

Communication that is clear and consistent is important in online teaching and can help to alleviate anxieties and confusion when done well. Here are some suggestions for structuring your communication.

Communication: Needs Assessment

Here are some questions you can ask in a quick poll to find out what kind of access and conditions your students have so you can adjust as needed as you move online:

1. Do you have access to reliable internet that still allows for physical distancing?
2. What device will you be using to complete the course?
3. Are there any non-course related conditions that will affect your ability to participate in the course during this time, e.g., food/job/housing insecurity, family member care and responsibilities, distance from family, resident/visa status in Canada?
4. Do you have a reliable support network for the next 1–3 months while you self-isolate?

Communicating with Students

1. Start with a message of care
2. Reiterate where you are in the course
3. Explain what is next and the steps entailed
4. Reiterate roles, responsibilities, and where to get help
5. Reiterate when they will hear from you next
6. Close with a message of care

Communication: Assignment Modification

1. Start with a message of care.
2. Explain how the assignment will be modified.
3. Outline the steps and where each of the steps will happen online. Be super explicit. An example of clear assignment instructions might be:
 - a. Research XYZ. Go to XYZ folder and read X, Y, Z.
 - b. Draft an outline. Send to group members by email. Peer edit using XYZ rubric.
4. Explain how any questions/concerns about assignment can be addressed and where students should take those questions.
5. Finish with a message of care and flexibility.

Note: Communication will most likely take place in your LMS (learning management system) or via email. Try not to rely on web conferencing (Zoom, Collaborate, BlueJeans) for all of your communication needs, as this requires a lot of bandwidth and may not be flexible or accessible for your students.