



Recommendations for Online Learning

The Covid-19 pandemic has disproportionately affected our community. Most Lehman students have been adversely affected. With an average income of thirty thousand dollars, Lehman College students have been fighting food and housing insecurity as well as generational wealth disparity. This document was created as a guide for Lehman College Administration and Faculty to provide reasonable accommodations for students struggling to overcome the pandemic's impact. The Lehman College Student Government Association and Student Legislative Assembly interviewed their peers from classes, clubs and shared their own experiences with different departments to provide the following online learning recommendations.

- **Consider providing flexible deadlines.** Keep in mind that students work from home, balancing work, family, and attending school during a global pandemic. Although many students have transitioned to online learning and working from home, this does not mean students can complete more work. Moreover, Lehman has many non-traditional students who may not have an appropriate (peaceful and safe) environment as they would on various campus locations.
- **Consider providing reasonable accommodations for students struggling to meet deadlines due to disruptions in online learning.** Before COVID 19, failure to meet deadlines on class assignments resulted in a deduction of points, and students were penalized for late submissions by losing 5-10% of the grade each day the assignment was late. However, online learning has presented many challenges for students, including technical difficulties, disruptions in-class instruction/lectures, and challenges for students with learning disabilities. Students have many different learning styles, which should be kept in mind when providing instruction through online learning. Therefore, providing reasonable accommodations such as a 48-hour grace period on assignments should encourage students to transition to the online learning process.
- **Professors should grade assignments promptly.** If students must submit assignments on time; therefore, professors should fairly reciprocate those actions with respect. Consistently receiving late submission grades creates uncertainty and anxiety within students' academic standing.
- **Educate students on INC grades, CR/NC, class withdrawal dates, and resources to access class materials. We understand that it is not your job as faculty to discuss**



CR/NC or the academic calendar. However, we do not have enough academic advisors in Lehman. Students are experiencing food and housing insecurity, contracting Covid-19, and may not know what they can do to salvage grades for a class. Please remind students about the [academic calendar of CUNY](#).

- **Some students may not be able to afford their textbooks due to financial hardships stemming from the pandemic's impact.** As a result, professors need to educate their students on what resources are available on campus to assist them with resource information to aid students' progression throughout the course. The library is providing help with textbooks to meet the need for more accessible textbooks. Contact Lehman College Chief Librarian, Mr. Kenneth Schlesinger, for information on textbooks so your students can use an electronic version for free.
- **Provide reasonable requirements for participation.** Students have made complaints of unreasonable requirements for participation and attendance in some classes. Requiring cameras and mics to measure participation is an example of an unreasonable participation requirement. Some students do not have built-in mics and cameras or adequate internet connection to utilize these online features. Thus, requiring them to have these features adds to their stresses, and students should not be penalized for failure to fix a technological issue that is out of their control. Lack of access to technology or a supportive environment during virtual learning creates unnecessary stress and an unpleasant classroom environment for students who may not have the resources to experience this full pandemic force. **Note:** The Office of Campus Life and the Office of Student Affairs has stated requiring students to have cameras on is against school policy as it shows professors and other classmates a student's vulnerable home situation (they could be homeless, in an abusive setting, Etc.). Professors that require cameras to be turned on are breaking this policy.
- **Class materials should be listed before classes start.** Some faculty do this. Others may even give extra time for students to access the materials. Less than two weeks to access class materials (books or online access codes) is unreasonable in our current circumstances. Also, ensuring that the textbook is available as a cheaper or free pdf will make students' circumstances easier.
- **Professors with fully online classes should strive to improve their communication with students.** Putting texts and course materials on Blackboard and expecting students to figure out the course is not practical because we are doing virtual learning for the third



time. Allow students to text or call you if your class is asynchronous; create alternatives for them to reach out other than just via email. Also, provide students with a breakdown of your Blackboard profile on the first day of class. Contact Stephen Castellano or IT if you need a tutorial on using Blackboard efficiently.

- **Refrain from assigning work outside of class meeting days, especially on weekends or holidays.** Many students have stated faculty were assigning work on weekends and scheduling due dates on random days and weekends rather than establishing consistent due dates. For example, all homework for Math 103 is due on Tuesdays, and all homework for English 344 is due only on Thursdays. Inconsistently with due dates do not provide a structure/routine and cause overwhelming work schedules. Students are consistently working and not having any days to themselves or to look about their mental and physical health.
- **Suppose exams or tests exceed 2 ½ hours.** Allow intermissions so students can use the bathroom breaks and to tend to family living with them. Allow the same time allowance on tests as you would in person. Asking students to complete tests in a shorter time than in-person exams is unreasonable. Some professors and departments have given shorter exam times in response to the fear that students **might** cheat. During the fall 2020 semester, one department required students to answer each question in the exam within 30 seconds. The department argued that it could be done if the students studied, not considering that it took time to solve equations, pick apart questions and comprehend long structured sentences. Some students could not read questions on time because English is their second or third language.
- **Do not penalize students for family/medical emergencies, technical issues during testing, or online submissions.** Students experiencing technical issues or emergencies should be given a chance to submit tests and assignments. Students reported issues even when they provided evidence, such as written medical notes.
- **Extend testing and examination durations** in foreign language courses, writing-intensive courses, and major courses to consider internet issues, students' environmental issues, or any further inevitable issues (internet connection due to weather) that might arise from remote learning. Students benefit from having more time in asynchronous courses because of the learning disadvantages caused by the lack of an in-person classroom lecture. Consider the circumstances of those students who know they learn better with synchronous classes but may have had limited options of enrolling in all synchronous class versions of their needed courses. On the blackboard platform, testing



features can be utilized to support students' success in test-taking. For instance, the test resume feature always allows students to log back into their original test if they are kicked out before the expired time or have equipment issues. It could also decrease students' need to contact the professor and retake the test.

- **Group chats are a part of student culture at Lehman, and students use group chats to stay in touch with their peers.** Before online learning, students at Lehman had the chance to form lifelong friends and have always had the chance to collaborate and communicate with each other outside classrooms. **Students should be allowed to have group chats to study together, share notes, and provide support for each other.** It is a very isolating time, and group chats can help students stay engaged and updated while decreasing the number of emails faculty will get from students. **If your students did not cheat using group chats before online learning, they will not now.** So please trust and advise your students on the importance of making ethical decisions.

Students are aware that faculty and administration are also experiencing Covid-19 like the rest of us. However, our enrollment for the Spring 2021 semester is down by 26%. Failure to accommodate the reasonable procedures listed above is one contributing factor to why our students are not re-enrolling during the pandemic. Suppose more have students drop-out, faculty positions, and student class availability as a result as this pattern continues. We are all a part of the Lehman community; we need to support each other to have a successful academic experience. We want to remain an accredited university with quality education even during the virtual setting.