

LfA Guidance for Spring 2021

The return to on-campus education in fall 2020 reflected Boston University's deep commitment to residential, in-person learning, with respect to both individual courses and the aggregate educational experience of our students. While Boston University students learn in a variety of settings on our residential campus, including laboratories, practice rooms, dining halls, and residences, face-to-face instruction is the cornerstone of the education we offer, allowing for the robust interchange of ideas between faculty and students and among students themselves. We must remember too that even a single semester represents a significant proportion of any individual student's total experience at BU. Thus, the University must continue to offer a residential in-person education of the highest possible quality every semester, even during this time of crisis, as long as we can do so safely. Our significant population of international students likewise requires that we abide by the legal expectation that F-1 visa holders are engaging in in-person instruction.

Essential to this residential experience is regular, sustained, and impactful interaction between faculty and students *on campus*. Specifically, any student who is residing in the Boston area and taking Learn *from* Anywhere (LfA) courses should be able to have, at minimum, one in-person interaction per week with each of their course instructors. These interactions could be the result of attending class in-person in a rotation, participating in a discussion session or lab run by faculty or a TF, or through some other in-person experience. The exception to this, especially in graduate programs, are courses that meet only once per week and require a rotation. In this case, students could only be in-person in such classes every other week. While some colleagues may not be able to teach in-person themselves due to workplace adjustments, in all cases, instructors of record should consider what in-person experiences might be possible in their courses, and which of these would be most enriching for students.

Options in Implementation

LfA requires that courses have an in-person component for residential students, but it does not require that all students participate in that component. In LfA, the face-to-face components of a course must be accessible both for students attending in person and for students attending synchronously remote. The LfA model does not require that *all* components of a course be delivered live, nor does it preclude courses from having some fully online, asynchronous, or remote components. But LfA does require, with rare exception, that each course have at least one substantial in-person component, and it also presumes that courses will be as in-person as possible given the totality of constraints impacting them (including public-health guidelines, room capacities, workplace adjustments of faculty, teaching fellows, and teaching assistants, and pedagogical considerations). Allowing for considerations such as faculty workplace adjustments, it is preferable that these in-person components be offered by instructors of record rather than teaching fellows or teaching assistants. In short, the goal when planning LfA courses should be not to reach some minimum threshold of in-person contact, but to maximize opportunities for students to have the richest possible in-person educational experiences, should they choose to embrace them.

The [faculty survey](#) revealed that faculty desire more flexibility in delivering LfA courses and more guidance about LfA options. Faculty have flexibility in the LfA model in terms of the various multi-component course design options in relation to the number of students enrolled and room capacity. Multi-component course options that were successful in the fall include but are not limited to:

- Remote lecture with in-person, rotated discussions
- In-person, rotated lecture with remote discussion sections
- Remote lecture, remote discussion, in-person labs
- Remote lecture, in-person, rotated discussion and/or pre-lab, and rotated labs
- Seminar-style courses that utilize regularly scheduled remote sessions
- Once a week seminars that break up in-person and remote portions of the same 3-hour block
- Large independent courses for which the regular lecture goes remote and the scheduled class time becomes rotated interactions
- Remote lecture that incorporates in-person experiences
- Some discussion sections of a course designated for wholly remote students and others for in-person students. Allows for more directed engagement and for in-person students to have fewer rotations

The above list is not exhaustive and is only intended to give an indication of the sorts of flexibility faculty could employ while aiming to offer robust in-person opportunities for students. Faculty have flexibility in terms of how they utilize components based on the course schedule. A multi-component configuration for a three-day-a-week course, for example, could have a synchronous remote lecture each week and two discussion sections on the remaining course days, where half the students attend in person and half the students attend synchronous remote on each of the two discussion days (M: remote lecture; T and TH: discussion sections with half in-person, half synchronous remote students). Faculty also have flexibility in terms of designing multi-component elements both weekly and across the semester. In other words, rather than employing the same multi-component structure each week, faculty should use their judgment in terms of “mixing” components across a semester. Faculty who teach a course that meets once-a-week can build a course schedule across the semester that mixes components. In a three week period, for example, week one could involve meeting the entire class time with in-person and synchronous remote students; in week two, the class could meet synchronous remote for half of the weekly meeting while the second half of the meeting time could be devoted to rotated interactions with the faculty member; and in week three, the faculty member could schedule students to meet in synchronous remote breakout rooms for group work for the first half of meeting, while the professor checks in with each group, and the second half could be a synchronous remote lecture for all students. As long as faculty continue to meet course-hour requirements and offer significant in-person components each week, faculty can employ a multi-component course design across the semester in ways that give the faculty flexibility in terms utilizing the best components for the differing pedagogical practices in relation to course material.

As faculty are encouraged to design multi-component courses both weekly and across the semester, a key consideration for faculty is the identification of course elements that have

significant impact in order to elevate those as in-person experiences. It is also important to ensure that students' in-person interactions are not solely with Teaching Fellows, Teaching Assistants, or those graduate students tasked with supporting courses and/or leading course components. It is the faculty who develop courses and learning outcomes, design assignments and assessments, deliver lectures, facilitate discussions, and ultimately assign grades. As the domain experts, faculty are critical to the transmission of course content. Teaching Fellows (our apprentice teachers) tasked with leading aspects of undergraduate courses should be carefully supervised by the instructors of record, especially while navigating the LfA framework. Finally, it is also critical that faculty set forth explanations and expectations of how the semester will proceed, specifically about what elements of the course will be accessible in-person, what will be remote for all, and what might be asynchronous remote.

Faculty are encouraged to consult with the Center for Teaching & Learning (CTL) or their school/college associate dean to explore all possible options. For additional ideas and suggestions, please visit the [CTL website](#) and Pedagogical Partnerships Blackboard site, which you can reach through the Digital Learning & Innovation [website](#).

One of the most significant challenges for faculty to serve these all-important roles in LfA is maintaining the LfA framework when in-person attendance by students fluctuates or drops off. In order to support faculty in meeting this challenge in the spring, we encourage faculty to design multi-component courses, to continue to employ the innovative teaching strategies developed in the fall, and to request that students utilize the cohorting app to express their intent/desire to attend in person and to allow faculty to know in advance how many students should be attending in which modality.

Options to consider for courses with significant numbers of remote international students

Similar to the fall 2020 semester, many international students may not be able or may not feel comfortable coming to the United States in the spring 2021 semester. We recommend that graduate programs with a significant number of remote international students closely examine their spring courses to determine what adjustments can be made to better accommodate students in different time zones.

Consider creating remote-only sections for your remote international master's students.

- If you have multiple sections of a given course and they are offered at different times, when possible, consider selecting among the timeslots for your different sections, the one that could best accommodate time zones where your international students are living. Depending on your student populations, the ideal times to hold these courses are likely between 8:00 and 11:00 am and 7:00 and 10:00 pm (EST).
- Where possible, faculty should adjust or add office hours to accommodate students in Asian time zones.
- While it may not be possible to change section timeslots at this point, consider working with your course scheduling/registrar team to make time changes and to list the course as “not in-person” (NIP) for spring.

Although we urge against scheduling courses with substantial international populations for times that will be in the middle of the night for those students, if a course will be offered during the middle of the night in another time zone, you should proactively reach out to all registered international students informing them of the course expectations:

- In particular, you should make students aware that they are expected to be present (virtually) at all relevant class meetings.
- In general, students cannot participate in class fully asynchronously. LfA courses are not meant to be offered in a fully asynchronous format (though some portions of the class may be). Instructors should clearly communicate this expectation.
- If you must offer courses with substantial international student populations during the nighttime for those students, faculty should adjust or add office hours to accommodate students in Asian and/or European time zones.