

From: **Office of the Dean of the Faculty** <gjb1@williams.edu>

Date: Wed, Jun 10, 2020 at 1:35 PM

Subject: Important information from the academic subcommittee of the on-campus planning group

To: All faculty members

From: Jacqueline Hidalgo, Mohammed Memfis, Bojana Mladenovic, Lee Park, April Ruiz, Beverly Tyler

(The academic subcommittee of the on-campus planning group)

We recognize just how hard the curricular planning that you're doing is. We are writing to offer guidance to faculty as you prepare for the possibility of a return to campus in the Fall. Many of our students have indicated their intention to return to campus if allowed to do so, but some will not be able to. We do not know which students will opt to pursue their courses in a remote fashion or why: they might do so for health concerns, because of visa issues, or any number of additional reasons. It is conceivable that there will be demographic or socio-economic patterns in which students are unable or choose not to return to campus. We feel strongly, and our college counsel has agreed, that it is an issue of equity and accessibility that our full curriculum be available to all of our enrolled students. For these reasons, we ask faculty who are willing to teach in person to design their courses as "hybrid" (with the possible exception of some sections of multi-section courses; see below).

Planning for hybrid teaching is new to many of us, and feels overwhelming given all the other stresses of the moment. We recognize that there have been many questions about what it will mean to support both remote and in-person learners. Some have asked whether that will mean that faculty need to "double" teach each of their courses. We do not believe that this is the case, though we absolutely recognize that designing hybrid courses will require a real investment of time. We feel strongly that this is a worthwhile investment for several reasons:

- any student who begins the semester in-person may need to switch to remote learning at some point; indeed, this need may arise for the faculty as well;
- the entire campus may need to switch to remote learning at some point as we did this spring;
- we may still need these hybrid models next spring or even the following year, depending on how the public health situation evolves; and finally,
- we do not know that we can guarantee classroom spaces to everyone who will want one (we believe we'll be in reasonable shape, but we cannot yet promise anything).

We also note that the college is committed to helping all students finish their semester, so being prepared for the eventuality that students in our classes may fall ill during the semester will be critical.

Given the challenges of designing hybrid courses, we also want to provide some guidance to help each unit in their planning.

1. Units should first consider their curricula in a holistic fashion. We recommend that units look at the transcripts of all their rising seniors, and consider what those students will need to take in order to complete their majors or concentrations. We remind you that while you cannot change the 9-course requirement for a major, your unit can be very flexible with in-unit requirements. For example, units can relax any distributional requirements within the major (subdisciplinary, geographic, temporal, or course-level requirements) and they can consider greater flexibility in accepting cross-listed courses for major credit. These would be temporary changes, formally treated as exceptions to the rules (which will not need to be approved by the CEA), which will ensure that all seniors can graduate with their anticipated majors and/or concentrations. In considering how they might relax internal rules, units should keep in mind that students are required to take only 3 courses per semester next year. Units whose majors currently require more than 9 courses can temporarily reduce that requirement to 9 courses.

We encourage units to inform all majors of these changes so that they know what will be expected of them, how to differentiate between firm and flexible requirements, and how best to manage expectations across multiple units.

Based on this analysis, units can then decide what electives they will offer in the 2020-21 academic year. It may well be that units will decide that they cannot offer their full array of electives as they consider the adjustments that will need to be made in other parts of their curriculum.

2. Faculty should assume that any in-person course may have some remote students. For those courses that have multiple sections, a unit may decide to designate a section as uniquely remote or as uniquely in-person. However, we caution that even in situations where this is possible, faculty should plan their courses with the expectation that the situation might change mid-semester. We also caution that we don't know what the relative enrollment numbers will be for in-person vs remote students, and therefore units need to develop fair and thoughtful plans about how to allocate seats in whichever mode (e.g., in-person) is overenrolled.

3. Our very strong recommendation is that faculty not approach their two audiences as separate groups that require separate courses, but rather plan for a hybrid model that will allow for the greatest flexibility. This is equally important in large lecture courses as well as smaller discussion-based courses. We encourage units to consider which aspects of their pedagogy and content can really be done well, given the constraints of a hybrid model. The key to a hybrid course model is to not treat the remote learners as a separate, perhaps less engaged group, but to normalize the remote components of a course across all of the students enrolled.

The Teach Summer programming can support faculty in their course design. Some possible hybrid models that have been discussed at recent Teach Summer meetings include the following (these are presented here just to help you begin thinking about what a hybrid course might look like):

- Videotaped class material (mini or full lectures) coupled with synchronous small section discussions or student group work (these small section discussions might be divided into in-person vs remote groups.) TAs might be used to help support smaller synchronous group work.
- Division of a class into halves in order to alternate in-person and remote interaction among students. Obviously the remote students would only get remote instruction, but the alternation would allow for lower class density while integrating remote learning into the course as a whole.
- Division of a class into halves, to alternate in-person and remote interaction on (for example) Mondays and Wednesdays, coupled with small group synchronous discussions on Fridays
- Conducting a class session as a zoom meeting with in-person as well as remote learners simultaneously, and projecting the remote group onto the screen; one might implement a buddy system so that an in-person student can make sure that a remote student's comments are heard.

We encourage you to work with the Teach Summer group in planning a hybrid design that will best meet your needs. We recognize that there are activities that simply won't work equally well for an in-person and a remote audience, but we encourage faculty to recognize that equitable does not have to mean identical. These links may provide some useful food for thought:

- <https://christinakatopodis.com/pedagogy/every-fall-2020-syllabus-needs-an-or-option-a-sample-assignment/>
- <https://www.rit.edu/academicaffairs/tls/course-design/online-courses/time-task>

4. Given the challenges of any hybrid teaching model, and the fact that many students have indicated their intention to take four courses, faculty should design their courses with the same, or lighter workload than in a normal semester. We urge units to think about preserving the quality of Williams instruction while being a bit less concerned than usual about the comprehensiveness of the covered material.

5. When units submit their preliminary list of courses (June 26) they will be asked (if we are opening the campus in the fall) to indicate the teaching modality for each course: exclusively in- person (only available for multi-section courses if another section is available for remote students), hybrid, or exclusively remote. When units submit their complete course packet materials (July 10), the registrar will need information on:

- exactly what course components the registrar needs to schedule (lectures, recitation sections, labs)
- appropriate caps for each of those components
- whether each component will be held in-person (needing a timeslot as well as a classroom) vs synchronously but remotely (needing only a timeslot)
- how many components students will need to sign up for

As you can imagine, the scheduling process will be considerably more complicated for the registrar than usual. Once the course schedule has been announced, all units should work to spread their courses out over the available class hour blocks as much as

possible. Discussion sections/recitations/conference sections do not need to conform to the same class hour blocks (as always), but should similarly be distributed throughout the day as much as possible in order to avoid excessive congestion in certain time periods.

Finally, we offer some clarification on the scheduling of tutorials. Tutorial sessions would still be up to a faculty member to schedule on their own. However, if a faculty member chooses to use a small classroom for these sessions (rather than conducting them via videoconference), we will need to establish some guidelines around the use and scheduling of those rooms in order to follow the same kind of hygienic and social distancing protocols required for other classrooms (for instance, we'd want to ensure some deadtime between consecutive users.) This would not be handled by the registrar, but most likely through the EMS scheduling system.

We hope to identify enough other classroom spaces on campus to handle other kinds of impromptu classroom use such as review sessions, office hours, TA sessions, exam make-up and accommodation, etc. We will establish a protocol for faculty to schedule spaces for these kinds of uses as well.