

Guidelines for Teaching in a Physically Distanced Classroom

Skidmore College

Fall 2020

Our preparations for in-person teaching this fall have called for careful attention to evolving public health guidelines and the creation of protocols that ensure the safety of faculty and students. This new reality will require the cooperation and goodwill of all participants; it may also raise questions and concerns, which we attempt to address here. Please note that changes or adjustments to these guidelines are likely as we learn how best to pursue our educational mission within the context of a pandemic.

Office of the Dean of Faculty

- 1. Teaching a class in person will require completing some new preparatory and concluding tasks.** This means you will have less time for content delivery than is typical; planning accordingly will help avoid frustration.

Before Class:

- Build in time to set up and test technology. There may be malfunctions, so have a backup plan.
- Clean your teaching area (podium, chair, etc.).
- Make sure arriving students follow the initial cleaning protocol (attached below).
- Record attendance and where students sit, perhaps by using a template (below). Contact tracing may be necessary. (If you choose to use photos for this purpose, please ask students for consent *first*.)

Avoid exceeding class time.

Near the End of Class:

- Clean your teaching area and remind students to clean their areas before departing.
- Remind students of the exit protocol—i.e., departing one row/group at a time---and caution them against gathering in hallways. Everyone should exit the building/tent, using designated exits and stairwells, as quickly as possible.

- 2. Communicating during class will pose new challenges.**

Face coverings are required, covering the nose and mouth completely (attached below); these will likely impact one's ability to speak and be understood. A few suggestions:

- Visit your classroom in advance to familiarize yourself with the space and technology. This will help you consider the possibilities and potential pitfalls once you are actually teaching.
- Consult LEADS/IT as necessary if you are finding sound/amplification to be an issue.
- Supplement verbal communications with slides, notes on white/chalk boards, or notes made available online.
- Consider alternative ways for students to pose questions/comments—e.g., texting you, submitting them by email in advance, etc. Make it clear that repeating oneself may be necessary, and will not be an annoyance.
- Repeat questions from students so that everyone (in person or remote) knows what was said.
- Consider an online de-brief: a posted recording of the class, a written set of notes, or other summary.

3. Students *may* interact during class time, but it will require care. Please heed the following:

- No furniture may be moved, as it has been carefully arranged to achieve necessary social distancing. (Each seat has a marker underneath as a reminder.)
- Breaking into small groups still requires physical distancing, which means sitting far away from each other and possibly shouting. Distanced pairs may work better.
- Students may use white/chalk boards as long as they maintain 6 feet of distance between each other. Chalk or whiteboard markers should be cleaned with disinfecting wipes before being passed to the next student. Additionally, ask students to sanitize hands after handling shared equipment or writing implements. Each room will have a large bottle of hand sanitizer.
- Any shared materials—beakers, workbooks, etc.—should be minimized; if they are non-porous, they should be disinfected with wipes each time they are passed to someone else.
- Paper handouts are not recommended; providing materials online is preferable. If paper handouts are unavoidable, handle and distribute them wearing protective gloves. You may also consider collecting exams, quizzes, or homework in a plastic bin and letting the papers sit for at least 24 hours (or whatever time period you deem safe) before handling.

4. You may have to ask students to leave. Any student who exhibits symptoms of illness (coughing, sneezing, etc.) may not enter class; in asking the individual to leave, you are protecting yourself and others. Please keep the following in mind:

- Since such a circumstance is bound to be a bit uncomfortable, it is advisable to consider in advance the strategy and language you will use if necessary. A student who is asked to leave should be referred to Health Services.
- Discussing this eventuality—as well as other classroom etiquette issues—with the entire class on the first day will help students understand that such a request is neither personal nor punitive.
- Be prepared to offer necessary course materials and tools online in the event that a student cannot be physically present but still feels well enough to continue with coursework. Letting students know that you will assist them if they become sick will help prevent the concealment of potential illness.

5. You are responsible for ensuring compliance with official safety measures. This includes all requirements and protocols mentioned above as well as the following:

- Eating or drinking in classrooms is prohibited.
- Walking past others should be done quickly, with face averted and no talking.
- Touching masks is discouraged as it compromises their cleanliness.
- If a student refuses to wear a mask in class, you should remind the student that mask wearing is a requirement. If the student continues to refuse to wear a mask, you should ask the student to leave the class. Violations of the mask-wearing requirement, or other behavioral concerns, should be reported to Cerri Banks, Dean of Students or Katie Wright, Associate Director of Residential Life for Student Conduct.

If cleaning supplies have run out or are low, or to report a cleaning issue, contact facilities (facilities@skidmore.edu). For a room emergency, dial 5860.

Above all, faculty and students should be prepared for inevitable disruptions, including the possibility that the College will pivot online entirely. Flexibility, goodwill, and humor go a long way toward helping students deal with the anxieties of the current environment.