

Taking a Large Course to an Online Format Teaching Remotely: Shared Experiences

Summary of virtual panel event held on August 13th, 2020
[\[Link to video\]](#)



There are many moving parts to consider as a large course pivots to a complete online teaching model - this session took us through that experience for Introductory Psychology.

Panelists:

Joe Kim, Course Designer

Michelle Cadieux, Course Coordinator

Thomas Samson-Williams, Head Teaching Assistant

Joseph Oluwasola, Student

Panel Questions:

Can you tell us about the structure of Introductory Psychology, and what changes you have made to deliver it in a fully online environment for the fall?

What challenges are you anticipating with teaching (and TAing) a fully online course of 2000+ students this fall? How might you overcome these?

What do you see as the benefits of teaching this course fully online?

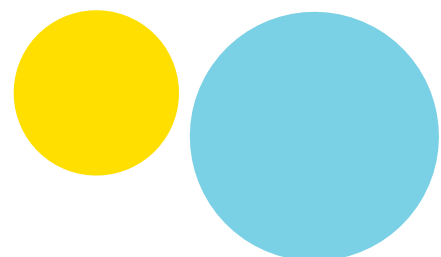
Tell us how you have managed the shift to a fully online course? What has been your process, or way of thinking about this shift?

Given your experience coordinating large courses, what is your advice or tips would you offer to other course coordinators or instructors or large classes?

What advice or tips do you think students need in order to be as successful as possible in online learning at McMaster this fall?

5 Key Takeaways from the panel

1. Online learning gives students the opportunity to work at their own pace. This self-paced method allows students to design their own learning experience and tailor it to their learning preferences. [13:10- 15:25]
2. The recent pandemic has forced everyone to step outside their boundaries and accept new challenges. The role of an instructor is to provide guidance, accept feedback on how courses can be enhanced and tailor the learning environment to their students' needs. [7:06-17:18]
3. It is important for students and faculty members to remain flexible. Chances are courses will have to evolve throughout the semester to accommodate student feedback and eliminate necessary hiccups. It is crucial that professors communicate with their students and continuously inform them of upcoming changes. [24:00-25:22]
4. It is important for both students and faculty members to cut themselves some slack. This transition will be difficult for both parties and it is important to acknowledge that everyone is trying their best to ensure students receive the best possible learning experience. [25:50-28:30]
5. It is important for teaching assistants to receive proper training. This will ensure that they have the necessary resources and tools to create a safe and engaging virtual learning environment. [36:46-37:30]



Some key takeaways from each panelist

Thomas Samson-Williams, Fourth year PNB student, Head TA

- As a teaching assistant it is difficult to conduct virtual tutorials and ensure students are engaged with the content because you're presenting to a bunch of black screens. [29:05-30:00]
- Tutorials generally provide students with the opportunity to meet new peers and develop a deeper level connection with other students. This is especially important for programs that have large cohorts. It is therefore important that teaching assistants try their best to unite the students and provide a safe platform for them to interact on. [30:10-31:40]
- It is important for teaching assistants to encourage their students to keep their mics and camera on so they can gauge student engagement. This would allow TAs to accommodate their teaching based on student comprehension and understanding. [31:48-33:55]

Joseph Oluwalsola, Student in Honours BSc Neuroscience, Teaching Assistant

- It is important for students to create a separate working environment which can closely mimic a library desk. This will help prevent students from being distracted and allow them to get the university experience from the comfort of their own homes. [38:56-42:06]
- It is important for students to be proactive through this transition. This involves reading the course outline ahead of time so you can reach out to professors or course coordinators if you require additional assistance. [42:07-42:47]
- It is crucial that students manage their time more efficiently. To mimic a library setting students can try to adopt the pomodoro technique or use online tools such as stay focused to eliminate distractions. [42:56-44:00]

Michelle Cadieux, Course Coordinator for introductory psychology

- When facilitating a large course it is crucial for the professor and course coordinator to work ahead. Remaining organized has been one of the biggest challenges during this shift. [18:47-19:46]
- It is important for professors to stay consistent to make it easier for students to navigate through the different courses. This may involve communicating with other faculty members to ensure that students have to navigate between the least amount of online platforms. [20:00- 21:34]
- One of the biggest challenges has been organizing virtual tutorials. It is important for students to still have a platform that they can moderate, have discussions in and ask questions. Course coordinators are responsible for ensuring that these tutorials run smoothly with minimal technical issues. [22:05-23:50]

Joe Kim, Associate Professor and Course Designer in Psychology, Neuroscience and Behaviour,

- Web modules are used to deliver the primary course content. These allow students to move at their own pace and revisit the primary content if required. The modules have interactive questions and games embedded. [7:58-9:50]
- In-person lectures are used for active learning purposes. Students are engaged through high level discussions, demonstrations, iclicker checkpoints and much more. [9:55-11:09]
- Tutorials are focused around problem-based activities and hands on learning. This helps students develop a holistic understanding of the class content. [11:10-12:10]
- It has been a challenge to transfer the blended learning concept online. The introductory psychology team is working to find novel ways to deliver the interactive activities on teams. [12:40-15:19]

Referenced Resources:

[Echo 360](#)

[Avenue to Learn](#)

