



Online delivery

Elena Zabolotnii <ezabolot@ualberta.ca>
To: Samer Adeeb <adeeb@ualberta.ca>

Wed, May 27, 2020 at 2:59 PM

Samer:
I keep remembering additional issues re: online delivery. So here are a couple of additional points.

1. Submission deadlines:

My TAs and myself had to develop a written guideline for assignment submission. I think I underestimated the students' creativity even within the fairly specific guidelines I outlined initially. It did not occur to me that students, for example, would submit unsigned, separate and multiple pages for a single assignment, or that they would take unlit photos that are barely readable, or that they would insist on using obscure web formats. In addition, apparently eClass allows assignment modifications even after the deadline - so I had a number of students tinkering with their files after the deadline and then complaining that their submission was labelled as late. So, our rules now include: each assignment being a single PDF file, with each page listing name and ID. Having run into problems myself, I recommend having restrictive acceptance rules (before, I allowed a number of document formats and I found that my TAs don't always have the ability to view the files).

2. What do we do with special accommodation with respect to 24-hr exams? I have a student requiring X2 time - so 48 hrs??? This in my view creates multiple opportunities for cheating, as Nick pointed out. To make it clear, the exam should be doable in ~3 hrs, with 24 hrs being given for flexibility.

3. eClass bugs: There are some bugs with eClass usability that I am running into. I find that testing a new setup is key - for example, my new meeting rooms today would create an error for unknown reasons. So, TAs can be engaged to test the setup.

On Wed, May 27, 2020 at 12:02 PM Elena Zabolotnii <ezabolot@ualberta.ca> wrote:

Samer:
Online delivery is moving along. It is an adjustment, no doubt. I hold online lectures at the class times and also provide video recordings for those who don't make it to the class. Class attendance varies wildly - I've had anywhere from 20 to 80 students. I try having a q&a session at the start and at the end, and allow in-class questions in the chat room which I periodically stop to address. I find the interactive component to be very important - I get the students talking about their own coop experience related to class discussion, fill in the missing answers etc. I noted that the students who participate often email me afterwards saying that they now understand better what they were doing etc.

I have been assigning online quizzes, more or less on a weekly basis, to ensure that the students study regularly even if they choose not to attend class. I find the weekly quizzes to be a very effective tool for this purpose. The all-or-nothing grading system can be problematic as all wrong answers are graded as 0 - no partial marks, that is. I will give a chance to the students to earn bonus points by solving additional problems to mitigate this issue.

Laboratories #1 and #2 are now recorded and posted on eClass along with surrogate data. First lab today - I will let you know how that goes. My sense so far is that online laboratories are no substitute for the real thing - the students are really lacking in context, judging from the questions I get.

Tutorials are held weekly (except for lab weeks) - I solve problems on the tablet you provided (thank you very much BTW) and then a designated TA answers questions. This setup works very well.

Nick had some really good suggestions regarding midterm/final format. Because it is an open book setup, we will be shifting the questions to a more understanding-based style (which is what I prefer in any case, but is much harder for the students). We are considering a 24 hour exam that represents a more or less geotechnical report - they are given lab data and must go from there. I am considering letting them do a handwritten writeup so I can assess properly (i.e. partial grade for correct approach/calculation error type situations).

Other stuff: I find that with non-attending students, general information is poorly conveyed. I get an endless stream of routine questions about schedule (listed in the outline), group assignments (listed on eclass and emailed individually), deadlines (all listed in outline and on eClass) etc etc. In a class of 20 that may be manageable but with 80 I am struggling. So I find the "announcement" function on eClass useful - I use it routinely and I estimate it cut the number of emails in half. Group assignments on eclass are useful but time-consuming, so rules on group selection must be announced early and strictly adhered to. Even then, there will be about 25% of students who missed the deadlines and are unhappy with their group selection. Usual stuff, only in the online format.

So, lessons learned:

1. eClass quizzes are excellent for the purpose of encouraging regular studying.
2. Bonus questions are excellent for extra learning effort (from past experience, 80-100% of students go for the bonus marks, which means they learn a lot in the process - I make sure of that).
3. Online lab delivery is not particularly effective. A demonstration on our own equipment helps with understanding the meaning of surrogate data, so I think it was worthwhile doing it.
4. Understanding-based exams, 24 hr long, are my preferred option so far.
5. Announcement function on eClass is very useful.
6. On-time class delivery + videorecording works for me.
7. Interactive components are a must when conducting classes.

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On Wed, May 27, 2020 at 10:49 AM Samer Adeeb <adeeb@ualberta.ca> wrote:

Hi Derek, Hooman, and Elena,

I am emailing to ask how online delivery of courses is going for you. It would be great if you can share any advice that I can, in turn, share with all faculty members related to how you are managing delivering lectures, labs, seminars, and assessments.

Let me know if there is anything I can help with.

Regards,
Samer