



Instructional Continuity Planning Guide

Teaching Continuity During a Canvas Outage

Purpose

This document provides guidance for instructors teaching in-person, online, and hybrid courses when Canvas is temporarily unavailable.

The goal of contingency planning is not to fully replace the Learning Management System (currently Canvas), but to maintain instructional continuity, communication, and student support until service is restored.

General Best Practices for All Instructors

Prepare Before an Outage Occurs

1. Consider taking the following proactive steps at the start of the semester:
 - Encourage students to check their NVC email at least once or twice a month for potential college notices, which could include a systems outage.
 - Include contingency communication expectations in your syllabus
 - Keep a downloadable backup copy of important course materials. Maintain copies of:
 - Syllabi
 - Assignment instructions
 - Lecture slides
 - Readings you are permitted to distribute
 - Grade records
2. Consider creating a simple backup communication plan
3. Inform students where updates will be posted during outages
4. Download important files from Canvas periodically
5. Communication Alternatives
 - a. Email Communication: Email is often the most reliable backup communication method during a Canvas outage. Log into Self Service. Access student email in the Faculty area of Self Service by clicking on current course titles. Continued instruction via email could include:
 - Sending announcements
 - Sharing assignment instructions
 - Providing schedule updates
 - Sending Zoom links
 - Answering student questions

Recommendations:

 - Use clear subject lines such as:
 - “Course Update During Canvas Outage”
 - “Class Instructions for Today”

- Keep messages concise and action-oriented
- Remind students when Canvas access has been restored

b. Teams as a Communication and Teaching Platform. Microsoft Teams can support communication with students and serve as a teaching platform. It is a good idea to include information about Teams in your back up communications plan. To use Teams:

- Click on Teams in MyApps
- Click on the Teams icon then on the top right click “Join or Create Team”
- Click the Class square and name your class team
- Add your students by beginning to spell their name or using their email address until their identity can be selected and added to the team.
- Once done, you can create a class home page, notebook, assignments, upload documents and even track grades after creating assignments.
- Teams also supports live Team meetings

Possible Uses:

- Holding live class sessions
- Office Hours
- Asynchronous communication with your students
- Group discussions

c. Zoom as a Backup Teaching Platform. Zoom can support both synchronous and asynchronous teaching during an outage.

Possible uses

1. Holding live class sessions
2. Office Hours
3. Review Sessions
4. Student Presentations
5. Group Discussions

Recommendations:

1. Keep recurring Zoom links saved outside of Canvas
2. Share Zoom links through email

3. Record lectures when appropriate. Recorded Zoom sessions can help support students who cannot attend live sessions during an outage.
 4. Use Cloud recordings when available
 5. Record short, topic-based lectures instead of long sessions
 6. Use screen sharing for slides and demonstrations
 7. Enable captions
 8. Share recordings via email or Teams
- d. MS OneNote Class Notebook. OneNote class notebook is located in MyApps and is a specialized, collaborative digital binder designed for instructors to organize lesson, distribute materials and provide personalized feedback.

Possible Uses:

- Class/group collaboration
 - Distribute class materials, handouts assignments
 - Student journals for reflection with feedback from the instructor
 - Develop lessons, create resources, store grades in a space hidden from students.
- e. YouTube Unlisted Videos. YouTube can be used to host instructional videos temporarily. Unlisted Youtube videos are not publicly searchable but can be viewed by anyone with the direct link.

Possible Uses:

- Lecture recordings
- Demonstrations
- Assignment walkthroughs
- Weekly updates

Recommendations:

- Do not include sensitive student information in videos
 - Share links directly with students through email or Teams.
- f. Microsoft ClickChamp Videos. ClickChamp is an online video editor where instructors can record, edit and share videos online using AI video editing tools. Go to your MyApps and search for the ClickChamp app. It may require your institutional log in.

Possible uses:

- Instructional videos
- Lecture recordings
- Demonstrations
- Assignment Walkthroughs
- Weekly updates

Recommendations:

- Do not include sensitive student information in videos
- Share links directly with students through email or Teams

Teaching Strategies by Course Modality

In-Person Classes

Possible Continuity Strategies

- Continue meeting in the classroom as scheduled
- Distribute printed materials if needed
- Conduct quizzes or exams in person
- Use verbal announcements for updates
- Collect assignments physically when appropriate
- Assessment Alternatives
- Paper quizzes
- In-class writing activities
- Small group discussions
- Physical handouts

Online Classes

Possible Continuity Strategies

- Move temporarily to Zoom sessions (either live or recorded)
- Email assignment instructions and materials
- Use shared documents for collaboration
- Record mini-lectures for asynchronous access

Communication Priorities:

- Clearly communicate expectations

- Reduce confusion by limiting platform changes (Do not require students to create new accounts)
- Be flexible with deadlines when disruptions occur

Hybrid Classes

Possible Continuity Strategies

- Shift online portions temporarily to email and Zoom
- Use in-person meetings for critical activities when possible
- Provide downloadable materials directly to students

Recommendations:

- Prioritize essential learning activities
- Simplify assignments during outages
- Communicate clearly about any temporary changes

Assessment and Assignment Alternatives

Exams and Quizzes

Possible Alternatives

- In-person paper exams
- Oral presentations
- Open-book assignments
- Take-home assessments distributed through email
- Short reflection assignments

Recommendations

- Consider flexibility during prolonged outages
- Avoid introducing unfamiliar tools during emergencies
- Focus on learning outcomes rather than platform-specific activities

Assignment Submission Alternatives

Options May Include

- Email attachments
- Shared cloud folders (Teams, Google, etc.)
- In-person submission
- Delayed submission after Canvas restoration

Recommendations

- Clearly communicate file naming expectations
- Confirm receipt of emailed assignments
- Be mindful of student access and technology limitations

Accessibility Considerations

During outages, continue to support accessibility and equitable access whenever possible.

Recommendations

- Provide captions for recorded videos
- Use accessible document formats
- Avoid relying solely on high-bandwidth tools
- Offer flexible participation options when possible

Faculty Checklist

Before an Outage

- Save copies of course materials
- Maintain updated student email communication practices
- Prepare backup Zoom links
- Include contingency expectations in syllabus

During an Outage

- Communicate quickly and clearly
- Simplify instructional activities
- Prioritize essential course functions
- Be flexible with timelines

After an Outage

- Inform students when Canvas access is restored
- Reestablish normal workflows gradually
- Provide clarification on any adjusted deadlines

Sample Message to Students

Dear Students,

Canvas is currently experiencing an outage that may impact access to course materials and activities. During this time, please monitor your NVC email for course updates and instructions.

Our class will temporarily use email and Zoom for communication and course continuity until Canvas access is restored.

Thank you for your patience and flexibility.

Sharing Syllabi with Students

If Canvas is unavailable, faculty can still share syllabi with students by:

- Creating links to uploaded syllabi on a webpage, OneDrive, Google Drive, etc.
- Downloading the syllabus as a PDF and attaching it to an email
- Faculty are encouraged to keep a downloadable copy of their syllabus available in case of temporary LMS disruptions.

Additional Notes

Canvas outages are usually temporary and resolved quickly. Planning ahead can help reduce stress and maintain continuity for both instructors and students. Faculty are encouraged to focus on clear communication, flexibility, and maintaining essential instructional activities during disruptions.

How this Guide Was Created

This guide was edited and finalized by the DE Staff and the Office of Academic Affairs. Please email the Office of Academic Affairs should you have any questions about this guide.