

## ***Adapting Team-Based Learning for Synchronous Remote Learning***

If you use Team Based Learning (TBL) in your teaching, you have designed a highly interactive class. Adapting that class for remote learning can seem daunting, but it can be done. In this short guide, you will find suggestions about the realities and challenges you should take into account as you make your initial decisions about moving to a synchronous learning model; then you will find suggestions for adapting key aspects of a TBL classroom for asynchronous remote learning.

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### **Realities that should inform our pedagogical decisions**

The realities that our students face when they go home to learn remotely often provide us with important reasons for choosing to move to an asynchronous model. These realities include the following.

*Struggles with connectivity.* Our students will go home to cities, towns, and rural areas that may have limited access to high speed internet. It may be difficult initially to imagine that students today might not have instant access to our Blackboard sites or the internet. Consider for a moment one of the cities we would regard as being highly connected—New York City. It is surprising to learn that according to [a report published in 2018](#) by the Mayor’s office in New York City, 31% of households in New York City do not have access to broadband internet. This may help you consider struggles that students in impoverished areas of the state or rural areas may face in securing high speed internet.

*Struggles with scheduling.* While studying at the University, our students worked their job and personal responsibilities around their school schedules. At home, new schedules will take precedence as students now have to take on added tasks: find employment with different schedules from the jobs they had at University, care for younger siblings, pitch in at home, run errands, and potentially care for themselves or family members if they become ill.

*Struggles with a home learning environment.* Our students will be living at home with family members who may not be able to maintain a quiet and ideal environment for learning. Our students may need to share devices with other family members. Our students may be interrupted at home in unpredictable ways. Our students may be ill. Our students may not have a welcoming home environment to come back to and may be staying in a temporary living situation or moving from one situation to another.

If you believe that students will not face these kinds of struggles and will have access to high speed internet, the same schedule they had at University, and a calm and productive learning

environment, you will need to confirm this by asking students through email or a Blackboard survey. You should ask them about their availability during class meeting times, their access to high speed internet, and their access to a learning environment where they can attend a remote class without interruptions. You may choose to survey students anonymously as answering these questions may be distressing to some students. After you have gathered information from students, you can begin adapting your TBL course for remote learning.

## **Adapting your course for synchronous learning**

The components of a TBL course that are most concerning for instructors as they consider remote instruction are the Readiness Assessment Process (RAP), 4S tasks, peer evaluation, and the camaraderie of teams working together. Before we look at how these elements of your TBL course can be adapted, keep in mind that some elements of your existing face-to-face TBL course will not change: students will continue to read; students will continue to listen to your mini-lectures; and students will continue to do homework, write papers, and take exams. Below, you will find a range of options for adapting the other elements of your TBL course.

### ***The RAP in a synchronous remote learning environment***

#### Most complex option

1. Use the Test tool in Blackboard to put your RAT items into a multiple choice test. Set the timer for the time you usually give students the iRAT in class. Set options so that you control when this test is available to students.
2. Make a copy of that test in Blackboard (if you don't know how to do this, we can show you!) to create a tRAT. For the tRAT, use the option Blackboard gives you to provide instant feedback to students about what answers are correct. Set options so that you control when this test is available to students.
3. During your synchronous Zoom class meeting, tell students to take test individually as the iRAT. Tell students to write out the numbers of the items and record their answers on a piece of paper: this is crucial.
4. Allow teams to discuss their answers in Zoom Breakout Rooms. They will use the answer sheet they created to share their individual answers with each other.
5. Allow students to individually take the tRAT.
6. Give teams time again to discuss the results of the tRAT and decide if they want to write appeals. (Note: This is why it is important in step 2 to set up your test in Blackboard to give students immediate feedback on correct answers.)
7. Give teams some time to begin working on appeals.

*Note: You will need to move students in and out of the Breakout Rooms every time you want them to work in teams.*

#### Completely acceptable option

Don't do the RAP. It may not be worth using this tool for you or the students. Given the stress that both you and your students face at this time, dropping the one or two RAPs that you have left in the semester will not drastically change your students' learning experience. This is acceptable and may be best for you and your students.

### ***4S tasks in a synchronous remote learning environment***

1. During your synchronous Zoom class meeting, use the Share Screen function to display your PowerPoint slides with the 4S tasks you have designed.
2. Have teams work in Zoom Breakout Rooms to come to consensus on their choice.
3. When you bring students out of Breakout Rooms, have a representative from the team share their choice using the Chat function of Zoom if you have a large class. If you have a smaller class with 2 or 5 teams, you can have students quickly share responses depending on the kind of task you've given them.
4. Report out to the whole class what the trends are in team responses.
5. Debrief as you would in your face-to-face class, drawing out and making student thinking visible.
6. Use your mini-lecture to clarify misunderstandings and misconceptions and to highlight areas where student thinking was on target with expert thinking.

### ***Peer evaluation in a synchronous remote learning environment***

#### Option for smaller classes

If you have a smaller group of students, simply post the evaluation form you are using on Blackboard and require students to fill that form out for each team member and send those forms back to you via Blackboard or email. Aggregate and anonymize feedback as you normally do and send that consolidated feedback to each student.

#### Option for larger classes

In the past, instructors have used [Teammates](#), and there may be other similar platforms available. We don't necessarily suggest that you use a platform that is not supported by the University. Because students are already having to learn and use new tools, we discourage you from adding to that burden. For a larger class, we suggest that in place of peer evaluation, ask students to reflect toward the end of their semester on how they've learned from their team mates during the semester and how they have developed as a member of a team. Require students to give one or two concrete examples of how being part of a team during this challenging semester will help them in their future careers, coursework, or life. This option allows students to reflect on their team performance and their teams' work.

### **Helpful tools for adapting TBL in a remote learning environment**

- If you want to record lectures or have synchronous classes or hold live office hours, use [Zoom](#), which is now integrated into Blackboard.
- If you have synchronous classes, you may want to use the Breakout Room function of Zoom: this allows students to work in teams. You can assign students to Breakout Rooms during your first synchronous Zoom class meeting. You can then move students into and out of Breakout Rooms as needed during class. [This short video](#) gives you an overview of how to create and use Breakout Rooms. Students can also use [Microsoft Teams](#) or a group text chat on their devices to work in teams.
- If you want to have students work asynchronously on 4S tasks, the [Groups](#) tool in Blackboard allows you to put students in small groups and the [Discussions](#) tool lets you set up a place for team members to interact asynchronously.
- If you want students to take RATS, use the [Tests](#) tool in Blackboard.