

Teaching IR Courses: Spring 2021 Semester Survey Results



THE UNIVERSITY
of NORTH CAROLINA
at CHAPEL HILL

The findings and recommendations shared in this document are taken from the results of a survey administered by the University's [Continuity in Teaching](#) group and completed by 30 faculty members who taught at least one in-person/remote (IR) course during the Spring 2021 semester. Nearly 350 students in enrolled in twelve IR courses also completed a survey about their experiences.

Most instructors and students reported that they appreciated the flexibility that this teaching mode has afforded students, especially during the pandemic. This course format does come with some unique opportunities and challenges; some of those are highlighted here.

Findings and Peer Advice

FINDING: 75% of instructors agreed that having an **in-class assistant** would be helpful if they were to teach a future IR course. Classroom assistants' primary duties focused on helping with technology set-up and assisting with remote students and their questions (e.g. monitoring Zoom chat). Most of the classroom assistants were either TAs or undergraduate learning assistants. One instructor had regular students rotate in this role.

PEER ADVICE: If you have a classroom assistant, be explicit about their roles and how you will communicate during class. If you do not have a classroom assistant, you may want to consider building in some regular intervals during class to check in with remote students and Zoom chat.

FINDING: Almost all the surveyed instructors agreed that **classroom technology support** was critical to their success teaching an IR course.

PEER ADVICE: Before the semester begins, schedule a consultation with the IT support group that manages the classroom in which you are scheduled to teach your IR course. For centrally-supported classrooms, contact the [ITS Classroom Hotline](#).

FINDING: A quarter of instructors reported having regular **audio problems**, and half of the students who took the course remotely reported having trouble hearing students who were participating in class.

PEER ADVICE: Learn more about the audio options in your assigned classroom and test your audio solutions before the semester begins. Survey students early in the semester to identify any technical problems they're having that you may be able to help resolve. You may need to get in the habit of repeating in-person student questions for your remote students.

Note: Many classrooms have been outfitted with ceiling mics and additional cameras to facilitate interaction between in-person and remote participants. These classrooms are often referred to as HyFlex classrooms. If you are not scheduled to teach your IR course in a HyFlex room, see about making other arrangements.

FINDING: Students participating remotely reported feeling **less engaged** during class discussion and small group activities. 58% of students surveyed said it was harder to focus and pay attention when participating remotely.

PEER ADVICE: It is easy for remote students to feel isolated. Encourage remote student comments and questions in Zoom Chat and monitor closely (hopefully an assistant can help with this). Consider projecting remote students on the screen for at least a short period of time at the beginning of each class to help establish community between in-class and remote students. Ask for remote student contributions during class discussions and report outs. Consider assigning groups for remote students during small group activities to help them get to know one another. Check in with remote students regularly throughout the semester to see how they are doing, via email, surveys, or invited office hours.

FINDING: Half of the instructors said they were not able to **cover as much content** using this mode, due to the extra time it took to manage class interactions.

PEER ADVICE: Manage your expectations and expect class activities to take a little bit longer. If you end up needing to re-prioritize course content, think about options for shifting some your content to out-of-class coverage (e.g. recorded lectures, assigned readings).

FINDING: Students valued **recorded class sessions** and interactions in **Zoom chat**, regardless of how they participated (in person, remotely, or some combination). An average of roughly 75% found class recordings and Zoom chat important or somewhat important.

PEER ADVICE: The ability to refer back to recorded class sessions can benefit all students, not just students who miss class. Consider your [options for recording class sessions](#). Likewise, Zoom chat can facilitate interaction between in-person and remote students during class. Instructors who opt to use Zoom chat will need to consider options for monitoring chat, and will need to ensure that students in class have disabled their device volume and microphones to avoid feedback.

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Contact | Questions

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