

TO: All instructional faculty  
FROM: Russ Tomlin, Senior Vice Provost for Academic Affairs  
Date: September 15, 2009  
SUBJECT: The H1N1 Flu Pandemic – Instructional Continuity

[NB: AN ELECTRONIC VERSION OF THIS DOCUMENT IS ONLINE AT [HTTP://ACADEMICAFFAIRS.UOREGON.EDU/H1N1](http://ACADEMICAFFAIRS.UOREGON.EDU/H1N1). THE ONLINE VERSION INCLUDES LINKS PROVIDING MORE DETAILED INFORMATION ABOUT THE RATIONALE FOR THE RECOMMENDED PRACTICES AND SUGGESTIONS ABOUT THEIR IMPLEMENTATION. There are answers to the questions "why" and "how" for most numbered points in this document.]

## PLANNING FOR OPTIMIZING INSTRUCTIONAL CONTINUITY

In the event of an increased H1N1 flu outbreak, usual patterns of teaching and learning are likely to be disrupted. Continuity of our teaching efforts even during such disrupted times must be a top priority for the University, in order to avoid lasting impacts of lengthy suspension or cancellation of classes. Thus, instructors (with this term used here to represent any members of the university community engaged in the presentation of courses), departments, and schools/colleges need to make contingency plans for continuing the teaching and learning enterprise as well as departmental operations during periods when high absenteeism compromises normal teaching and operating efforts. This document provides general recommendations regarding advance contingency planning as well as specific action steps to be taken should an H1N1 flu outbreak materialize.

### (1) General issues

1. Instructors are urged to address planning for dealing with flu outbreaks in their class syllabi.
2. In this planning, instructors are urged to provide greater flexibility in class attendance and absentee policies, as well as in policies for making up work and examinations and for Incomplete grades.
3. Instructors should seriously consider expanding their course presence on Blackboard or other internet-based sites, facilitating transition to non face-to-face instruction should circumstances require it.

### (2) Specific planning regarding student absence/illness

1. The instructor for a course is in the best position to judge when/if flu-related absenteeism has risen to the level where it will negatively impact the regular means of instruction.
2. When/if the instructor makes this determination, he/she should consult with the department or unit head for concurrence, then initiate alternative instructional approaches (below).

3. The department or unit head will inform the relevant dean as to the number of courses/sections for which alternative instructional approaches have been initiated.
4. The dean will provide Academic Affairs with weekly summaries of the number of courses/sections for which alternative instructional approaches have been initiated.
5. In the event that alternative instructional approaches cannot be implemented, thus risking disruption of instructional continuity, the dean and Academic Affairs must be informed immediately.
6. During periods of reliance on alternative instructional approaches, the instructor must remain in contact with students, so as to be able to determine when to return to the original instructional setting. Such a resumption of normal activities should be undertaken in consultation with the department head or unit leader, who will inform the dean, who in turn will notify Academic Affairs.

### (3) Specific planning regarding faculty/instructor absence/illness

1. Recognizing that “one-off” or short duration instructor absences have routinely been dealt with in ways that lead to negligible loss of instructional continuity, instructors and academic units should deal with short flu-related instructor absences through comparable means.
2. For longer-duration flu-related instructor absence in order to effect appropriate “social distancing” to prevent the spread of the flu virus, the instructor should initiate alternative instructional approaches (discussed further below).
3. For longer-duration flu-related instructor absences due to acute instructor illness, the academic unit should implement contingency plans, either the initiation of alternative instructional approaches (discussed further below) or the provision of a substitute instructor until the instructor of record has recovered sufficiently to resume instructional duties, either as originally planned or through alternative instructional approaches.
4. During periods of reliance on alternative instructional approaches, the instructor must remain in appropriate contact with students, so as to be able to determine when a return to the original instructional setting may be arranged. Such a resumption of normal activities should be undertaken in consultation with the department head or unit leader, who will inform the dean, who in turn will notify Academic Affairs.

### (4) Alternative Instructional Approaches

1. Use of non face-to-face communication is a given. This communication may be effected by whatever means are appropriate and available.
2. Continuation of instruction may be effected through a wide variety of methods, ranging from “low-tech” approaches to state-of-the-art electronic methods. Whichever approach is followed, the instructor must maintain availability for consultation and discussion. Low-tech approaches could include guided independent study/writing or

provision of reading lists and assignments, while high-tech approaches could include podcasting or use of online course delivery tools. At an intermediate level, expanded use of Blackboard, providing course materials and maintaining an open discussion forum for student-instructor and student-student exchanges, would represent a viable, easily accessible option.

3. Very helpful information about alternative teaching approaches is available online at <http://libweb.uoregon.edu/cmet/fluedtech.html>. Please note that, given the unusual circumstances we are facing, this will probably not be the best time to seek assistance in developing proficiency with electronic means of teaching that are beyond your current abilities.