional staff. Implementation of the plan may occur as early as the first day of class. For team-taught courses, consensus of when to implement the plan must be achieved across all instructors.
4. Instructional staff will discuss the plan and its implementation with students on the first day of class. Student input will be considered when implementing the plan.
5. Instructional staff will communicate to students when they will implement the plan, as well as the duration in which the plan will take effect. Communication will include both NDSU email notification and posting a permanent announcement on the course’s Blackboard page.
6. Instructional staff who implement an instructional continuity plan are responsible for assessing outcomes directly related to the implementation of the plan to ensure comparable student learning outcomes to those otherwise achieved in the absence of the implementation of the plan.

7. Instructors have the right to forgo student ratings of instruction (SROIs), or to undertake them on the condition that they are not used in annual performance review or promotion and tenure processes. Those requests must be made to the instructor's supervisor in writing prior to the implementation of an instructional continuity plan. In the absence of a request, SROIs will be implemented in the usual fashion.
8. Each academic unit should develop a plan that assigns a "backup instructor" who can continue to deliver course material in the event that a particular course instructor becomes ill and unable to continue teaching.

Classroom Activity Procedures

1. All students, faculty, and staff will maintain basic social distancing, by maintaining 6 feet of space between the individual and others in the classroom. The instructor is responsible for monitoring that social distancing occurs.
2. College of Health Professions Policy 3.01 establishes a list of actions considered as professional misconduct. As noted above, College Policy 3.01 requires students to voluntarily commit to all policies and procedures applicable to the delivery of the College's educational programs. This applies not only to any student who declares a major housed in the College of Health Professions, but also any students in other majors completing coursework offered through the auspices of the College of Health Professions. The following instances of professional misconduct are particularly noteworthy:
 - Item 1: Violation of conduct described in course policies or articulated by the instructor in writing.
 - Item 5: Approaching faculty, staff, or students in less than a professional manner and treating faculty, staff, peers, and patients in a disrespectful and inconsiderate way
 - Item 16: Endangering patients, faculty, staff, and/or fellow students or damaging their property.

The College views any action on the part of any student that deliberately or carelessly increases another individual's risk of exposure to an infectious pathogen to be a violation of items 5 and 16 above. The College also considers such actions on the part of employees to be a violation of the terms of their employment contract (the "work safely" criterion), as well as NDSU Policy 151.

3. Instructional staff will place language in their course syllabi that establish ground rules to ensure that the risk of spreading a contagious disease are kept at a low level. These ground rules should follow CDC and North Dakota guidelines (see links below) and include, but are not limited to, the following:
 - Requiring the use of masks in all face-to-face classroom settings
 - Creating an assigned seating plan, following University seating guidelines
 - Determining the starting and stopping points of class to reduce the intensity of traffic into and out of the classroom
 - Developing a mechanism by which students enter and exit a classroom while maintaining social distancing

Failure on the part of students to abide by these rules is also a violation of item 1 above. All are enforceable through the processes and procedures outlined in College Policy 3.01. Costs will be borne by each individual participating in the course.

4. Any rules set by faculty in their course must also be adopted in an analogous manner by the instructor or other course personnel (teaching assistants, etc.).
5. College Policy 3.06 states that “Upon acceptance to a professional program housed in the College of Health Professions, students may be required to submit documentation of health status. Programs will define their own documentation requirements and include those requirements in their program handbook(s).” Academic units may extend this requirement to SARS COV 2. However, units must develop criteria to apply the requirement to all students, faculty, and staff. Those criteria must be approved by faculty, and be applied and enforced in an equitable manner. The onus is on the academic unit to demonstrate equitable and uniform applicability and enforcement. Input from students and staff must be sought and incorporated as those criteria are developed.

Classroom Infrastructure

The College of Health Professions Office of the Dean will work with NDSU’s central administration to:

1. Limit entry and exit points to Sudro Hall, Aldevron Tower, and NDSU Nursing at Sanford-Bismarck in a manner that reduces congestion in the hallways and at building entry/exit points.
2. Ensure that all classrooms in Sudro Hall, Aldevron Tower, and NDSU Nursing at Sanford-Bismarck, as well as other locations in which CHP courses are taught, have infrastructure to promote safe and effective instruction. This includes both reasonable changes to classroom technology to facilitate instructional continuity as well as the resources to assist in sanitizing classroom spaces.
3. Distribute seating capacities for all classrooms on campus to faculty and staff as soon as they are created and made publicly available.
4. Distribute any changes to course and classroom schedules implemented to reduce congestion in buildings and improve the flow of student traffic.

Suggestions for Instructional Staff

1. If you are teaching a course(s) in the fall 2020 semester, please start designing your course as soon as possible.
2. Determine the physical location in which your course is scheduled to be held. Plan for only a fraction of those seats to be available given social distancing guidelines. Determine whether you want to request a different room, or plan to keep the room, but adopt an instructional continuity plan that addressed the reduced seating capacity (likely 30%) in the room. Inform your supervisor of your decision before June 15.
3. As you plan your course, please create a list of essential, but reasonable, changes/additions to the classroom environment that are necessary to implement your course this fall.
4. Provide your supervisor with information about your instructional continuity plan, classroom changes, and any necessary (but reasonable) expenditures necessary to implement your plan. Send this information to your supervisor as soon as possible, but no later than July 15, 2020.

Suggested Prevention Measures

To keep everyone safe and healthy during this active pandemic period, please practice these good public health prevention measures:

1. If you are sick, please stay home.
2. Avoid close contact with one another including practicing social distancing at least six feet apart.
3. Wash your hands frequently with soap and water for at least 20 seconds. Use hand sanitizer that contains at least 60% alcohol for cleansing hands, or to clean and disinfect work surfaces.
4. Avoid touching your eyes, nose, or mouth with your hands.
5. Cover your mouth and nose with a cloth face cover when around others.
6. Cover your mouth and nose with a tissue when you cough or sneeze and throw used tissues in the trash and immediately wash your hands.
7. Avoid close physical contact with others including social greetings such as handshakes, hugs, kisses and other direct contact.
8. Monitor yourself for flu-like symptoms including fever, cough, muscle aches, breathing difficulty, loss of taste or smell, and call your local health care provider if you develop symptoms or have questions about COVID-19 testing.

CDC Resources

<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/index.html>

<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/colleges-universities/considerations.html>

Resources Developed by the State of North Dakota

<https://ndresponse.gov/sites/www/files/documents/covid-19/ND%20Smart%20Restart/Additional%20Resources/NDSmartRestartPlan-200515.pdf>

<https://ndresponse.gov/covid-19-resources/covid-19-business-and-employer-resources/nd-smart-restart/nd-smart-restart-protocols/large-gatherings>

North Dakota State University Resources

Policy 151: Code of Conduct <https://www.ndsu.edu/fileadmin/policy/151.pdf>

Policy 325: Academic Freedom <https://www.ndsu.edu/fileadmin/policy/325.pdf>

College of Health Professions Resources

All College Policies Referenced in this document are available here:

https://www.ndsu.edu/fileadmin/healthprofessions/documents/College_of_Health_Professions_Policy_Manual_5.1.2019.pdf

Policy 3.01: Student Academic and Conduct Standard – page 44

Policy 3.03: Right to Terminate Enrollment – page 50

Policy 3.06: Status Documentation – Page 51

Policy 3.10: Instructional Continuity – page 56 (Note: the policy contains sample statements to include in your syllabus)