

**Ferris State University
COVID-19/Delta Variant
Classroom Planning for the Contingencies**

Introduction: Brief History of the University's Response to COVID-19

In response to the pandemic, four committees were developed to focus solely on the University's response to COVID-19. All four groups focused on re-thinking various aspects of campus operations to create safe environments for learning, living and working, inclusive of resources, expectations, policies, testing and moving toward vaccines.

First, the Emergency Management team began meeting in mid-March to understand COVID and to determine what the University needed to do to continue to operate. The Committee also partnered with local, state and federal entities to ensure compliance with mandates, while staying abreast of the ever-evolving and changing virus, and nationwide response. Members met daily to understand the virus, interpret federal and state guidelines, determine how to disseminate technology and help others find Internet access, discuss business operations, make decisions and share information with the campus. Additionally, in conjunction with the health department and hospital, we created protocols to manage the early COVID cases and move the campus into a remote status.

Second, the Re-entry Committee (established April 2020) focused on creating a successful re-engagement strategy. The charge was to create detailed, thorough plans for a realistic and sustainable campus re-engagement that focused on three main points:

- Creating a comprehensive plan that guided when and how to safely re-open and/or deliver in-person campus operations and activities
- Ensuring the plan was inclusive and supportive of the high-quality teaching and engagement opportunities while operating in a safe manner consistent with federal and state mandates and/or guidelines
- Promoting the use of the plan across the University to ensure consistent application of actionable items as appropriate within various divisions and units

The Committee developed three re-entry phases: (*Phase 1: May 20 – July 12, 2020 with limited, essential services on campus, Phase 2: July 13 – August 23, 2020 with gradual return of additional staff and faculty as directed by divisions/departments, and Phase 3: August 24 – December 21, 2020 with full return to in-person campus operations*). These phases were greatly informed by local, state and federal guidance for employees, and plans for mitigating the spread of COVID-19 in classrooms, offices, dining areas, common areas and all University facilities. The plans were developed understanding the need to pivot as local, state and federal guidance evolved.

The team also took on the task of frequent communication to campus, developing the [Coronavirus Updates Hub webpage](#) and creating a list of numerous resources to help our campus communities navigate safely through the pandemic (i.e. Re-entry Playbook, Re-entry Engagement Plan templates, COVID-19 Dashboard and more).

Re-entry Committee continues to meet to monitor and discuss ever-changing local, state and federal mandates and recommendations, monitor mitigation plans, and communicate any changes and reminders to faculty, staff and students.

Third, a Testing Committee was developed to implement COVID-19 testing on campus. Initially testing was focused on student-athletes and those living in on-campus housing. As they became more proficient in their ability to offer broader testing, the target audience was expanded to include students who lived off campus in addition to faculty and staff. This was a very important part of our COVID-19 mitigation strategy because much of our population had not been eligible for testing in the community. This committee worked to secure asymptomatic and symptomatic testing. Additionally, they developed many iterations of testing as the sophistication and availability of testing methods evolved. The committee also worked to secure a state grant and to develop a wastewater testing process, in coordination with the City of Big Rapids. These efforts have informed the focus of PCR COVID testing.

And finally, a Vaccine Committee was created to partner with the health department and local hospital to coordinate a comprehensive vaccine strategy. The University played a vital role by becoming an approved vaccination site, allowing us to provide COVID-19 vaccinations to the community, students, faculty and staff.

Measures Taken in March 2020 to Pivot to Remote

During the midst of spring break, the University made the difficult decision to move all classes to remote instruction. Faculty and staff rose to meet this challenge, and everyone made heroic efforts to help students. It quickly became clear that we were unable to return to face-to-face instruction that semester, and it also seemed unlikely we would be able to return for the summer sessions. As a result, all instruction continued to be provided remotely through June 1, 2020.

The University developed a wide range of resources to support faculty and students throughout the pivot to remote learning:

- Zoom licensing was acquired
- Staff in the Faculty Center for Teaching and Learning were available to assist with course design and delivery (e.g., creating inclusive learning environments, developing rubrics, making course content accessible, digitizing course materials, creating videos and more)
- The IT Solution Center (ITS) made laptops available for use and supported faculty who had taken their computers home
- eLearning and ITS provided webcams; and eLearning assembled a list of places to find WiFi and created an Academic Continuity webpage to assist faculty with technology resources and information

On June 25, 2020, the University announced that Fall semester would begin with classes as planned on Monday, August 31, and would pivot to remote instruction where possible after Thanksgiving recess, beginning Monday, November 30 for the remainder of the semester. Classes that needed to remain in-person after the recess due to accreditation requirements were identified. Faculty survey responses showed a clear preference for this approach. This change did not shorten the semester. Courses were offered in-person, remotely and HyFlex, while following guidance from the CDC, as well as state and public health officials. Simultaneously, the University was determined to offer more flexibility by expanding course delivery options to accommodate the needs of all students.

The University offered three course delivery methods:

1. In-person classes took place in rooms adjusted to allow for each student and the instructor to maintain six feet of distance from each other.
2. HyFlex classes blended in-person and online learning in an effort to reduce the number of students on campus and in classrooms at one time. HyFlex provided instructors the option of meeting with part of the class in person and part of the class joining via a live-stream.
3. Fully online classes were conducted in a synchronous (one set meeting time for all students) or asynchronous (no set meeting time, allowing students to access course materials at any time) format.

The University remained open and operations continued, including housing and dining services, which remained available for students through the end of the semester. On October 1, 2020, Provost Fleischman announced a spring semester calendar change that included the elimination of spring break. On November 15, 2020, the Michigan Department of Health and Human Services issued an emergency order enacting a three-week pause to curb rapidly rising COVID-19 infection rates. Under this order, colleges and universities were directed to move to remote learning effective Wednesday, November 18.

Academic accommodations were made for students, including allowing pass/no pass grades for classes, extending deadlines for course withdrawals and relaxing requirements for incomplete grades.

Planning for AY 2021-2022 and Return to Work Expectations and Protocols (85% f-2-f)

Planning for AY 2021-2022 included a return to fully in-person classes. The remote work policy was lifted as of May 24, 2021, with everyone returning back to their physical work locations by June 14, 2021.

COVID-19 and the Delta variant continue to cause challenges, and as such, masking indoors is required for faculty, staff, students and visitors as of August 12, 2021, regardless of vaccination status. The Re-entry Committee will be monitoring the situation and will re-evaluate this requirement at the beginning of the fall semester and beyond.

As the University experienced last year, the coronavirus and its variants may cause us to pivot to alternate modes of instructional delivery.

Fall 2021: Return to Campus and Planning for Classroom Instruction

Throughout the Spring 2021 semester we have been planning for a return to Fall 2019 classroom modes of instruction (Plan A). Measures have been taken to ensure we are able to maintain a safe and healthy campus environment (e.g., encouraging vaccinations, conducting comprehensive testing, and implementing a mask mandate on campus) and contingency planning, (Plan B), in order to minimize disruption in the event of a spike.

Contingency Planning (Plan B)

As we continue to engage in contingency planning, we are in the process of defining what Plan B involves and identifying the factors we will use to determine when it will go into effect. Planning for the implementation of Plan B includes, but is not limited to:

- Identifying classes with a large number of students
- Reducing the density in our classrooms to allow our f-2-f classes to continue
- Scheduling secondary/adjacent rooms to enable students to engage in real-time from a remote location
- Outfitting these classrooms with Kandao Conferencing Camera and IPEVO Doc Cam for Hybrid Teaching
- Assigning a student technologist (TA/department rep or others) to each secondary/adjacent room to help
- Providing training for the integration of the Kandao conferencing cameras and IPEVO doc cams, with Zoom will be provided to the instructors, TAs, and other technologists; and
- Implementing other mitigation strategies, as needed

Implementing Instructional Option 1 (for spaces with adequate technology):

1. Install Kandao at the lectern station via USB in the primary and secondary rooms.
2. The instructor launches Zoom at the teacher's station and selects the Kandao as their camera and microphone.
3. The TAs or student technologists launch Zoom in the secondary rooms and select Kandao as their camera and microphone.

Note: Instructors may still want to use the in-room speakers, otherwise the Kandao can be selected as the speaker option in Zoom.

Implementing Instructional Option 2 (for spaces with minimal technology):

1. Install a Kandao Camera on a cart with a laptop and a 24" monitor.
2. The instructor launches Zoom at the teacher's station and selects the Kandao as their camera and microphone.

3. The TAs or student technologists launch Zoom in the secondary rooms and selects Kandao as their camera and microphone.

Note: Separating the Kandao from the AV system in the room may be advantageous to instructors teaching style in labs and rooms where instructors don't remain behind the teaching station. Other technology may be needed in labs and auditorium-style classrooms.

Instructional video: This [instructional video](#) that ITSC/FCTL created explains the operation of the Kandao camera and Zoom functions.

Note: Options one and two can be used in either a single classroom or multi-classroom hybrid instruction setup where a secondary classroom is used. Dividing a large class across multiple rooms is possible using the Kandao cameras and other technologies that will be identified during installation or upon request/approval.

Technology Support and Contact Information

Technical support will be provided by ITSC – itsc@ferris.edu and/or (231) 591-4822 and eLearning – eLearning@ferris.edu and/or (231) 591-2802.

Please submit all support requests through the [ITS Portal](#).