

RADFORD UNIVERSITY

Center for Innovative Teaching and Learning

Resilient Pedagogy:

Creating an Online Environment for your Face-to-Face Course

What follows are guidelines for creating an online presence for your course, even if it is primarily offered face-to-face. Using the principles of **resilience**—the capacity to maintain function in the face of disturbance—resilient pedagogy will strengthen your students’ ability to persevere in the event that you can’t always meet in person due to public health or other emergencies; student, faculty, or family illness; or other contingencies that may disrupt your course plan. Resilient pedagogy is about both *what and how* you teach. It is designing a course that can withstand disturbances while fostering learning, growth, and belonging.

As we saw in Spring 2020, **flexibility is critical to student and faculty resilience**. Our courses need to reflect public health guidance on allowing for sick or immunocompromised students to learn from home. Students and faculty members also will likely still feel the stress of COVID this fall; even more so in light of the exposed injustices that are so palpable in our country at the moment. Please consult the resources for trauma-informed, flexible, inclusive, and humane teaching on CITL’s [Keep Teaching webpage](#), and on the D2L site mentioned below.

Resilience in the age of COVID requires that we be prepared to teach in multiple environments. Our face-to-face interactions have become precious in their scarcity, and we can honor that by choosing carefully what we do in person. In your course planning, reserve the sacred space of the classroom for activities that are genuinely enhanced by gathering together.

D2L Resources and Development Opportunities

We have provided in-depth resources and tutorials for all our recommendations in a **D2L site, called Resilient and Flexible Teaching Resources**. You have been automatically enrolled, so you can simply search “Resilient and Flexible Teaching” on D2L to find the course. CITL, DoIT, and McConnell Library will also be offering a **summer workshop series**, information forthcoming, on many of these elements, and we will be offering a **Resilient and Flexible Teaching (RaFT) two week seminar** on course design using D2L July 27-August 7. In the meantime, please reach out for individual consultations.

Additionally, CITL, DoIT, and McConnell Library have collaborated on a **D2L course template** that has a pre-loaded course structure, including information for your learners on student support that will contribute to their persistence and success. The template is a zip file that you import into your course. Then, you can use the structure as is or modify it as necessary. You can find the template and instructions in the Resilient and Flexible Teaching Resources D2L course.

Recommendations for Critical D2L Components for all Courses: Regardless of whether you plan to use a virtual environment extensively in your course, a resilient pedagogy approach suggests that your learners will benefit by having some materials online. Moreover, should a pivot to fully online be necessary, it will be easier if basic components are in D2L. Every course already has a D2L course shell. In order to avoid a confusing experience for our students across many disparate courses, we strongly recommend that you import our template and include the following critical components:

- A syllabus, including your availability and contact information
- A welcome message that details how you plan to use D2L in your course
- Drop boxes for assignments (to prevent having to exchange physical materials in class)
- Handouts or other materials you plan to share with students

Additionally, you should be prepared to put lecture content (PowerPoint slides, lecture notes, videos), discussions and other learning activities, and assessments (quizzes, exams, projects) online in the event that you or your students cannot attend class in person.

Recommendations for a Resilient and Flexible Course: A learning experience where your students (and you) are working in both an online and face-to-face environment will make it easier for your course to continue if conditions make it impossible for you or your students to attend. In addition to the critical component suggestions above, these are some best practices for a flexible course:

- Put all content (readings, videos, lectures) into D2L and make sure the materials are accessible with captions or transcripts for videos and audio recordings.
- Make all assessments digital (quizzes, exams, projects, assignments) so that students can complete them online as necessary, and you avoid handling paper.
- Use discussion forums in D2L to prime the pump for, or add to, in-person discussions. Begin or finish in-person discussions in the D2L discussion forum.
- Use class time for activities that are best done in-person and D2L for activities that are best done independently, online. Use class time for discussion, team or group meetings, demonstrations, workshopping, writing or performances, questions, Socratic conversation, or laboratory activities. Move quizzes, study guides, videos, readings with questions, or lectures online.
- In case of an abrupt pivot to online, consider prioritizing activities that work better face-to-face (such as performances, labs, field trips, and presentations) in the first part of the semester.
- Use a buddy/group/team support system so students have one or two other students in the course they can contact in the event that they must miss in-person classes.
- Hold some office hours via Zoom or Microsoft Teams to avoid close in-person contact.
- Assist students in setting up team meetings and study groups via D2L or Zoom and structure groups/teams so that each student plays a role and is accountable to the group.
- Explain in class and put in writing in D2L how your course will operate between in-person classes and D2L online. Establish a predictable routine for your students so they can easily anticipate when things are due, when class meetings occur, etc. Consider requiring students to communicate via Radford University email, and issue a low/no-stakes assignment that requires an email response.
- Be transparent and explicit about what you're asking students to do, why you're asking them to do it, and what success looks like. Give detailed instructions about activities, as well as where and when to turn them in.
- For all major course announcements that you make in class or on email, also put them in D2L.
- Use a survey or poll (on D2L, or as a low-stakes assignment) each week asking students about their learning in the course. Ask them to express concerns about class and their performance.