

MARYLAND INSTITUTE COLLEGE OF ART

ADDITIONAL COURSE INFORMATION FOR FACULTY

*Special Notes related to Teaching Online*

*with integrated perspectives from the SVA Academic Affairs Committee*

Academic Year 2020-21

The following information and recommendations are intended to help with course planning and problem solving during the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic that has modified MICA operations. Some information may not apply to all programs, such as those in Open Studies. Additional guidance will be shared with Open Studies faculty at the beginning of January.

Canvas

Canvas is the most accessible mode of communication with the most students most of the time and should be the primary delivery method for course information. Canvas is accessible, most of the time, to students in countries with more regulated internet access such as mainland China. Canvas' messaging capabilities, instead of or in addition to MICA email (a Google product), should permit faculty and students with MICA email access issues to communicate. Adjustments need to be available for students who are unable to upload an assignment to Canvas due to bandwidth/connectivity issues. Still, using Canvas is the most inclusive method of sending and receiving information from students.

Online courses: planning synchronous meetings

*No course operating online shall meet for the entirety of the scheduled class.* It is not conducive for student learning and is unsustainable for faculty and students alike.

At the beginning of the semester, please identify ideal times for synchronous learning during the time your course is officially scheduled. For example, if your course meets 9am-3pm, consider polling the class about what 60-90 minute slot within those hours works best for a synchronous class session. You may need to vary the synchronous class meeting time(s) *within your scheduled class time* so everyone gets their preferred 60-90 minute slot at some point. Meeting for more than 120 minutes during your class period is acceptable. Some students prefer more contact and it works well for some groups to break up their videoconferencing into shorter encounters over a longer window. But it is not best practice to Zoom, whether lecturing or discussing, for more than two hours at a clip.

Likewise, It is not recommended for MICA students to take a wholly asynchronous course. Of course there will be times that your students can't make it to your synchronous session. Invent strategies to engage students synchronously either during office hours or via smaller group

meetings. Small group meetings or individual meetings with students are highly encouraged to promote learning and engagement with the course materials.

Courses operating online will include students who are not in Baltimore and may be located across two or more time zones. Faculty should be realistic and flexible in regard to synchronous attendance for students living outside of the U.S. It is likely that connectivity issues will occasionally occur that prevent international students from attending in real time. Students should not be penalized for absence from synchronous class meetings. There will be times that both domestic and international students experience interruption to internet service.

### Workload

First-year students are often challenged by the transition from high school to college workloads. This strain is likely exacerbated for all students by current conditions. Faculty should take this into account by managing a consistent syllabus with a reasonable workload and clear deadlines for assignments. Faculty should develop assignments that are easy to submit and evaluate, and in whatever ways possible refine their strategies for giving critical feedback in a timely manner. Faculty should incorporate a practice of receiving regular feedback from their students in such a way that allows them to adapt to the ever-changing needs of delivering an online education. C/TIE has created a "Mid-Course Feedback" module that is available in the Canvas Commons. A [student workload estimator](#) may be useful as you plan your course.

### Attendance

Faculty are expected to document attendance and participation, however broadly defined.

Please note that students on the SVA Academic Affairs Committee expressed concern around different ways the above might be interpreted by different faculty especially during a school year spent wholly online. Here are some of the key recommendations that come directly from the undergraduate and graduate representatives of that committee.

- 1. State what counts as an absence. Students need to be informed that they won't be penalized for absence from synchronous classes, especially if there are bandwidth or other issues beyond the student's control.*
- 2. Faculty should have at least one make up assignment for every class in case of missed classes or deadlines. Students should not be policed (grade docking) for missing classes [Faculty sometimes tie attendance to their Canvas grade book, this is not advisable given the complexity of online course management]. Faculty-imposed policies such as 2 absences = decrease in one letter grade, etc need to be removed. We need consistency across all absence policies next semester.*

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*4. Faculty should not require doctors' notes for excused absences, a student emailing beforehand should be enough. Not everyone has access to healthcare or can visit a doctor. With an ongoing pandemic, students should be encouraged to take care of their health first.*

#### Student absence due to illness

Currently, if a student becomes sick and needs to be absent or remain under quarantine for a period of time, Student Development Specialist Louise Cracknell notifies the faculty member. This academic year, Associate Deans will also be notified. If there is a need for a student to quarantine, that does not necessarily mean that a student cannot participate in class asynchronously, or make progress on assignments or toward core learning outcomes. The faculty member and student should establish specific expectations for participation and assignment completion in writing. Faculty do not need to teach class a second time for a student who falls ill, or multiple times for multiple students. Faculty should consider creating explicit policies regarding extensions, as well as attendance, that allow for flexibility but also provide a basis for consistency and accountability. Examples can be found at [accessiblesyllabus.com](http://accessiblesyllabus.com) under "Policy."

Please note that other illnesses are likely to happen. Just because a student is absent does not immediately mean a student has symptoms of COVID-19. Per usual, students could have the flu, strep throat, an injury, etc.

#### Grading for Spring 2021

*Letter grades are the default for AY2021, but students will have the option to choose Pass/Fail from Enrollment Services.* In Week 6 of the spring term, students will receive an invitation to request the Pass/Fail option. This choice is not retroactive, meaning that if students opt for Pass/Fail in one or more courses then the selection is not reversible in Week 15. Currently a passing grade is recognized as a D (65%) or higher for undergraduate students (UGS will propose to the Academic Affairs Committee in Spring 2021 to change this to a C- (70%) or higher)).

Please note that students on the SVA Academic Affairs Committee expressed concern this summer around various ways of grading and the different ways in which grading methodologies align with MICA's core values. Here are recommendations that come directly from the undergraduate and graduate representatives of that committee:

*"We understand that it is important for students to receive feedback on their performance which is quantitative. This needs to be done in ways that provide support and care.*

*We're encouraging this should be carried out by communicating with the students. We're recommending all professors have mandatory biweekly 1-1s with students to provide feedback on their work. (as opposed to just 'open office hours'. Students have reported that they do not*

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*feel comfortable scheduling or attending open office hours as they are not sure if the professor is truly available.)*

*A majority of students have reported a dip in motivation levels while working from home, and worrying about grades when their circumstances fluctuate. It would help students for professors to put in place tactics and structures where the motivation of students is self-driven as opposed to grade based, especially in the current environment. The workplace does not rely on grades as a factor for motivation, if we are to prepare individuals whose portfolios and mindset reflect an enthusiasm for a cause as opposed to a policing device, it will better prepare the students for operating outside the school environment."*

### Incomplete Grades

Incomplete grades (I) may be applied sparingly and in compelling circumstances where the student has been making steady progress in a course, but cannot complete assigned work by the end of the semester due to illness or other extenuating circumstances beyond the ability of the student to predict or control.

The grade of Incomplete is not appropriate for students who have a poor attendance record, since it is not possible to make up missed classes or other engagements. (Students who have missed an excessive number of classes/coursework for health-related reasons should contact the Student Development Specialist in Student Affairs about the possibility of medically withdrawing from the course.) The grade of Incomplete is also not appropriate for students who have simply fallen behind in submitting required work. An Incomplete Contract, obtained through the Office of Enrollment Services, is required, and must be signed by the student, the supervising faculty member, and department chair. The contract is turned in to Enrollment Services by the instructor at the time of grading. *The student must request an incomplete from the instructor before the final grades are due.* If the written request is not made, the instructor will submit a final grade based on work completed to that point.

Incomplete grades require an incomplete contract, filed with Enrollment Services and signed by the student. They should not be used as a default when a faculty member hasn't heard from a student. If that's the case, the faculty member should always give the student the grade that they've earned per the grading metric on the syllabus. Things like medical leaves of absence (MLOAs), late withdrawals, etc., will be handled by Louise Cracknell in tandem with Enrollment Services, so any requisite grade changes (e.g., if an LOA causes grades to change to Ws) will be addressed during that process and are not the purview of individual faculty members.

Assignment of an incomplete grade presumes both that the student will be able to complete the coursework in the time frame established below and that the instructor will be able to review the completed work in that time frame.

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Incompletes must be fulfilled by the fourth week of classes of the subsequent semester, unless an extension is approved by the Registrar. If the contract is not fulfilled by the designated deadline, the grade is automatically changed to a failure (F). Students requesting incomplete grades should consult with their academic advisor and/or financial aid counselor about potential implications for their academic and financial aid standing.

#### Disability & Accommodations Confidentiality

Referrals to the Learning Resource Center (LRC): A student's disability status is confidential information between the student and the LRC, unless a student discloses that information. If the student has disclosed information that would allow you to facilitate an introduction, please email the LRC and the student. Faculty should not ask questions about a student's disability status or imply that a student has or may have a disability if the student has not disclosed that they have a disability. If a student has not disclosed information that facilitates an introduction, you may want to encourage them to connect with the LRC generally for academic support as one element of multiple resources that are available. If you are not sure how to make a referral or connection between the student and the LRC, you can contact the LRC director, [lrc@mica.edu](mailto:lrc@mica.edu) to discuss the best approach.

LRC Accommodations: A student's LRC accommodations are confidential between the student, the LRC, and each faculty member that the student requests the LRC notify. Faculty should not share information about approved accommodations or the student's disability status (i.e., that the student is registered with the LRC) with anyone, including their department chair, associate dean, etc. Any questions about a student's accommodations should be sent to the LRC director, [lrc@mica.edu](mailto:lrc@mica.edu). No other individuals should be copied on email communications regarding a student's disability status or LRC accommodations.

#### Concerns about Student Behavior

Contact ART (Academic Response Team) with concerns and reports of problematic or worrying student behavior such as class disruption, behavior changes, excessive absences, and academic integrity concerns. ART members will work to address questions/concerns and also connect with other Academic Affairs or campus resources and help coordinate responses. ART serves as an academic bridge and resource: a one-stop contact for faculty and academic staff to alleviate the time spent identifying student support services and being referred to multiple campus offices.

The ART email address is [academicresponse@mica.edu](mailto:academicresponse@mica.edu) and is monitored all day during week days. This group exists to refer faculty to the appropriate resources on campus when they are not sure about the correct course of action when working with a student of concern. More information is available on the ART website:

<https://www.mica.edu///faculty-resources/academic-response-team/> (portal log-in required)

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### Decker Library access

Decker Library is closed to visitors. Book check-out, physical Inter-library loan of books and DVDs, and purchase of materials are on hiatus during the Spring 2021 semester. Librarians are available for research help. Please see Decker Library's [Current Operation Information](#) for details and contact information.

### Online Community Building

Please note that faculty, staff, and students on the SVA Academic Affairs Committee expressed concern around how to build community during a term spent wholly online. Here are recommendations that come directly from the undergraduate and graduate representatives of that committee:

*"A large majority of students are in support of using Discord / Slack to augment the community building and learning experience across classes. Setting up a Discord/Slack server should be something all professors should be engaging in or delegating to a TA, and subsequently participating in for discussion."*

### Field trip policy

During AY2021, all field trips will need to be virtual for all undergraduate courses.

Physical distancing practices and conservative budgeting will make spring field trips and site visits extremely difficult and unadvisable for courses within non-field-based degree programs. Faculty should consult with their department chair or program director to assess whether a field trip/site visit is necessary to meet course (or program) learning outcomes and whether it is possible to fund and plan within College policy. For future terms, any required travel off campus must be communicated in syllabi students receive at the start of the semester.

[Undergraduate Academic Field Trip and Site visit policy](#)

[Graduate Academic Field Trip and Site Visit policy](#)

### FAQ: Students accessing online courses from outside the US // VPN usage

#### What is a VPN and why might students need one?

A VPN is a Virtual Personal Network. It redirects internet traffic through a specially configured remote server. The VPN hides the user's IP address and encrypts all the data sent or received. A VPN allows users living in areas where the internet is censored to bypass strict censorship laws and access sites that are otherwise banned. Students in mainland China as well as Iran, Syria, Saudi Arabia, Turkey, and Venezuela are most likely to use VPNs as part of their access to the internet. In mainland China, censored software includes all Google products, YouTube, Facebook/WhatsApp, Instagram, and some features in Canvas.

What is MICA's policy or stance on student VPN use?

MICA neither encourages nor condones VPN use. VPNs are used all over the world for a variety of reasons and usage law varies. MICA strongly recommends that students consult their local laws and regulations.

Is a VPN required to access Canvas in the countries listed above?

*Canvas has been designed to work without a VPN.* Confusingly at times, students who use a VPN might find that it decreases the speed of downloading. Attempting access or downloads with the VPN turned *off* may help with some access and speed issues. Bandwidth is variable in other countries (much as it is in Baltimore and all over the US) so it is highly recommended to use videos of 10 minutes or shorter. If you want to use a YouTube or Vimeo video, you should convert it to an mp4 using a free service like <https://clipgrab.org/>.

I've heard that VPNs are illegal in China. Is that true?

Somewhat. China's Ministry of Industry and Information Technology requires all VPN developers to obtain a license from the government. VPN apps that don't meet the regulations are unavailable to users in China through regular channels. However, individuals who download the VPNs in other countries or through other channels are generally still able to use VPNs on the mainland.

General consensus among corporations doing business in China is that so long as anyone using a VPN does so for personal purposes and avoids risky situations (e.g., engaging in political groups), the user should not encounter difficulties from the Chinese government. While there have been reports of local governments blocking VPN access at various times, for various reasons, ExpressVPN, the VPN that MICA will be using, verifies that its product is functional in mainland China and receives consistently high ratings in a number of tech publications.

Will a VPN solve all access issues for students in regions impacted by internet censorship?

No. VPNs drastically reduce barriers to accessing educational software, but VPN reliability can be inconsistent in China and elsewhere. For example, coinciding with important political meetings and events, it can become more difficult to connect to VPNs. You should confirm with each student that they are able to access the specific educational software that you intend to use in your course. Anticipate needing some flexibility with deadlines as well as contingency plans in the event of inconsistent access.

Who oversees the VPN assignment process at MICA?

The Office of International Education (OIE). Questions can be directed to [internationaleducation@mica.edu](mailto:internationaleducation@mica.edu).

*Perennial course planning information*

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## Student names and pronouns

Class rosters and other documents created from the registration system contain students' legal and preferred names as well as their pronouns should they wish to designate them. Please use students' preferred names and their pronouns.

## Learning outcomes

Course Learning Outcomes (CLOs) are clear statements written for students to explain the habits and behaviors students will develop as well as what they will be able to do following the completion of a particular class (in other words what they have learned). CLOs are constructed using action verbs followed by the demonstrable skills, abilities, or knowledge gained through the coursework. Use action verbs, e.g. create, construct, produce, render, employ, evaluate, define, classify, distinguish, formulate, synthesize, document, etc., rather than more vague terms such as "know" or "understand." The demonstrable skill, ability, or application of knowledge should be something that is assessable. Your syllabus should have approximately five CLOs. CLOs must align with Program Learning Outcomes.

*For example:*

- Students will demonstrate the ability to accurately depict the human figure and anatomy using visual elements such as line, shape and value.
- Students will design appropriate typographic solutions for multilayered messages presented in two, three and four dimensions.
- Students will produce a body of images that demonstrates the effects of technical camera controls.
- Students will produce a body of images that expands on a concept or idea.
- Students will be able to distinguish and classify different architectural styles through written and oral assignments.
- Students will construct a research paper using properly documented sources.
- Students will contribute to the development of a learning community in which all voices are respected.

CLOs should align with the Program Learning Outcomes (PLOs) expected of students upon completion of their degree program. However, note that CLOs are specific to the course and are not the same as PLOs. Faculty with questions about how to properly construct CLOs or about the relevant PLOs should contact their Department Chair, Program Director, or Associate Dean.

## Environmental health and safety

Faculty must follow health and safety guidelines relevant to course activities and processes, and to review MICA's Emergency Operations Plan and attend EHS training. Without exception,

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it is each faculty member's responsibility to coordinate with the EHS Office to ensure that all risks associated with their class activities are identified and to assure that their respective classroom procedures mirror the EHS and Academic Department Guidelines. Most importantly, faculty are to maintain compliance with all safety and environmental regulations, state and federal, as employees of this college and are expected to act as examples of how to create art in a way to minimize risk, and reduce harm to themselves and the environment. Faculty must identify and require appropriate personal protective equipment for each art making process, for each student, in all of their classes, when applicable. EHS related training can be requested through MICA's EHS office (410.462.7593).

Resources for Spring 2021 (this list is being expanded in a new document located [here](#))

[Keep on Teaching](#) spring 2020 toolkit and guides

Educational Technology [page](#) with links to video tutorials on Canvas

[MICA Netiquette](#) (Online etiquette) guidelines

Learning Resource Center (LRC) [Resources for Faculty](#): Includes information on supporting students with disabilities, the accessible classroom, and making online course content accessible.

[Quick Reference: Responding to Student Distress](#)

Student Development Specialist [Guide for Faculty](#); [Guide for Students](#)

Referral to the [Behavior Intervention Team \(BIT\)](#) in cases of concern about student mental health, risk of self-harm, or harm to others.