

# Advising in Times of Disruption

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Co-authored with participants of the @AcAdvChat community

Sharable Link: <https://t.co/pY4ZqMDOIs?amp=1>

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## Advising in Times of Disruption

As our institutions rapidly make decisions about suspending normal activity to slow the spread of COVID-19, advisors will need to take a creative approach to continuing to provide student services to support student success. This document is inspired by the [Teaching Effectively During Times of Disruption document](#) put together by a team at Stanford University.

While this is a time of uncertainty and some anxiety, advisors can provide patience and a listening ear to students and colleagues. To borrow from the Teaching Effectively document, “Times of disruption are, by their nature, disruptive, and everyone expects that.” You should not be expecting to provide services in the exact same quality and manner as you would under normal circumstances; creating an entirely online student support network for your campus would take a lot of time and planning. What you should be focusing on right now is minimizing the disruption to normal advising activities, as much as possible, and being supportive of the students, who are also experiencing this disruption.

Crowdsourced document tracking institutions that have closed or moved to online learning due to COVID-19:

<https://docs.google.com/spreadsheets/u/2/d/19wJZekxpewDQmApULkvZRBpBwcn5gZIZF2SEU2WQD8/htmlview?fbclid=IwAR1CejOFCbVGaWVOeV3zuRbOz-XiaimpCCWdAi3zqFRpESjVRcGbRkTb0qg>

Spreadsheet tracking Residence Life ideas in light of COVID-19 (from Marci Walton, Xavier University):

[https://docs.google.com/spreadsheets/d/1emjU0fM3wAzn7ChRcS\\_dO5cgFQilqh2mAzXyv\\_nEj4/htmlview?ts=5e68e40f&fbclid=IwAR1jArqSgU\\_MTccfJpFb4Wh9WDcd8AHv26ozWFhDAclmr0MKw3EWCOPYOYto&sle=true#](https://docs.google.com/spreadsheets/d/1emjU0fM3wAzn7ChRcS_dO5cgFQilqh2mAzXyv_nEj4/htmlview?ts=5e68e40f&fbclid=IwAR1jArqSgU_MTccfJpFb4Wh9WDcd8AHv26ozWFhDAclmr0MKw3EWCOPYOYto&sle=true#)

## Evaluate Your Tools

In the case of campus closure, are you prepared to work remotely/telecommute? Do you have a campus-issued laptop or tablet that you could use to work away from campus?

As staff, you may or may not be given the option to work remotely. If you are still asked to be in the office supporting students, consider moving all scheduled appointments to phone or video appointments (see [section below](#)). Practice physical distancing (leave at least 3 feet between you and another person -- try not to sit directly next to a student during an appointment), keep sanitizing wipes or supplies available, and practice other good hygiene to prevent the spread of illness (wash hands, avoid touching nose, mouth, and eyes, cover coughs and/or sneezes, dispose of used kleenex in the trash).

If you will continue to see students in person, you/your unit might consider messaging to ALL students with a scheduled appointment that they need to either cancel or convert their appointment to phone or video if they are experiencing any symptoms of illness or fever.

Sample messaging may include:

“If you are experiencing a fever, cough, or any other symptoms of illness, please call our front desk at XXX-XXX-XXXX to either cancel your appointment or reschedule your appointment as a phone or video appointment. Thank you! Here are CDC recommendations for preventing illness: <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/about/prevention-treatment.html>”

Some things to consider:

- Work from home may not be possible for all individuals, but working at your office conducting remote appointments may still require additional applications and tools.
- Charge up your mobile devices and plan to bring them home with you along with chargers.
- For digital files that are on your desktop or in the shared or personal drive, we strongly suggest setting up a folder in a cloud storage solution (such as Box, Dropbox, Google Drive, Microsoft One Drive, etc) for yourself and dragging those files there
- Will you have access to files remotely via VPN or similar log-in?
- Does your institution use any of the following applications? Make sure you've downloaded the latest version to your mobile device:

- Skype for Business (download app to your phone, so you can take phone appointments without using your personal number)
- Zoom or other online meeting platforms (also available as an app)
- Microsoft Teams app (use this to organize our group projects and very easily video conference with one another)
- Outlook app (to your phone and to your iPad)
- Box or other cloud storage options
- What tools do you have web-based access to?
  - Appointment scheduling software
  - Student Information System
  - Advising Notes
  - Curriculum plans
  - Reporting software

## Complications of Switching to Online Teaching & Advisement

It is not simple to just flip a switch and start teaching or advising online. In many cases teaching an online or hybrid course is much more complex than just teaching a face to face course, because it requires engagement in ways that professors may not be accustomed and intentional use of content, pedagogies, and strategies. Similarly advisement can be very tricky online, and just having access to online tools may not lead to positive results.

Teaching & Advising Online: Know that for someone who has never taught or advised online this can be very complex

- What are the best practices of teaching or advising online
- What are the challenges of repurposing in-class materials
- How do we keep the level of engagement or assessment the same?
- Faculty or advisors may not be aware of differences in expectations online

Learning Online: Know that for students who have never been taught or advised online this can be very complex

- What are the best practices of learning or advising online
- Access may not be equitable for all students
  - Students may not have ready access to working computers if off campus
  - Accessibility of course material may not allow for equitable participation
- Students may not prefer online learning

Engage with faculty, staff, & students who are more used to online courses

- Students who are used to online formats may have recommendations
- Staff who advise online may be able to share their practices
- Faculty who regularly teach online, may have strategies & ideas to share

Resources

- <https://www.hastac.org/blogs/jacqueline-wernimont/2020/03/09/thoughts-resources-those-about-start-teaching-online-due-covid?fbclid=IwAR1IHSzzCQK0EbLccbrafRet1YAXe-D4jW4GhUTZwOViKqJh8NbYxkdR8pk> - Shared by Angela Battista (NASPA)

## Communicating Changes

As information changes rapidly, keeping your students up-to-date with information is critical. Your institution's communications office should be the primary channel of information, but your office/unit/department web site should reflect the most up-to-date recommendations (or link to the primary institution source).

If your appointment software allows you to message all students with a scheduled appointment, notify them about the remote-appointment options your office is implementing (see section below for further recommendations).

Consider using your campus learning management system (LMS) as a place to provide information that would be useful for a lot of students and/or announcements about changes that might impact a wide group of students.

Regularly check your email and respond quickly to student inquiries. In this time of disruption, students may be seeking information in a shorter timeframe.

When replying to an email with information that may be subject to change, make sure that you communicate that "this information is accurate as of the time that I'm typing this and is subject to change at a rapid rate. Please see {insert web address} for the most up-to-date information and recommendations."

If your institution has chatbots for Admissions questions, or just in general, be sure that they are updated with information regularly.

Useful resource: [How to Outreach to Online Students](#)

## Remote Appointment Options

While many of our students may have access to resources which would allow them to maintain an advising appointment remotely, not all will/do, so keep that in mind when choosing remote options. When possible, allow students to choose the method they would prefer.

### Phone appointments

Many advisors schedule phone appointments with students throughout the year, and for a variety of reasons. During a time of campus disruption, phone appointments may be the easiest way to connect with students.

- Make sure to remind students to verify that they have provided a phone number (either in the appointment system or in your Student Information System) that they will have access to during the time of their appointment.
- Be sure to communicate whether you (advisor) will be calling at the scheduled appointment time, or whether it is the student's responsibility to call.
- Make sure that the student is aware of the time (and timezone) that the appointment will be held -- sometimes disruption from normal routine makes us forget to convert timezones, if necessary.
- Recognize that a student may or may not have control over the external environment they are in at the time of the appointment. If they are home, there may be other people/siblings/pets and/or external noises which they cannot control. You can communicate expectations that you would *like* for them to have access to a computer in a quiet space during the appointment, but be understanding if that is not possible.
- After the appointment, consider sending a follow-up email with a recap of what was discussed, any website links that the student should look at, and any additional information that the student should know at that time. Since you won't be able to read the student's non-verbals over the phone, a follow-up email keeps the line of communication open and allows for confirmation that both you and the student are on the same page about the appointment.
- Record advising notes, even for phone appointments. In case the student ends up talking with a different advisor the next time, it is useful for everyone to know what the content of the appointment was.

### Video-conferencing appointments

If your institution already has a video-conferencing platform available for use, refer to the help documents for that platform specifically.

If your institution does NOT have a video-conferencing platform available for use, you could consider any of these options (not an exhaustive list):

- Skype
- Zoom
- Google Hangouts
- Facebook Messenger Video
- FaceTime (iOS only)
- GoToMeeting
- WebEx
- Whereby
- Microsoft Teams

*\*Please note that there are pros/cons to each of these platforms for advising. If you are making a decision on what to use, consider your overall needs, the length of time you would anticipate needing to use this solution, the learning curve, the available tools (screen share, audio/video options, etc), the ease of sharing link or appointment invitation, etc.*

Some considerations for video-conferencing appointments:

- Think about what the background behind you looks like on camera. You don't necessarily need it to be an exact replica of your office, but you probably don't want a pile of laundry in the shot, either. Some platforms have an option to blur your background which could be beneficial.
- Some students may not feel comfortable using their camera during a video conference appointment, and that is okay. Keep your camera on if that works for both of you, or just switch to audio only using the platform.
- Consider using screen share so that both you and the student are viewing the same item at the same time. This will reduce confusion and also ensure that the student doesn't get lost in verbal navigation.
- As with phone appointments, it is helpful to send a follow-up email with a recap of what was discussed, any website links that the student should look at, and any additional information that the student should know at that time. A follow-up email keeps the line of communication open and allows for confirmation that both you and the student are on the same page about the appointment.
- Record advising notes, even for video conference appointments. In case the student ends up talking with a different advisor the next time, it is useful for everyone to know what the content of the appointment was.

Zoom specific resources for advising usage:

- Creating a breakout room: <https://support.zoom.us/hc/en-us/articles/206476093-Getting-Started-with-Video-Breakout-Rooms?fbclid=IwAR3uwUbj4GUM3WHkevhZHfJbgaq782VEye-C8EDqCMjLZS4fpcoASu7BXFk>
- Using the waiting room function: [https://support.zoom.us/hc/en-us/articles/115000332726-Waiting-Room?fbclid=IwAR2QWGJi2MXQs1DBbyj\\_nVK2lp2rnPjuM5fWscwvOY4AkFt4iOKQ7PxUmj4](https://support.zoom.us/hc/en-us/articles/115000332726-Waiting-Room?fbclid=IwAR2QWGJi2MXQs1DBbyj_nVK2lp2rnPjuM5fWscwvOY4AkFt4iOKQ7PxUmj4)
- 

Some troubleshooting tips (from [Teaching Effectively During Times of Disruption](#)):

- **If your microphone is not working**, use the phone number listed in the meeting invitation. You can use your phone as the microphone and audio source for your call rather than your computer's built-in microphone if necessary.
- **If your Internet connection is slow or lagging**, consider temporarily turning off your video stream and only maintaining the audio stream. Sometimes, running the web camera on your computer will use up the Internet's bandwidth in a way that might make communication challenging. Turning off the video should improve communication quality and consistency.
- **If you have earbuds or a headphone set, wear them!** Wearing earbuds or headphones will reduce the amount of noise that your computer will pick up during your quality, which will make it easier for your students to hear you. Similarly, you may want to advise your students to wear earbuds or headphones during the call.

- **Advise students to mute their microphones if they are not speaking and unmute the microphones when they wish to speak.** Students may be joining calls from all kinds of different locations, many of which may create background noise that could be distracting. Encourage students to mute themselves if they're not speaking to minimize unnecessary or distracting background noise.
- **Check the "chat" space for student questions and contributions.** Some students may not have working microphones and, therefore, may be unable to contribute via voice. The chat room is a good place for students to contribute, ask questions, and be involved.

Using Live, Online Sessions to Support Continuity of Instruction (OLC pop-up webinar)  
[https://docs.google.com/presentation/d/1ZBbNY2VKqdO5jvIUQ4\\_K5g4OGgc19Q-aMhLh5JqFF9w/mobilepresent?slide=id.g70e9097812\\_0\\_12](https://docs.google.com/presentation/d/1ZBbNY2VKqdO5jvIUQ4_K5g4OGgc19Q-aMhLh5JqFF9w/mobilepresent?slide=id.g70e9097812_0_12)

### Email appointments

While perhaps not the most effective use of time, you might consider offering an email appointment if the student is concerned about access to phone or wifi for a 30-minute appointment. If you and the student opt for an email appointment, you can instruct the student to jot down all of the questions they were hoping to address during the appointment in one email message. The more specific the question, the better. (Questions such as, "What should I take next semester?" may or may not be answerable, unless you have confirmation that they are still following the same track as discussed during a previous appointment.) Because students are probably used to emailing you with questions, there would be no learning curve for this option.

## Addressing Staff Needs

During times of disruption, making sure that everyone in the office is aware of updates and supported is important. If advisors are working remotely, making sure that there are still opportunities for sharing information and processing the rapidly evolving environment are critical.

- Consider keeping regularly scheduled staff meetings, but move them to a virtual environment.
- Advising administrators might consider scheduling more frequent 1-1 check-ins with their direct reports to make sure that everyone has what they need (physically, emotionally, mentally).
  - Be aware of EAP resources for faculty and staff, and how those referrals may or may not be impacted with campus closures/changes.

## Other Remote-Work Considerations

- There are some useful tips in this blog post: New To Working from Home?  
<https://blog.zoom.us/wordpress/2020/03/09/working-from-home-tips-to-meet-like-a-pro/>

- If working from home, set aside a workspace, even if it's the dining table.
- Try to stick to a schedule that works for you, even if it's not the regular "8 to 5" that you would work in the office.
- Eat, drink water, take breaks, get rest.
- Consider using some paid time off, if that is an option for you. This is a stressful time with a lot of rapidly changing information. Take care of and be kind to yourself, your colleagues, and your students.
- While it might seem like you'll have "all of this free time to work on a big project", don't set your expectations too high. Just aim to do the work.
- This is a good opportunity to review the accessibility and usefulness of your advising web resources. Take notes about your experience, especially if they can be used to enact some changes in the future.
- In addition to providing time for student appointments, think about what other projects you may be able to work on during this time:
  - Class updates/preparation for an upcoming semester
  - Orientation presentation updates
    - Consider impact if in-person orientation sessions are canceled; how could orientation information be presented in online venues?
  - Proactive email outreach to students
  - Long-term planning
  - Revamp online course content
  - Review department/unit website and take note of things that need updated, changed, or reworded for clarity
  - Read an article from the [NACADA Journal](#) or [NACADA Review](#). Create a discussion group with other advisors to reflect on how that article might impact or influence your advising practice.
  - Watch a [NACADA web event recording](#)
  -

## Longer-range Planning Considerations

While the spread of COVID-19 will hopefully wane before the start of orientation season, it is not a bad idea to have a contingency plan in case there are still restrictions on travel and group meetings into the summer months.

You might consider creating components of an online orientation experience. Perhaps you already have some information on your department website or on your Learning Management System (LMS) that can serve as a basis for this project and planning. Some questions to consider to help you determine in what format you'd want this orientation material:

- What are the learning outcomes of the advising component of orientation? How can those learning outcomes be met and assessed in an online environment?
- Will you provide synchronous (in-real-time) video options for orientation, or would you have students complete asynchronous material and then schedule a phone or video appointment to schedule classes?

- What would staffing needs be in order to individually schedule each student who would be entering your program in the fall?
- How are placement levels determined at your institution? Will it be possible to get those placement tests completed online?
- How does the release of AP/IB test scores in early July typically impact class registration at orientation? If moving to an online orientation format, how would you address the release of scores?

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## Additional Resources

Center for Disease Control Interim Guidance for US Institutions of Higher Education:

<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/guidance-ihe-response.html>

Preparing for the Coronavirus on Campus

<https://www.higheredjobs.com/Articles/articleDisplay.cfm?ID=2164&Title=Preparing%20for%20the%20Coronavirus%20on%20Campus>

Distance Advising for Online Education Advising Community resources:

<https://nacada.ksu.edu/Community/Advising-Communities/Distance-Advising-for-Online-Education/Resources.aspx>

Online Learning Consortium academic continuity plan resources:

<https://onlinelearningconsortium.org/response-from-olc-qm-upcea-and-wcet-regarding-the-coronavirus-covid-19/>

NACADA Clearinghouse resources on Safety Issues - Pandemic

<https://nacada.ksu.edu/Resources/Clearinghouse/View-Articles/Safety-Issues-Pandemic.aspx>

Teaching in Times of Disruption

[https://docs.google.com/document/d/1ccsudB2vwZ\\_GJYoKIFzGbtnmftGcXwClwxzf-jkkoCU/preview](https://docs.google.com/document/d/1ccsudB2vwZ_GJYoKIFzGbtnmftGcXwClwxzf-jkkoCU/preview)

Online Student Services: What, Where, Who, When, How, and Most Importantly, Why (from 2018 -- just about online student services in general, not specifically about moving services from F2F to online) <https://er.educause.edu/articles/2018/10/online-student-services-what-where-who-when-how-and-most-importantly-why>

## Benchmarking: Institutions Heading Online Classes & Services Due to Covid-19

University of Washington	<a href="#">Press conference</a>
Harvard University	<a href="https://www.harvard.edu/covid-19-moving-classes-online-other-updates?utm_medium=social&amp;utm_campaign=hu-twitter-general&amp;utm_source=twitter">https://www.harvard.edu/covid-19-moving-classes-online-other-updates?utm_medium=social&amp;utm_campaign=hu-twitter-general&amp;utm_source=twitter</a>
Ohio State University	
Michigan State University	<a href="https://msu.edu/coronavirus/latest-updates/">https://msu.edu/coronavirus/latest-updates/</a>
University of Toledo	<a href="https://www.utoledo.edu/coronavirus/">https://www.utoledo.edu/coronavirus/</a>
University of Michigan	<a href="https://publicaffairs.vpcomm.umich.edu/2019-novel-coronavirus-covid-19/">https://publicaffairs.vpcomm.umich.edu/2019-novel-coronavirus-covid-19/</a>
University of Kentucky	<a href="https://www.uky.edu/coronavirus/">https://www.uky.edu/coronavirus/</a>