Flex instruction, generally defined as instructing both face-to-face and online students at the same time (synchronously), also sometimes referred as concurrent or simultaneous teaching, can pose some challenges. The following are best practices to help ensure more effective and less stressful Flex instruction when needed due to COVID or other special circumstances.

Note that this type of instruction is generally not encouraged because it often causes the instructor to lose focus in that they are required to switch from managing face-to-face to online students resulting in difficulties in presenting the best learning experience to all students. Only instructors who are comfortable/skilled with the technology, are highly confident in there general teaching capabilities, can manage multiple tasks at once, and are in special situations such as due to COVID, should consider this instructional application.

Consider Alternatives

In many cases, it may *not* be possible to conduct a Flex instructional session (such as due to resources or time constraints) or you, as an instructor, may not feel comfortable or ready to use this advanced technique. If this is the case, consider alternative ways that the student can continue to learn and still stay caught up within the course.

✪ One approach would be to create and provide a short summary video or slideshow about the class topic and to instruct the student to conduct some sort of associated active learning component that may or may not be graded (formative assessment).

- Examples could be a short quiz, a short essay, a forum post, or some other type of engaging assignment that would help you and the student demonstrate understanding of the content and show participation.

✪ You can also offer to meet your online student(s) for a special online "office hour" session to go over content that was covered in-class. This could be done instead of teaching using Flex or in addition to, just to check to make sure they are properly grasping the concepts presented in class. Expressing a willingness to spend extra time with them helps with community building.

Flex (Simultaneous) Instruction Best Practices: if Needed

If you still feel that using Flex instruction is needed and you are willing to put in the extra effort needed to have an effective and beneficial learning experience, follow the proceeding best practices for this instructional technique.

Prepare Ahead of Time:

Practice using the technology (Zoom) in class to record your presentation, without online students first. This will help prepare you in properly managing good audio, video camera, and screen capture procedures, before you actually conduct a live Zoom session and conduct class with both face-to-face and online students at the same time.

✪ Give specific information within your syllabus on your policy regarding Flex/ Concurrent instruction. Example: Flex/Concurrent instruction will only be provided by **prior approval**/arrangement and only for students who will be missing more than two classes due to medical or other special situations – *be specific and ensure students know what is expected of them and that this isn't some tool for them to simply miss class whenever they want.*

✪ Provide students with the Zoom address ahead of time. This can be written in the syllabus and could even be put on the Learning Management System (LMS) as a link within your course – *remind students that prior approval would be required before admittance on Zoom.*

✪ Tell students that they need to add a professional looking photograph of themselves (profile picture) to their Zoom account: https://support.zoom.us/hc/en-us/articles/201363203-Customizing-your-profile#h_01F6MWFRY3D62ANBVYSB7ZNNS7

- Requiring every student to have a professional profile picture will help the class learning community know one another and better interact even if the student does not turn on their video feed.
- Encourage students to turn on their video feed at least while they are talking. This greatly helps with active discussion and engagement.
- Additional reasons to have online students share their video feed and ways to overcome reasons why students might not want to share their video feeds are addressed in this informational video: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-D08YVXJQ5s

Lecturing/Presentation:

Realize that during Flex instructional you are talking to both the face-to-face class and the online students at the same time. It is important to periodically look at your web camera in order to have "eye contact" (instructional presence) with all audiences.

✪ If you move around while instructing, be sure to come back to the webcam location to be in view for your online students. If you moved away to make a dynamic point, be sure to restate the point "on camera" so that the online audience can clearly hear what you said.

Interaction:

Realize that your online students can only hear what is stated close to the microphone. For this reason, it is important to restate any questions or comments made by in-class students.

✪ Just as you periodically ask in-class students questions, do not forget about online students. Ask them questions as well. Similarly, let your online students know that if they have a question, they should be free to ask as well. Tell them to just say "excuse me I have a question" because you might not see their raised hand or hand icon.

✪ If displaying or using something in the face-to-face classroom that is not on the screen, be sure to have digital versions for your online students to use (Example: in class reading, worksheets, etc.).

✪ If you are doing group work in class be sure to use breakout rooms (Zoom feature) for your online students so that they can still properly participate in the active learning activities.

- If you only have one or two students online, have a student from a face-to-face group connect to the Zoom session on their cellphone to let the online student(s) work with their face-to-face group. *Be sure to properly manage the classroom/projected Zoom session's microphone (it may need to be muted until group work is over).

✪ You can also poll the entire class, including the online students, by using online polling tools such as Mentimeter (www.mentimeter.com) where students simply go to a web site (using a laptop or a cellphone) and enter their responses. – *responses are displayed instantly*

Again, it is important to stress that this type of instruction is generally not encouraged due to its varied difficulties as well as high training/experience requirement and should not be used except for special circumstances, mainly severe, longer-term medical issues. Examples would be if a student has ongoing COVID issues, or more than half your class would be absent due to a spike in COVID contractions. Proper evidence should always be provided by students in accordance with the university's current policies.