

Perceptions of Instructional Quality

Student Feedback on UI Responses to the Disruptions Caused by the Pandemic During Spring 2020

At the end of Spring 2020, the University of Iowa conducted two surveys to collect student perceptions of the transition to virtual instruction and their feedback on the university's response to the disruptions caused by the pandemic.

The ACE Supplement survey asked three open-ended questions about experiences with virtual instruction and one rating-scale question, "Under the circumstances, how would you describe the support you received for managing the transition to virtual instruction?" While nearly 3 out of 4 rated the support they received as *Very Good* or *Adequate*, 1 in 5 rated it as *Inadequate* or *Extremely Inadequate* (as shown in Figure One). Responses to the open-ended questions are reported at assessment.uiowa.edu/ace-supplement, and selected examples are included below.

The Pandemic Response Survey (PRS) asked a range of questions on experiences in addition to virtual instruction. An overview of responses is reported at assessment.uiowa.edu/prs. Figure Two summarizes the distribution of student responses to PRS questions about experiences in their classes.

Responses consistently show 60-70% of students responding positively ("Often" or "Very Often") to characterizations of class experiences; 8-16% responded "Rarely" or "Never" having these experiences in classes. Through both surveys, we see a mixture of positive and negative feedback, with few students reporting only positive or only negative experiences during Spring 2020.

Student responses to open-text survey items echo the patterns that are summarized in Figures One and Two. A number of recurring themes in these comments are especially important to consider as the university plans for future semesters:

- *For students, there is no substitute for meaningful engagement with faculty.*
- *Good instructional practices for in-person classes are also important in virtual instruction.*
- *Challenges unrelated to learning significantly affected student ability to learn and succeed in their courses.*

Examples of student comments illustrating each of these themes follow on p. 2.

Figure Two: PRS responses characterizing student experiences in their course

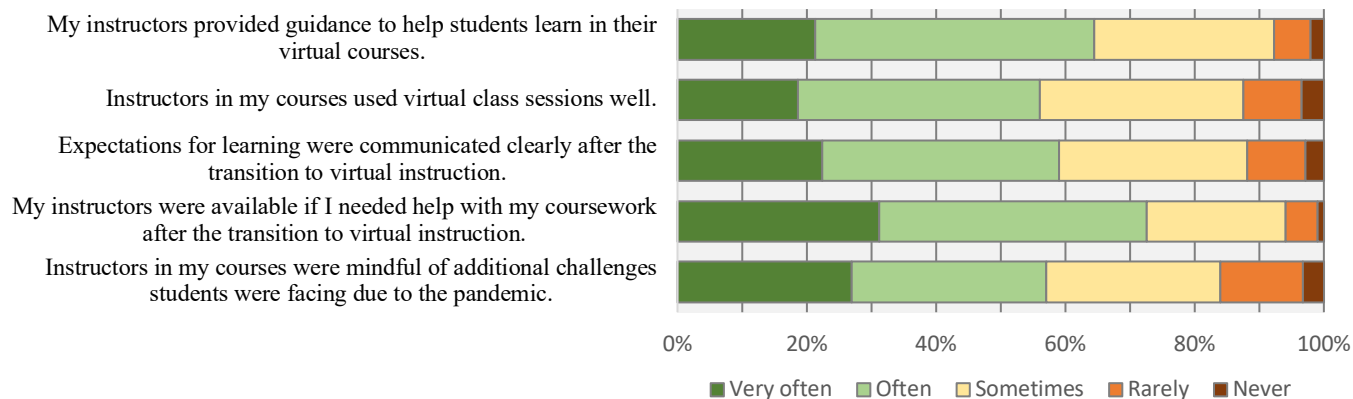
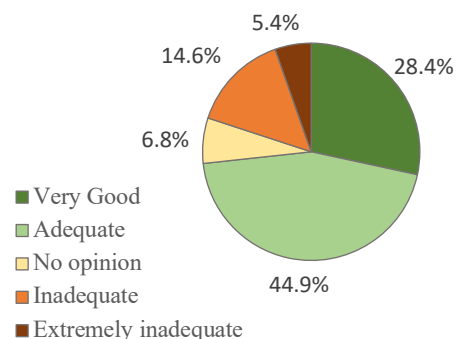


Figure One: ACE Supplement ratings of support for the transition to virtual instruction



For students, there is no substitute for meaningful engagement with faculty.

The more contact I had with professors, the easier the transition was. ... Having Zoom meetings so that there was some level of live interaction was more supportive than lessons that consisted of pre-recorded videos, additional readings or other assignments. Those types of fixes were more confusing, less personal, and more overwhelming.

What meant the most to me was still being able to have access to my professors, and meeting with them during their 'office hours' even though it was a little different considering our circumstances.

Being able to meet for discussion and engage in back and forth dialogue made a huge difference in what I learned. Also, being able to connect with professors via Zoom helped me feel less isolated and made it easier to ask questions.

Some professors were great and did everything they could to facilitate learning, some just posted old lecture recordings from previous years and checked out. When the teacher wants the student to learn as much as the student wants to learn, it doesn't matter whether we meet online

Good instructional practices for in-person classes are also important in virtual instruction.

Lay out everything each week and send out announcements frequently. Remind students of what's coming up as well as what's due and when ... Update the syllabus because things get very mixed up when trying to manage 4+ classes all online.

Direct support in learning material rather than just being told what to learn instead of how to learn it

I think it's important to have the ability to ask questions and interact with an instructor as you learn the material.

Professors sending out announcements regarding upcoming material, live discussion sections over Zoom to work through examples or questions, and providing extensive directions on assignments as expectations were difficult to gather from the online delivery method.

Challenges unrelated to learning significantly affected student ability to learn and succeed in their courses

The PRS the survey asked students to identify how frequently a number of non-academic challenges interfered with their academic work (summarized in Figure Three). ACE Supplement responses noted similar challenges, and also revealed additional types of challenges that interfered with students' academic work.

Some professors ... did not seem to take into account the various difficulties many students were facing in our personal lives that we could not control. Some seemed to be under the impression that students were trying to take advantage of the changes by making unfair requests, but this was obviously not the case, and more understanding from those professors would have helped immensely.

I think the teachers understanding our situation and that because of this pandemic adjusted accordingly ... A couple teachers were extremely understanding and changed dates due to my circumstances of having my power shut off

Access to web cameras, printers, and specific system requirements were difficult to acquire.

I had a lot of research papers added to give us points we would have earned in class, but since a lot of my professors did that, it was time consuming. I also had a professor say our final was going to be ... open note (printed out notes only which I had to go to a store to pay and do) and then [it was changed to] open book (only hard copy of the book which I had the e-book of so I spent money expediting it).

Figure Three: Responses to the PRS item, "How often have these challenges interfered with your academic work during the pandemic?"

