

Dear Colleagues,

As Dean Claybaugh has recently said, the public health situation will require most of our teaching to move online. I'm writing today with some preliminary information about another change to our usual academic rhythms.

In all likelihood, a significant number of our students will not be on campus this fall. Yet all students, be they in Cambridge or not, need to have the time to obtain their course materials. Scheduling of sections, labs, and other live course events will present additional challenges as we try to accommodate students in different time zones. Finally, instructional staff, such as TFs and CAs will need time to be ready to teach courses online.

All of this requires that shopping period and course registration take place prior to the first day of classes. Many of the details of this change still need to be determined, and some will depend on the decisions that Dean Gay will make at the beginning of July. Considering the magnitude of the change, I want to share a rough timeline, as well as some suggestions for how to prepare for course registration.

The precise dates are still to be determined, so please treat the following as a rough guideline:

**August 10** Canvas Sites are published and contain key information.

**August 17** Course Materials for an online shopping period are available on canvas site.

## August 10: Populate and Publish Canvas Sites

Students will benefit from key pieces of information, whether that's in the form of a preliminary syllabus, a syllabus from a previous semester, or a separate component of your course's Canvas site.

### Items to Consider Including

- Course Description
- Course Scheduling for synchronous components:  
What are the live attendance requirements for your course? How will you manage scheduling to support students in various time-zones? What are your expectations for section/lab attendance?  
If you only know how many sections you'll be able to offer once enrollments are set, describe as best you can how these sections will be scheduled.
- Please pay special attention to what is different online: course expectations, how to get help, and what flexibility there is in scheduling and deadlines.
- Assignment structure and grading scheme
- Rough timeline of assignments
- Course materials to the extent that they are known. Please be thoughtful about making course materials available online.
- Registration instructions if your course has controlled enrollment, such as a lottery or an application process.
- Any course community considerations. Students are likely to worry about feeling isolated and missing out on many of the social and communal aspects of taking a class.

## August 17: Beginning of Shopping Week

Shopping Week is intended to give students as much helpful information as possible as they decide on their fall courses. The online Shopping Week has the same aim. However, we encourage faculty to take this opportunity to rethink how to present the information they want to make available.

Faculty use any number of formats, above and beyond providing the basic information on the Canvas site mentioned above: live sessions, video presentations, sample lectures, office hours, Q&A sessions, etc. We are working with OUE to create a mechanism that allows faculty to coordinate their live sessions to avoid conflicts.

This rough timeframe for Shopping Week will allow students to register for courses and enter any controlled enrollment mechanisms, such as lotteries, interviews, applications, and the like, in time for an enrollment deadline about one week before classes start.

### Lotteries and controlled-enrollment courses

Most undergraduate courses require permission to enroll, whether by random lottery, partially random selection, or a systematic application or interview process. It is our hope that the necessary changes to registration this year will include more transparent and coordinated methods to make this process less confusing for students, advisers, and instructors.

Below is an overview of the available tools and how they might be used in our new circumstances:

- Lottery systems can be used to manage large numbers of student requests to enroll (General Education has managed ca. 4000 enrollments this spring through a coordinated lottery).
- Batch enrollment can be used by catalogue coordinators to enroll concentrators in required courses prior to shopping week. Some concentrations may want to use this tool to register students for tutorials or other required courses.
- Requisites can be established in my.harvard to grant automatic permission to enroll to students who meet a set of criteria, such as concentration, class year, pre-requisite or co-requisite course enrollment, etc. Some faculty may want to use requisites to manage enrollment, knowing that permission of instructor can override requisites to make an exception.
- Enrollment caps can be set in my.harvard to limit enrollment for pedagogical reasons. Since registration will take place before classes begin this year, some courses might not need a selection process, allowing open enrollment while space is available and utilizing a waitlist to manage the order in which available spots will be offered to students.

Instructor permission is the most common tool, but unfortunately it is also the most cumbersome. Instructor permission can override requisites and enrollment caps, so we recommend using it in concert with other tools to manage enrollment more efficiently.

No matter what system you choose to manage enrollment in your courses, we ask that you please include registration instructions on my.harvard and Canvas to give students equal access to information about the process for requesting permission to enroll in your course.

## Rough Timeline After Shopping Week

- Once shopping week is concluded, instructors will have several days to complete whatever processes they choose to follow for managing controlled enrollment.
- Students enroll in courses about one week before classes begin, and based on enrollments, teaching fellows and other support are assigned to classes.

## A Final Note

Please do not hesitate to reach out to me if you have questions, concerns, or suggestions. My email is [bnickel@fas.harvard.edu](mailto:bnickel@fas.harvard.edu). We appreciate all of your help in making this semester as successful as we can. We will be in touch with you again as soon as we know more.

Sincerely,

Bernhard Nickel  
Professor of Philosophy  
On behalf of the Committee on Course Registration

Further information regarding limited enrollment courses:

Dear Colleagues,

I've had a few more inquiries in response to the letter I sent earlier [regarding late July and early August scheduling of course preparation and presentation], and I wanted to enlarge on the timing/sequencing for shopping, lotteries, and enrollments.

I'm going to talk about Controlled Enrollment (CE), rather than lotteries, since totally random lotteries are just one of a host of ways that instructors decide who can take a class.

Shopping as we know it requires that we and students do many things all at once. During one week, students:

- Go to classes and decide which ones they want to enroll in or, if applicable, enter CE processes for.
- For some courses during the week, for some courses later, they hear about the results of CE processes and have to decide whether to take the offered spot in the class.
- At the end of the week, they are supposed to enroll.

Having to do all of this at once is stressful for instructors and students alike.

The model that the course registration committee is developing aims to disentangle these issues. So rather than have the three things I just described run concurrently, we suggest that they run in sequence.

First: Shopping Week. Let's say that it runs from Monday, August 17 to Friday, August 21.

Second: All through shopping week, students can enroll in courses that don't have controlled enrollment. By the end of shopping week, the evening of Friday, August 21 in this example, the students have to enter CE processes. (NB: that's not to say that instructors can't start holding interviews, for example, with interested students during shopping week. It's just to say that students need to register their interest in enrolling by Friday night. How do they register their interest? In whatever way the instructor tells them: everyone is free to decide how to run CE)

Third: Instructors have until, say, the following Wednesday, August 26 to continue the example, to settle their class rosters. That will probably mean offering spots to students on Monday or Tuesday so that students have enough time to accept or decline.

Fourth: The enrollment deadline for students, what used to be the end of shopping week, is now moved to the point

Fourth: The enrollment deadline for students, what used to be the end of shopping week, is now moved to the point after CE processes are done, Wednesday, August 26 in our example.

This way, we're creating a little more breathing room for students and instructors.

I hope this is useful.

Have a great weekend,  
Bernhard.