

# Equitable Teaching in Hybrid and Remote Classrooms

## Introduction

**Equity** in teaching is related to but distinct from **diversity** (the presence of different people of marginalized identities within a space) or **inclusion** (people of identities different from the dominant identity feel welcomed, included, and able to participate) in the classroom. Equity is a process, and the goal of this process is liberation from oppressive structures, yielding outcomes of diversity and inclusion. Equitable teachers transform structures and resources in and outside our classrooms to ensure fair and just opportunities and outcomes for *all* of our students. Our educational systems, including UNC-Chapel Hill, have historically been designed to benefit certain types of students: students who are, for example, White, wealthy, and non-disabled. Pursuing equity in teaching means transforming the design, structures, and resources of our classrooms and institutions so that they benefit every student and support all student identities. The following checklists can help you navigate this process. Remember that small tweaks can make a big difference—challenge yourself to check off one or two new items each time you teach!

## Equity in Hybrid and Remote Teaching

### Course Design

- Clarity and structure:** I have a clear and highly structured course design with a high level of support for students.
- Includes remote learners intentionally:** I have plans for how students who need to attend class remotely will be able to fully participate and access resources.
- Asynchronous:** I have a plan for asynchronous instruction in the event that many students need to attend class remotely and do not have access to adequate internet resources, are working, are caregiving, etc.
- Culturally relevant content:** The content of my course is culturally relevant to my students' experiences. I include a diverse array of identities in my class materials. I uplift marginalized and critical voices that challenge dominant power structures in my discipline.

### Additional Tips

- Consider using [Lessons in Sakai](#) to structure and support students keeping up with coursework. With hybrid and remote courses, there are many different platforms for

delivering information and content to students. Centralizing it (in Lessons, or a similar platform) will help keep in-person and remote students in sync.

- The [checklist tool in Lessons](#) is great for helping students keep up with what they have done/still need to do each week.
- There is no culturally neutral content. Despite our insistence that a particular article is “simply the best,” or “this is just an objective description of x issue,” all of the readings, books, and artworks that we assign to our classes exist in and are shaped by a cultural context. This Inclusion by Design [self-assessment tool](#) may be helpful in identifying areas where you might improve your course content, especially the section on course content beginning on pg. 7.
- Avoid having the only content about racial minorities and marginalized people be focused on racism, disparities, suffering, and trauma. Include the power, resilience, and leadership of oppressed communities in your content, not only focusing on the ways people are oppressed.
- Be mindful of the cost of your course materials. Are there ways you can reduce the cost (use an older version of a textbook that is available used, share pdfs, use books that are available electronically through the library, etc.)?

## First Day of Class

- Understanding student needs and experiences:** I have prepared a tool (like this survey) that will allow me to get to know the unique needs of each of my students, especially in the context of hybrid/remote learning and the global pandemic.
- Respect student identities:** I model respect for the names and pronouns of my students on our first day.
- Community agreement:** I have plans to create a community agreement in collaboration with my students concerning discussion guidelines and codes of conduct that explicitly includes online discussion norms.

### Additional Tips

- If you are teaching hybrid, hyflex, or remote, it may be harder for students to get to know you. You could create an introductory get-to-know-me video, a few slides about yourself on your first day slidedeck or VoiceThread, or share a bit about yourself and your teaching style.
- Names and online/remote class: Invite students to edit their names in Zoom/online platforms and encourage them to include a pronunciation guide and pronouns.
  - Model this by editing your screen name to include your pronouns/pronunciation.
  - E.g. “Abigail (a-big-ale) she/her”
- Form a community agreement that covers basic discussion guidelines in collaboration with your students. You could pose this question to your class: “What does the class need to agree on in order to have thoughtful, productive and fruitful discussions, free

from harm?" (Offer an alternate way to respond, like a PollEverywhere or a live Google Doc as well.)

- Explicitly include online chats, forums, and/or conversations in your discussion, consider how you and your students should respond if someone says something harmful online, how the harm can be repaired, and take into account that online discussion (more anonymous, harder to read tone) is very different from in-person discussion.
- Consider including a "step up, step back" point in your discussion guidelines that values encouraging students whose voices tend to dominate to step back and make room for others, and encourages students who may be less likely to immediately volunteer to step forward.

## Class Discussion

- ❑ **Community agreement:** I remind my class of our community agreement guidelines before beginning a discussion, and we return to the agreement regularly to make changes and revisions as needed. (It's simple to have a discussion guideline slide that you insert before any slides to prompt discussion or copy and paste to any online forum prompts)
- ❑ **Facilitating to prevent harm:** I have a strategy for (and am transparent with students about) what I will do as the discussion facilitator if I feel or learn from my students that a discussion is becoming harmful. My approach is centered on supporting the needs and experiences of marginalized and oppressed students, not on maintaining the comfort of the majority or dominant students.
- ❑ **Variety:** I have a variety of ways for students (both in-person and remote) to engage in discussion (including, for example, small group, large group, think-pair-shares, and tools like PollEverywhere).

### Additional Tips

- Ways to steer challenging discussions or discussions that have become harmful may include:
  - Pausing the conversation and redirecting it.
  - Asking everyone to do a reading and then return to the conversation with new information.
  - Identifying dominant or oppressive narratives that are being reproduced in the class discussion (de-personalizing it from the student(s) who voiced the dominant narrative), and inviting students to instead present critical narratives that challenge the dominant narrative.
- Consider asking students to self-evaluate regularly about how they are meeting the community discussion agreement and participation requirements. You can provide students with a structure to reflect on how they have been doing and set goals for themselves for the next unit/period.

- Very large online discussions can be difficult for some students to jump into. Consider small discussion groups that students stick with throughout the semester (or for one unit), encouraging them to form rapport and community. See tips on forming groups below.
- When using Zoom for live discussions, be sensitive to a diversity of student settings and living circumstances. [Not every student has a quiet, safe, and Zoom-ready home.](#) Normalize and encourage muting video/microphones and using screen backgrounds, and show students how to use such tools. Video chatting is more tiring than in-person discussion, and having highly structured discussions with breakout rooms, etc., can help students engage.

## Content Delivery

- Securing Zoom:** I have [secured Zoom sessions](#) so as to prevent Zoombombing. This is not only a security issue, but an equity one, as many Zoombombers display racist, sexist, and misogynistic language or images.
- Low-bandwidth versions:** Consider enabling phone/dial in for synchronous Zoom meetings so students can call in, uploading audio-only versions of classes/lectures that require less bandwidth to download, and creating resources/content with the students with the lowest level of access to resources in mind.
- For further recommendations, see **UDL for remote/hybrid classrooms resource.**

## Assessments and Assignments

- Variety:** I have a variety of different types of assignments and assessments that affords students many ways to demonstrate their learning.
- Scaffolding:** Each assignment builds on the skills and knowledge students developed with earlier assignments. I am teaching and providing resources for the skills students need (writing, test-taking, computer skills, etc.) to create successful assignments.
- TILT** (Transparency in Teaching and Learning): Find an in-depth checklist [here](#). My course assignments clearly articulate to students assignments':
  - Purpose:** Some instructors break this category down into **skills** students will gain from completing the assignment and **knowledge** they will gain.
  - Task:** Define the characteristics of the completed assignment. Detail how students can complete the assignment (perhaps including a step-by-step breakdown with a timeline).
  - Criteria for success:** You can include a checklist of essential components of the assignment, a rubric you will use for evaluation, and examples of successful work.
- Learning goals:** My assessments align with the course's learning goals and assess student learning around stated goals. I am not assessing knowledge or skills extraneous to course learning goals.

- ❑ **Grades:** Student grades are determined by a diverse variety of assignments, participation, and assessments, not only by a few high-stakes assessments (like one mid-term and one final). My grading scheme centers student learning and health.
- ❑ **Exams:** My exams and assessments do not require students to be present in person (students may need to join class remotely due to health needs, even if the class is designated as in-person).
- ❑ **Integrity:** My assessments value student integrity. I take proactive measures by ensuring that assignments and assessments do not lend themselves to academic misconduct, instead of punitive measures after the fact to punish students.

### Additional Tips

You may be considering alternate assignments to in-person final exams. This is a chance to also rethink how you are assessing student learning. Is an in-person exam the only way for students to demonstrate knowledge? And if in-person assessments are not possible, what alternate methods could you employ?

Remember to:

- Teach the skills you expect students to use. Not every student has worked extensively on computers before college, and computer skills vary widely. If, for example, you want students to create a video or podcast, make sure you are providing resources, support, and instructional time on how to do that. You don't want the medium of the assessment to be a barrier to students demonstrating their knowledge of course content.
- Offer flexibility in assignments to allow for students' different computing abilities, time limitations, and preferred communication styles (verbal, written, etc.).
- Build in flexibility on deadlines (time banks, allowing students to set alternate deadlines, etc.).
- Have clear rubrics for assignments available to students as they work on the assignment (not only after they have turned it in). Use instructional time to talk through rubrics and explain what you are looking for in a successful assignment.
- Offer opportunities for revision and iterative learning.

**Grading:** As the student-initiated pass/fail and CV grades will (currently) NOT be in effect for fall 2020, this can be an opportunity to test alternate forms of grading that offer students the flexibility and grace that learning during a global crisis demands. Students will still be mourning the deaths of loved ones due to COVID-19, experiencing the protests and uprisings against police violence and antiblackness across the world, and navigating the difficult financial circumstances brought on by the pandemic.

- **Labor-based contract grading:** Instructor and class agree on a “contract” or basic set of assignments and labor to be completed and grade is determined based on the student's labor and progress, not in reference to a predetermined “standard” of quality.
  - [Labor-Based Grading Contracts: Building Equity and Inclusion in the Compassionate Writing Classroom](#) by Asao Inoue
  - [“A Simple Alternative to Grading”](#) by Glenda Potts

- **Student self-grading:** Students are invited to evaluate and assess themselves and their progress, while the instructor focuses on offering formative feedback on assignments and ways to encourage and support student learning and growth.
  - [“A Practice of Freedom”: Self-grading for Liberatory Learning](#) by Vicki Reitenauer

## Forming groups

- ❑ **Diversity:** I take the diversity of student experiences into account when I form long-term intentional groups.
- ❑ **Group structure:** I assign roles for student group work to clarify responsibilities and reduce unequal distribution of individual labor.
- ❑ **Zoom breakout rooms:** I use small-group work to promote student interaction, using [random assignment](#) for short-term, low-stakes activities and [intentionally forming](#) groups for longer-term, high-stakes assignments.

### Additional Tips

- Remember students will have very different schedules and abilities to meet.
- Consider using a skills test ([High 5 Test](#)) to help students identify their strengths.
- Break group work into roles (recorder, presenter, researcher, artists, etc.) with clear expectations for each role.

## Mid-semester feedback

- ❑ **Get feedback:** I will solicit mid-semester feedback from students and implement changes in response
- ❑ **Give feedback:** I have a plan to offer students mid-semester feedback on their own progress.

### Additional Tips

- Ask students what is/isn't working—they will be able to identify the classroom structures that are less effective in supporting their success.
- A simple form to use in your course: 1) What is working well for you? 2) What isn't working well for you? 3) What changes would help you succeed/learn more?
- Be clear about what you will do with the feedback, and try not to wait until the next semester to incorporate it, so that the students who provided the helpful feedback will be able to benefit from the revisions you make based on their feedback.

- To encourage students to be accountable for their own learning, consider offering students structured self-assessment and class mid-semester feedback. This is a great time to have students check in on how they are meeting class discussion expectations.

## Community safety and masking

- Students whose communities (low-income, migrant, BIPOC, disabled) are disproportionately affected by Covid-19 due to systemic racism and ableism deserve specific support.
- If you include a policy on your syllabus requiring mask-wearing to be counted present, for example, make sure that you always have extra masks to provide to students who might not have one. It is important not to penalize students for things out of their control, like not having access to a mask.

## Further Resources

- [“8 Ways to Be More Inclusive in Your Zoom Teaching”](#) by Viji Sathy and Kelly Hogan
- [“Want to Reach All of Your Students? Here’s How to Make Your Teaching More Inclusive”](#) by Viji Sathy and Kelly Hogan
- Sewanee [Equity, Inclusion, and Remote Teaching](#)
- [“COVID-19 and Videoclassism: Implicit Bias, Videojudgment, and Why I’m Terrified to Have You Look Over My Shoulder”](#) by Taharee Jackson
- [Peralta Online Equity Rubric](#), a self-evaluation and revision tool
- [20 Tips for a Successful Online Course](#) by Sheryl Burgstahler
- Boston University [Remote Teaching Resource List](#)
- UC Davis [Online Equity and Inclusion](#)
- [Trauma-Informed Teaching and Learning Online: Principles & Practices During a Global Health Crisis](#)
- Crowdsourcing [Teaching Online with Care](#)