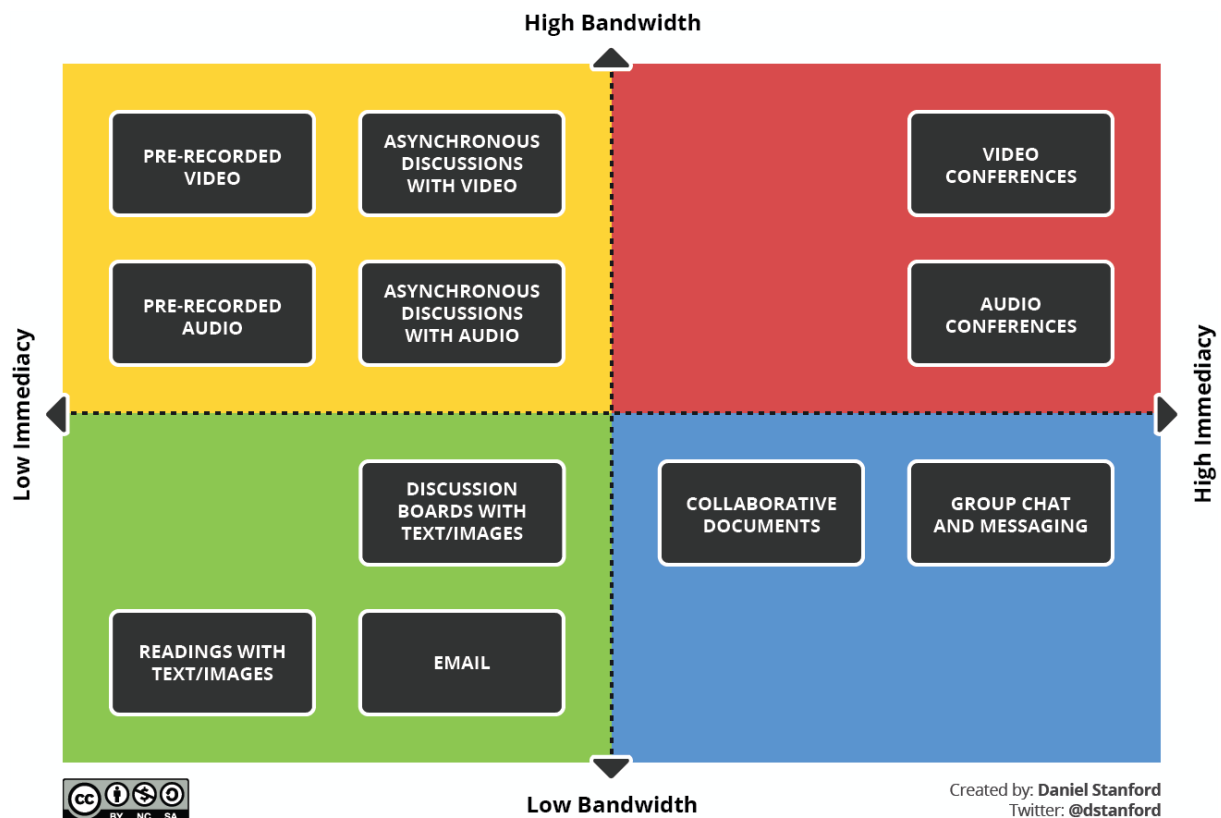


# Tips for Winding Down and Bringing Closure to Courses

*These tips are for faculty winding down and bringing closure to their courses.*

1. **Keep it simple and focused – no need to know it all.** You don't need to do fancy technology activities, create detailed assignments or marking schemes. Keep it simple any way you can! There is no need to become an expert on how to teach online in such a short time period. Give yourself a break and do your best.
2. **Adjust expectations.** What might have been expected for assignments and exams in a regular semester, will have to be adjusted for this abnormal situation. Without compromising the essential learning components of your course, adjustments might mean redoing evaluation percentages, dropping an assignment, providing extensions and redos for some work, giving take home exams or forgoing an exam.
3. **Ascertain student technology access.** Check in with your students about their access to technology and the best ways to connect with them. Some may only have a mobile phone with weak reception. Some may not have Internet at their home or suitable access. Try to think of ways to connect such as good ol' standbys email or phone. Consider summarizing content in a handout you can email them or share in a short video they could watch - instead of reading on a small screen.
4. **Bandwidth is a premium.** Consider the image below – bandwidth vs. immediacy. If students have low bandwidth and you have a low urgent level on communication, try email and discussion boards in Blackboard Learn. If you have a higher immediacy level for communication but lower bandwidth, try pre-recording your content and uploading to YouTube for students to watch when they can. See blog post by the author of the diagram below: [Videoconferencing Alternatives: How Low Bandwidth Teaching will Save us All](#)



5. **Communicate frequently with care and compassion.** Your students look to you for guidance and direction in these challenging times. Anytime you can share a story, a reassuring comment or some inspirational thoughts – it will go a long way. Stay in touch via email until the course has been ended. Many students are overwhelmed trying to finish off many courses in new ways and will appreciate any humour, positive thoughts or calming comments.
6. **Share how you are shifting and adjusting the course.** Share how you are balancing rigor and support in your courses. It is okay if the rigor is not what it normally was. Nothing is the way it was, and all institutions will know this semester didn't end as expected. Keep students up to date on your marking and grading activity so they know what to expect and when to expect it. Anytime you can give them updates on anything that is shifting or has new information, updated due dates - they will appreciate the communication.
7. **Have simple ways to distribute documents and readings:** Create PDFs of materials and/or links and send via email or Blackboard Learn, post documents and readings in Blackboard Learn. Remember to send clear instructions to students about what you want them to do with the materials. For example, read the handout, listen to and review the PowerPoint presentation, read the attached article, watch the YouTube video, etc., and send a critical summary/answer X questions. Include how and by when you expect students to send their work to you. Students can either reply by email, or you can use the functions in Blackboard to get students to submit work.
8. **Consolidate, summarize and share big ideas of the course.** Students might find a one-pager handout, short video or a few PowerPoint slides helpful to share the big ideas/essential learning outcomes or key take-aways of the course. This might help students see what they have learned, what you deem most important and provide them with something to take with them to into their next courses. It might help some students who are so bogged down in trying to complete so many assignments and tests at this time – to see the bigger picture of the course. This is not meant to create more work for you – just an idea if you want to do.
9. **Screencasting:** Might be your new best friend. Create mini-videos of yourself explaining concepts or mini-lessons. Upload to YouTube under private URL to send to students. You can explain assignments, feedback, remaining concepts etc.
  - <https://screencast-o-matic.com/> - Screencast-o-matic: is a popular tool that is browser-based and with free account with basic recording or
  - <https://www.screencastify.com/> - Screencastify: works via Google Chrome, free account for up to 5 minutes per video with all recording features included – a good for all levels of users
10. **Consider alternative assessments of student learning.** Putting an exam in Blackboard is possible but isn't always the best choice. Besides the work involved to upload questions, build a test and all the settings, students could experience low bandwidth and not be able to complete all questions. This might not work for all learners. If you are still trying to wrap up some final assessments, consider these ideas:
  - [Final Assessment Flow Chart](#) (University of Saskatchewan) – nifty little flowchart to help you decide if you need a final exam and what alternatives might be possible
  - [Open Book Exams](#) – consider a case study, problem-solving questions, portfolios or self-reflections
  - [Testing Alternatives](#) – Open and closed book exams
  - [Alternatives to Traditional Testing](#) (University of California – Berkeley)
  - [12 Alternatives to Traditional Testing](#) (Lakehead University)

11. **Connect with your students, hold a review session or office hours - virtually on BlueJeans** – NIC’s video conferencing platform. If you have an account (get one from [ctli@nic.bc.ca](mailto:ctli@nic.bc.ca)) set up a virtual gathering with your students or provide them optional times to drop in and have a chat. It might be a nice way to end the course and help them through the remaining time in the course. BlueJeans virtual sessions can be recorded and the recordings are stored in Montreal, Canada. Zoom (similar platform) most likely doesn’t store recordings in Canada. We should aim for consistency with student experiences as Student Services and some NIC instructors are using BlueJeans. See what is possible: <https://support.bluejeans.com/s/>
12. **Conduct class discussions or polls to engage learners**
  - Create a discussion forum in Blackboard Learn to host student conversations, unpacking of concepts and ways of allowing for ideas to be shared in a digital forum: [Blackboard Learn Help for Discussions](#)
  - Engage learners in online or face-to-face classes, <https://www.polleverywhere.com/> Poll Everywhere (free account up to 25 responses), [Kahoot](#), [Mentimeter](#) and [Socrative](#) are good (and free) tools.
13. **Convert class lessons to alternative formats**
  - Create summary handouts from classes / PowerPoint presentations. These can be sent to students via email. They can also be uploaded to Blackboard Learn. [Blackboard Learn Help for Instructors](#)
  - Create narrated PowerPoint presentations and send these to your students. Under “Slide Show” tab see the “Record Slide Show” button giving you voice only narration or video narration (so students can also see your face if you have a web cam). You can narrate a whole presentation in one sitting. Lots of videos online show you how to do this. [Microsoft Record Slide Show Help](#)
14. **[Hope Matters: 10 teaching strategies to support students](#)** and help them continue to learn during this time of uncertainty (Inside Higher Education article)
15. **[10 Tips to Rapidly Transition to Remote Education](#)** (UBC) – top tips about making a quick transition to online
16. **[Checklist for Teaching Remotely](#)** (University of Calgary) – one pager of thoughts for what you might do in current practice and how to move to an online version
17. **Wrap it Up!** As best as you can, wrap up the course. Students will appreciate one less item on their plates and you’ll be relieved one more course is done. Communicate to your students any final grades or feedback on their assessments. Share some uplifting and encouraging comments. Wish them well.

Keep these **three principles of universal design for learning** in mind as you are considering alternatives for learning, thinking about adjusting your courses to online formats, or thinking ahead to an online format.

**PRINCIPLE I: Provide Multiple Means of Representation** - Present information and content in different ways, give students choice in how they can access content, share video, handouts, websites, audio clips, slide decks ....

**PRINCIPLE II: Provide Multiple Means of Action and Expression** - Differentiate the ways that students can express what they know, give them choice in how they demonstrate their learning such as through a video, podcast, paper, concept map, debate, dramatic scenario, interview, case study, web page, blog post...

**PRINCIPLE III: Provide Multiple Means of Engagement** - Stimulate interest and motivation for learning in a variety of ways from discussion boards, polls, debates, group work, team-based learning, research assignment, open pedagogy project, create an open textbook chapter....