

Social Distancing Learning Model

University of Mount Union

Fall 2020

Frequently Asked Questions



Preface

This Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ) document is provided to you after several weeks of deliberation, brain-storming, and feedback on the part of the COVID-19 Academic Affairs Working Group. This working group, a cross-departmental group comprised of faculty, staff, and college deans, continues to work tirelessly to provide the most recent and accurate best practices available. While it is understood this cannot always be as comprehensive as possible, the working group believes this to be the best place to start to provide valuable information regarding the Social Distancing Learning Model. Through the Summer of 2020, the working group will continue to add, edit, and revise this FAQ. This is considered a living/working document that may change as quickly as COVID-19 has changed our instructional delivery. As additional directives and guidelines are passed down by state and local governments, accreditors, and industry organizations, the working group will adapt this document.

The working group asks that you take time to review this document, determine how the Social Distancing Learning Model will impact your courses, and how the working group might make this a better document to serve you. Once you have had a chance to process the information in this FAQ, please submit any questions, comments, concerns, and suggestions to AcademicContinuityPlan@mountunion.edu. The working group will not provide individual responses to your feedback, but will incorporate your comments and suggestions into the document.

The COVID-19 Academic Affairs Working Group sincerely appreciates your patience and support while working through these unprecedented times. Below, you will find a list of the members of the working group. Stay well!

Dr. Bryan J. Boatright, *Asst. Vice President for Academic Affairs – Chair*
Dr. Jeffrey Breese, *Provost and Vice President for Academic Affairs*
Caitlin Clark, *Associate Athletic Director for Compliance, Administration, and Inclusion*
Dr. Danielle Cordaro, *Associate Professor and Center for Faculty Development Director*
Dr. Stephen Craig, *Instructional Designer*
Jesse Cunion, *Assistant Dean for Student Success*
Dr. Heather Duda, *Founding Dean of the College of Arts and Humanities*
Dr. Sandra Madar, *Founding Dean of the College of Natural and Health Sciences*
Cara McEldowney, *Manager of Instructional Technology*
Ross Miltner, *Director of Student Accessibility Services*
Dr. Melissa Muller, *Associate Professor and College of Natural and Health Sciences Fellow*
Dr. Bruce Pietz, *Associate Professor and Faculty Senate Chair*
Dr. Kristine Still, *Founding Dean of the College of Applied and Social Sciences*

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What is the Social Distancing Learning Model?

The Social Distancing Learning Model (SDLM) is a flexible, hybrid design for learning that maximizes in-person time with students while delivering most of a course content online. It was developed specifically to meet the needs of Mount Union students while the COVID-19 pandemic necessitates changes to in-person instruction, and it shares some features with hybrid models being used on many other campuses that plan a return to in-person instruction this fall. To allow for social distancing, each course with ten or more students will split its in-person instruction time among enrolled students. This will allow students and instructors to maintain six feet of distance while they are together, a basic health and safety recommendation of both the WHO and CDC during the pandemic.

While SDLM was developed for our context as a result of a health crisis, it engages much of what has been learned about effective teaching and learning in higher education over the past 20 years. We strongly suggest you use the pedagogy of flipped learning to prepare courses for the SDLM. Flipped learning divides the learning environment into self-study using online materials and in-person time with instructors and classmates. Direct instruction in the form of lectures, written instructions, demonstrations, texts, films, podcasts and other study materials are provided to students online in an asynchronous format. Because we are working with hybrid instruction for all students this year as a result of the pandemic, activities such as taking quizzes, turning in work, and taking exams should also happen online. In-person instruction should be used to engage students in discussing and reviewing course material, in collaborating on projects, and in laboratory work and experiential learning; in short, in-person time should be used for active learning that is difficult to duplicate online.

Why are we using this model?

During the pandemic, virtually all students in the US who were not enrolled in fully online courses experienced a major disruption in their learning environment when, within a matter of days, their instructors scrambled to move instruction online. A [national survey of college students' experiences](#) during the pandemic suggests dips in their motivation due to the following factors:

- Being physically separated from their instructors and peers.
- Having to adjust quickly to learning remotely, with many stating that were in living situations that were not conducive to learning.
- Worrying about the virus and its impact on their lives.

The same summary of the research shows that one third of the students who said they were unsure about whether they would return were worried that their courses would be online only, with no return to physical classrooms or to campus life. Students quoted in the survey



summary stated a desire for community, interactivity, and the ability to participate in the activities and approaches to learning that led to their decision to choose a particular institution.

According to Office of Marketing, students choose Mount Union because it is a small, residential campus that “feels like home.” They choose it because of the close relationships they are able to form with peers and because of the low student-to-faculty ratio. Students expect Mount Union faculty to be more than just transmitters of information—they are mentors, advisors, and facilitators of deep learning.

Given those expectations, the COVID-19 Academic Affairs Working Group developed the SDLM, which responds to students’ expectations for the “high touch,” experiential, and personalized learning environment that they expect from the University of Mount Union. The model achieves the following:

- The learning environment is designed to maximize student learning and engagement in both the online and face-to-face course elements.
- Experts deliver direct instruction that is accessible to all students in the course.
- Students spend in-class time engaging with the material, with the instructor, and with peers.
- The learning environment can easily pivot to a fully online format, should the need for more emergency remote teaching become necessary.

How will students be divided among sessions?

Courses with 9 or fewer enrolled students or courses with enrollments that can accommodate the adjusted socially distanced seating in each class room will not be required to split students among sessions, although they may do so if they choose to. **However, instructors with smaller enrollments should prepare and deliver most of the instruction online**, reserving in-person time for active learning and discussion. This will help them to prepare for the need for more fully remote instruction.

To help assist you in developing your syllabus and course design, we have provided you with several scenarios that can be applied to many of the courses on the Fall 2020 schedule to help you visualize how classes should be divided. You can find those scenarios in this [Social Distancing Learning Model Scenario document](#). Please note that this document does not provide every single scenario, but it does provide you with those scenarios we recommend. The working group will continue to develop additional scenarios based on your feedback.

We realize this is a lot of information and one size may not fit all. The working group has committed to continually developing these scenarios. Later in the Summer, you will be asked to communicate your plan, based on these scenarios, to the Office of the University Registrar. The University Registrar will send a reminder with the most recently developed scenarios.

Courses of 10 or more enrolled students will be required to adopt SDLM, unless the room can accommodate the entire class roster with the socially distanced seating arranged by Physical Plant for Fall 2020. For those that cannot accommodate in these newly adjusted seating capacities should follow the directives below.

Courses meeting on a 2 day a week schedule (i.e. Tuesday, Thursday) will have the following option:

- Courses meeting on a 2 day a week schedule (i.e. Tuesday and Thursday) will split the students enrolled in the class into 2 groups. One group will meet face-to-face on Tuesday and the other group will meet face-to-face on Thursday.

Courses meeting on a 3 day a week schedule (i.e. Monday, Wednesday, Friday) will have 3 options:

- Split the students enrolled in the class into 3 groups. One group will meet face-to-face on Monday, the second group will meet on face-to-face on Wednesday, and the third group will meet face-to-face on Friday.
- Split the students enrolled in the class into 2 groups. The Monday, or other specified, class session will be remote or be an additional assignment from the instructor with all students engaged in remote learning. The first group (or half the class) will meet face-to-face on Wednesday. The second group will meet face-to-face on Friday.
- Courses meeting one day a week for 2 hours or less will split the students enrolled in the class into 2 groups. The first group will meet face-to-face one week. The following week, the second group will meet face-to-face.

Courses meeting one day a week for more than 2 hours will have 2 options:

- The first group will meet face-to-face one week for the entire class session. The following week, the second group will meet face-to-face for the entire class session.
- The first group will meet face-to-face one week for half of the scheduled class session. The second group will meet face-to-face for the second half of the class session. With this option, all students will still be engaging in a portion of the face-to-face delivery every week.

For courses categorized as clinicals, practicums, and internships: The University will defer to the policy and guidelines set forth by those outside partners.

For courses categorized as labs, ensembles, and other non-traditional class sessions: Studies on rehearsal and performance needs in the performing arts are still emerging. Faculty in these areas will work with their college dean to review the scientific evidence



and determine the best options to maintain a safe and healthy rehearsal and performance space.

How will students know how they will be divided?

How the course roster will be divided, in accordance with the Social Distancing Learning Model, will be at the discretion of the faculty member teaching the course. Instructors should keep in mind that some students may request certain meeting dates to accommodate their other courses. While we encourage you to keep this in mind when dividing your class, it is entirely up to you how the division takes place, as long as equal numbers of students are in each group to allow for social distancing. **Please note that you should make this determination no later than one week prior to the first scheduled meeting date of the course and communicate how the class is divided to your students.**

Will students and faculty be required to wear face coverings in class?

Yes. On July 23, 2020, Ohio Governor Mike DeWine issued a statewide mask order stating the following. The Governor's order can be found here:

<https://governor.ohio.gov/wps/portal/gov/governor/media/news-and-media/covid19-update-07222020>

All individuals in Ohio must wear facial coverings in public at all times when:

- *At an indoor location that is not a residence*
- *Outdoors, but unable to maintain six-foot social distance from people who are not household members*
- *Waiting for, riding, driving, or operating public transportation, such as a taxi, a car service, or a private car used for ride-sharing.*

The order only requires those 10 years old or older to wear a mask. Additional exclusions include:

- *Those with a medical condition or a disability or those communicating with someone with a disability;*
- *Those who are actively exercising or playing sports;*
- *Those who are officiants at religious services;*
- *Those who are actively involved in public safety; or*
- *Those who are actively eating or drinking.*

All members of the Mount Union community are expected to comply with the Ohio Governor's order, including in the active classroom. This means that all students and instructors are required to wear a face covering while class is in session. In addition to the Governor's face covering order, you may be asked to wear additional Personal Protective



Equipment (PPE) for classes that have special circumstances requiring more than just a facial covering of protection.

Can I convert my face-to-face courses to an online format instead?

Those wishing to convert fall face-to-face courses to an online format may do so only after applying to teach the course online and approval of their College Dean and Provost's offices. Those courses already scheduled for online delivery in the Fall will not be required to apply for any additional approvals. The Office of the University Registrar will not convert any Fall courses to an online format without the above application and approvals. Those wishing to apply for online instruction should contact the Dean of their College for the appropriate forms and supporting documents.

Do I have to use D2L to manage my courses?

Because the University is committed to providing a consistent experience for students and to keep the Social Distancing Learning Model organized and consistent for both the face-to-face and remote portions of each course, **all instructors are required to utilize Brightspace D2L for all courses on the schedule.** The working group encourages any instructor who might need additional training or assistance with D2L to reach out to the Center for Faculty Development as soon as possible. Both the Instructional Designer and the Manager of Instructional Technology are willing to assist with the creation of your D2L course and can offer tips and tricks to make our learning management system a great tool and resource for your Fall courses. D2L is a great University resource that allows instructors to offer a structured experience, repository for assignments and discussions, and a standard grade book.

Why are we using flipped learning as the basis for our course planning this summer?

[Flipped learning](#) refers to changing the learning environment so that some elements are delivered asynchronously online instead of in person. Typically, this means that an instructor would record lectures and/or provide material online for students to read, watch, or listen to before class. In-class time is then spent discussing the material, working on projects, papers, problems, lab or collaborative work, etc., with the instructor as facilitator. Flipping your courses' content this summer will have several benefits for your students and for you:

- If you must meet with two or three separate groups of students during the week, it will allow them to have mostly parallel experience of the learning that occurs in and out of class and prevents you from having to deliver the same material to two or three different groups.

- Flipped courses provide a stable learning environment that is easier to pivot to fully remote delivery, should the need for more emergency remote instruction arise. The asynchronously provided material that you designed and planned in the summer will still be there, available online any time for students, and regular class times can be used to continue to support students in groups or individually using tools like Virtual Classroom, Teams, and Microsoft 365 collaboration tools.
- Thinking through your courses' redesign prior to the start of the semester and spending time recording lectures and demonstrations, and finding films, podcasts, or reading material to support your students' learning will allow you to focus on engaging with students in person and online during the semester. You will not be in the position that many of us found ourselves in this spring—scrambling to rewrite assignments and rubrics, recording lectures last minute, figuring out technologies and communication plans on the fly, exhausting yourself and confusing your students in the process.

Flipped designs can also help you to be efficient with your time as an instructor. Recorded demonstrations, lectures and other materials can be reused or repurposed in future courses, saving you time and effort later. It may be that we will have to continue with the SDLM in the spring or even in future semesters—learning how to flip courses and provide more online instruction now will save you labor in those future situations.

Can I use a blended synchronous model instead?

A blended synchronous course is one where the instructor delivers instruction to a group participating remotely and to an in-person group at the same moment. It might seem that using every class period maximizes learning for all students, but careful consideration of the context reveals both pedagogical and material challenges to this mode of learning. We do not recommend this form of delivery at this time for the following reasons:

- Technologies and programs that support blended synchronous learning environments do exist. However, these are not the tools we became familiar with during emergency remote teaching, such as Zoom, Teams, and Virtual Classroom. Those technologies are specifically designed to work in situations when ALL participants are working remotely. They can be used if necessary, such as if one or more students become ill or are otherwise unable to physically attend class.
- The tools required to provide a high quality blended synchronous learning environment include specialized mics, cameras, software and other equipment. As you can imagine, these represent a significant institutional investment in not just the infrastructure, but also in faculty time and training.
- Managing a synchronous blended course requires training and practice. Giving sufficient attention to both the in-person and remote audiences and can be challenging



and takes time to master. One or both audiences can be left feeling as though they have had a diluted experience of the learning.

Can I shorten in-person instruction time if I am delivering content online?

This is a complex question and depends on the course you are teaching and how it is scheduled. For example, if you are teaching a MWF course, you might decide that Monday might best be utilized differently—for example, for students to work through extended practice, or for all students to meet online synchronously online during the class period while you will meet in person with half your students on Wed and the other half on Fri.

Please be judicious about reducing class time—after all, the purpose of SDLM is to maximize the amount of access students get to faculty members and other students during the pandemic. Make these decisions based on what you think best supports the learning of students in your course.

Most importantly—Whatever you decide, **you must follow the social distancing guidelines** (i.e., split groups over 10) and **you must be consistent throughout the semester** so that students understand the expectations for learning in your course.

What if one or more of my students becomes ill or cannot participate in the F2F learning environment?

In these cases, which we hope will be rare occurrences, you may wish to explore limited use of tools like Teams, Virtual Classroom, or Skype to bring in a single or a few students who need to be physically absent from in-person sessions. This solution can work reasonably well if students are working in small groups.

What if I become ill?

The deans have reached out to department chairs to determine teaching plans, should members of a department become ill and require a substitute to take over their courses.

Should I plan for online midterms and final exams?

Yes. Traditional exams can happen online, as well as exam alternatives, such as presentations. Planning for online delivery of exams and specifying how they will occur in your syllabus is very important. Doing so helps students to understand how exams will occur, as well as your standards for academic honesty.



Are we considering giving additional technology to all faculty? Will rooms be re-configured?

We continue to work with the University administration and Information Technology to explore technology and resource options. While we understand there are many great tools available, we have to keep in mind the University's commitment to protecting the budgets during this difficult time.

Physical Plant is currently working with the Office of the University Registrar and the University COVID-19 Working Groups to determine the best ways to socially distance classrooms for reconfiguration and other room modifications.

What is the UMU policy regarding academic field trips and travel with students?

Given the challenge of social distancing using college transportation, the University is pausing all field trips and conference travel with students. Requiring students to use their own transportation is not a viable alternative, as it disadvantages students without access to a personal vehicle. The University recognizes that for some courses, trips provide important curricular content. The institution recommends making excursions one of several ways to fulfill a key learning outcome, thus making trips optional, outside of scheduled class time, and low density. Requests for exceptions to this policy can be made to your College Dean or Vice President.

How can I achieve social distancing when students are working together in class?

Microsoft 365 offers live versions of familiar Microsoft programs, such as Word, Excel, and PowerPoint. These online versions of the programs allow students to work together in class synchronously or asynchronously after class. Microsoft 365 programs are very similar to what is offered in Google Drive, but unlike Google Drive, they are supported by Mount Union's Office of Information Technology and Center for Faculty Development. Students should be advised to bring their devices to class so that they are able to collaborate from a safe distance. The Center for Faculty Development is working on how-to resources for using Microsoft 365 to support social distancing during active learning in class, and we will update you when the support becomes available.



Can I buy hardware or software with departmental or other funds?

You can discuss special equipment purchases with your department chair and dean. Please note that IT may not be able to support special equipment purchased by you or your department. Please expect to be your own technology support if you decide to purchase your own equipment.

This feels like a lot to manage this summer. What support is available?

The Center for Faculty Development has launched an asynchronous institute called “Flip to Pivot” to prepare you to teach effectively and efficiently throughout the year. The institute will cover a variety of topics, but chief among them will be how to leverage and build on your existing skills with D2L and tools to help you to “flip” elements of your courses so that they can adapt to SDLM. The institute is designed to support you rather than to be a burden to complete. You should be able to complete it within a few days if you spend 3-4 hours a day working through the content. It will be completely asynchronous, and you can complete it at your own pace and at your own convenience. After the July 4th holiday we will begin to offer weekly support sessions similar to the Tuesday/Thursday sessions hosted by CFD members during the last half of the Spring 2020 semester.

You can access the institute via D2L: <https://d2l.mountunion.edu/d2l/home/36861>

Is the asynchronous institute called “Flip to Pivot” required?

It is the expectation of the Provost’s office, the Center for Faculty Development, and the COVID-19 Academic Affairs Working Group that all those teaching a course in the Fall of 2020 will attend the institute. We understand that there will be varying levels of knowledge and understanding, but we are confident this institute will provide valuable information to all those teaching in the Fall. Therefore, we do expect that everyone will take part in the institute.

How do I complete the “Flip to Pivot” institute?

Accessing all materials presented is not required to complete the institute. We recommend that you spend time with materials that will support your process of developing courses in the fall and your growth as an instructor. Complete the three “Try it” activities and participate in the two discussions to complete the institute.



How do I get more detailed information about the above questions or how do I submit suggestions for continued improvement?

As mentioned, we want to hear from you. Your feedback, suggestions, and comments are important to the success of the Social Distancing Learning Model and the success of our Fall semester. To facilitate your feedback, we ask that you direct questions to AcademicContinuityPlan@mountunion.edu. The working group will not provide individual responses to your feedback, but will incorporate your comments and suggestions into the document. On July 1, 2020, the working group will host a remote open forum where all can discuss and ask questions. Please stay tuned for more details at a later date regarding this open forum.