

UTEP Instructional Activities

End-of-Semester, Fall 2020

Students Directly Impacted by COVID-19

With the high rate of infection in El Paso, many students are being impacted, whether because of their own health or cascading effects associated with the health of someone they care for. If students tell you they have tested positive for COVID-19, please advise them to self-report using the [screening app](#). If a student has been on campus, the instructor can ensure that reporting takes place by sending an e-mail to covidaction@utep.edu. Students who **test positive** will receive [this letter](#) that provides guidance on coursework/research, on-campus employment, health and wellbeing, and personal feelings. Important information is included in the letter that should be of interest to faculty—please review. Students who test positive are also assigned to case management through the Office of the Dean of Students. Case managers contact students daily and make sure that their needs are met. They encourage students to work with their instructors to manage coursework. If students become too ill to contact their instructors, case managers may interact with faculty directly. For clarification, the UTEP Center for Accommodations and Support Services (CASS) is *not* typically involved with accommodations for acute illnesses, focusing instead on students who live with longer-term disabilities.

Unprecedented circumstances call for unprecedented flexibility, and faculty have considerable latitude in accommodating students who are ill. When students request a deadline extension because of a COVID-19 occurrence, please work with them, as appropriate, to help them successfully complete relevant course requirements. It may be necessary to balance concerns around test security and psychometric equivalence with public health issues, providing alternative assessments, extending deadlines, etc. For classes with teaching assistants, be sure to share relevant information with them so that students are not penalized. If you have questions about a student's status, you can contact the [Office of the Dean of Students](#).

Shift from on-campus activities to online learning

In light of local developments, many faculty have shifted remaining on-campus activities online to keep our community safe. If you have revised your course syllabi and scheduling, please be in direct contact with your students to explain changes in expectations so that they can plan appropriately and assess their academic progress.

Last week of classes and final exams

As planned from the start of the semester, UTEP **will not have in-person class activities after the Thanksgiving break**. Online final exams should be planned either asynchronously or at the regular time listed in the [institutional exam schedule](#). In instances where an online final exam is not appropriate or possible, faculty have discretion to plan for an in-person final exam. In-person exams should be handled like any other class sessions, with appropriate distancing, mandatory masks, and no more than 50 students in a room. If you do not have sufficient space in your classroom to accommodate all your students safely and believe an in-person exam is essential,

please respond to this [questionnaire](#) to arrange for overflow proctoring support, as available. Do be sure to have contingencies in place for an alternative format in the event that campus becomes further restricted. In addition, instructors should accommodate students who are not in El Paso, who are members of vulnerable groups or are caring for members of vulnerable groups, who are ill, or who are otherwise unable to complete face-to-face exams.

Current Grades

Ensure your Blackboard gradebook is current so that students know their standing and can make informed decisions about dropping classes.

Drop Date

The drop deadline has been extended to December 3rd, the last day of classes for the Fall 2020 semester. A dropped course will remain on the transcript with a grade of “W” and will *not* count toward the students’ 6-course drop limit. Please encourage your students to discuss this option with you to understand if their standing in the course merits a drop. To drop a course, students should email records@utep.edu from their Miners email, and include their (1) name, (2) student ID, (3) course name (e.g., UNIV 1301), and (4) course CRN (e.g., 12345).

Grading Mode

With the support of the Faculty Senate and the Graduate Council, temporary changes have been made effective November 10, 2020. The temporary Satisfactory/Unsatisfactory course grade policy can be found [here](#).

Communicating Grades to Students

Faculty have several options for discussing grades with students while ensuring confidentiality. Release of grades via systems that require signing in with UTEP credentials is acceptable: Microsoft Teams, UTEP email, or Blackboard. Do not release grades to students over the phone as it is difficult to confirm a student’s identity.

Incomplete Grades

Assigning an Incomplete grade allows students to complete the remaining work within a timeframe that you establish. It is recommended that the student has completed most of the work of the semester so that they can reasonably finish without guided instruction. If the student needs access to the Blackboard course after the semester has ended, please email helpdesk@utep.edu with the CRN of the course, the student’s name and 800 number, as well as the beginning and ending dates for access.

Closing out the semester

Finally, we encourage you to think about a meaningful way to close out the semester, a culminating assignment or event to mark the end of the semester and celebrate students’

learning and accomplishments under challenging circumstances. Students will appreciate a little extra thought and attention this time of year, so we encourage you to be creative.

Resources

Below are a few of the institution's resources to aid students' success.

[Student Success Help Desk](#)

[Tutoring Services](#)

[UTEP Academic Advising Center](#)

[Office of International Programs](#)

[Counseling and Psychological Services](#)

[UTEP Academic Advising Center](#)

[Office of Student Financial Aid](#)

[Military Student Success Center](#)

[Miner Athlete Academic Center](#)

[More Student Resources](#)

Thank you for your commitment to providing our students with the best academic experience possible under the circumstances.