University of Pittsburgh
COVID-19 Standards and Guidelines: Instruction

I.   Purpose

This document details the University of Pittsburgh's (University) Standards and Guidelines on Instruction. These Standards and Guidelines are applied to each of the University's COVID-19 operational postures (High Risk, Elevated Risk and Guarded Risk). More information on these operational postures and their gating criteria can be accessed at the following website: https://www.coronavirus.pitt.edu/operational-postures.

The Standards and Guidelines outlined below are subject to change as deemed necessary by the Provost and Senior Vice Chancellor's recommendation to the Senior Leadership Team and approval of the chancellor. Communication about the University's current Standards and Guidelines will be announced and posted on the following website: https://coronavirus.pitt.edu/.

The University will always operate in compliance with federal, state, and local health standards and restrictions, including Pennsylvania Department of Health guidance. The University reserves the right to implement additional health standards and restrictions that reflect the needs of the University and the health, safety and well-being of its community.

As conditions and circumstances change, this set of Standards and Guidelines may need to be revised.

II.   Scope

The Standards and Guidelines below apply to the entire University, including all University members and campuses.

III. Definitions

A. **Learning Management System (LMS):** A Learning Management System is a software platform for the delivery of educational course content. The centrally-supported LMS at Pitt is Canvas.

B. **Flex@Pitt**: A flexible course structure that allows courses to be delivered in-person and remotely, synchronously and asynchronously, by the same instructor.

C. **Synchronous learning**: Synchronous learning is learning that happens in real time.

D. **Asynchronous learning**: Asynchronous learning is learning that happens at a different place and at a different time for everyone, with no real-time interaction.

IV.   Modality

Classes will be taught in a manner that provides an excellent educational experience regardless of whether the student attends in person, remotely, synchronously or asynchronously. The Flex@Pitt model is the Pitt-branded variation of the "HyFlex" teaching model. Flex@Pitt maximizes the in-person educational experience whenever it is safe to do so, while still allowing students and faculty to engage in whatever manner they deem comfortable. Flex@Pitt will be employed for each academic year that is impacted by the pandemic.

- Classes will include a mix of synchronous (in-person and remote), and asynchronous activities to meet the total teaching/learning time and course objectives.
- Faculty and students must be prepared to move between in-person and remote modes as conditions change.
- Faculty should submit to their dean or regional campus president (or their designee) their plans for implementing the Flex@Pitt model for each formal class they are assigned to teach.

A. High Risk Posture
- All classes are offered remotely and are a mix of synchronous remote and asynchronous remote activities.
- All synchronous remote class activities will be available via videoconference and recorded (for asynchronous engagement) where appropriate. Under certain limited conditions, such as privacy concerns related to content or class discussions, and with permission from the dean or regional campus president or their designee, faculty may choose not to record a class session. In these cases, faculty should offer a comparable alternative asynchronous activity for students who are not engaged synchronously. Students can opt out of being recorded.
- Students should participate in synchronous remote class activities or watch the video later.

B. Elevated Risk Posture
- Classes are, with few exceptions as noted below, offered remotely and are a mix of synchronous remote and asynchronous remote activities.
- All synchronous remote class activities will be available via videoconference and recorded (for asynchronous engagement) where appropriate. Under certain limited conditions, such as privacy concerns related to content or class discussions, and with permission from the dean or regional campus president or their designee, faculty may choose not to record a class session. In these cases, faculty should offer a comparable alternative asynchronous activity for students who are not engaged synchronously. Students can opt out of being recorded.
- Students should participate in synchronous remote class activities or watch the video later.

- Some small in-class learning may take place as appropriate and with permission from the dean or regional campus president or their designee.

C. Guarded Risk Posture
- Most classes will provide an in-person engagement option at least once per week.
- Students can attend synchronous classes in-person, participate remotely, or both.
- All synchronous class activities will be available remotely via videoconference and recorded (for asynchronous engagement) where appropriate. Under certain limited conditions, such as privacy concerns related to content or class discussions, and with permission from the dean or regional campus president or their designee, faculty may choose not to record a class session. In these cases, faculty should offer a comparable alternative asynchronous activity for students who are not engaged synchronously. Students can opt out of being recorded.
- Instruction in some large lecture courses will be fully remote.
- A faculty member need not be in the classroom if their personal circumstances prevent it. Faculty who are not physically present in the classroom should plan for creating dynamic, interactive in-person classroom experiences for students and can choose one of the following options to teach the class:
    a. Appear on screen in the front of the classroom and conduct discussions or field questions;
    b. Team teach with another faculty member who does not have a personal circumstance that puts them at high risk;
    c. Employ a teaching assistant to help mediate or facilitate the interactions in the classroom;
    d. Employ a staff member or undergraduate teaching assistant to help mediate;
    e. Faculty may suggest an alternative, but comparable, option.
  In options b-d, the instructor of record can also be present on screen in the classroom.
- Students need not be in the classroom if they believe it is unsafe for them. They can participate in synchronous class activities live or watch a video later.

Standards and Guidelines V – VIII remain constant for all operational postures.

V.   Technology and Course Platform

Flex@Pitt requires specific technology in the classrooms as well as for faculty and students.

- Pitt Information Technology (Pitt IT), working with the University Center for Teaching and Learning and the schools/regional campuses, will define minimum technology specifications and requirements for students and instructors that include: basic computer hardware that includes a camera and microphone and basic software (Microsoft Suite, Canvas, Panopto, Top Hat, Zoom or Teams). Further specifications should be defined by each school or regional campus, and then by program or class, as required to meet discipline-specific or course-specific needs.
- Faculty who don't have necessary equipment may request it through Pitt IT. Students may also request loaned equipment from Pitt IT.

- Minimum technology requirements will be communicated to students by Pitt IT so that they can secure a computer that is robust enough to allow them to fully participate in courses.
- The Canvas Learning Management System should be used by faculty to provide a consistent and standardized environment to support student learning.
- Virtual Lab software is available for students to access at https://www.technology.pitt.edu/services/virtual-lab
- Flex@Pitt classrooms will support video conferencing with either mobile or installed technology. Pitt IT will manage the installation and the University Center for Teaching and Learning will support faculty training.

VI.   Flex@Pitt Course Quality Standards

Courses will be designed to meet quality standards. Faculty should ensure:

- Courses should have clearly articulated course-level learning objectives. These objectives inform and align with an appropriate assessment strategy that includes both formative and summative assessment. They also guide the development of meaningful and engaging learning activities, materials and course assets.
- Courses should have a coherent organizational structure, with content organized by meaningful features (e.g., topics, theories, chronology, project deliverables, etc.), and presented in a consistent manner across modules/units. Relationship between course elements should be clear and explicit.
- Courses should have a plan to provide clear and consistent communication regarding logistics, policies and processes; expectations; feedback; transparency; and caring and concern for students' personal circumstances.
- Courses should facilitate opportunities for students to actively and meaningfully engage with the course content/materials, the instructor, and other students. This engagement should be provided via a mix of synchronous and asynchronous class activities.
- Courses should contain pointers to student support resources, including library, advising, Counseling Center, study skills development, tutoring, etc.

VII.   Accessibility Accommodations

Courses will be designed to meet approved accessibility standards. Faculty should:

- Recognize and respond to accessibility issues when designing a course.
- Identify accessibility tools in Canvas as needed.
- Recognize that accommodation requests may look different for online/hybrid courses than for in-person courses.
- Consult with Disability Resources & Services (DRS) Accessibility Resource as needed and appropriate regarding accessibility accommodations.

VIII.   Faculty Competencies

There are a number of teaching competencies required to successfully implement Flex@Pitt. Faculty should:

- Have a fundamental understanding of online/flexible pedagogy.
- Have a fundamental understanding of classroom management and course delivery strategies.
- Have a baseline competency with the use of technology/tools available for online teaching such as Canvas, Zoom and Panopto.
- Develop competency to use classroom technology.

Consult the University Center for Teaching and Learning for resources, workshops, and consulting.

IX.   Related Authorities, Guidance and Resources

University Center for Teaching and Learning
Pitt Information Technology
Disability Resources and Services
COVID-19 Standards and Guidelines: Accommodations for Employees Returning to Campus
COVID-19 Standards and Guidelines: On-Campus and Remote Work

X.   Contact Information and Public Accessibility

This document is posted on the University of Pittsburgh COVID-19 Standards and Guidelines website and can be found at: https://www.policy.pitt.edu/university-policies-and-procedures/covid-19-standards-and-guidelines. For questions related to this document, please contact: Resilience Steering Committee at ResilienceSteeringCommittee@pitt.edu.