GSI Mentoring for Remote Instruction

Q&A with Teresa Puthussery, Assistant Professor of Optometry and Vision Science
2019 Recipient of the Faculty Award for Outstanding Mentorship of GSIs

What steps can faculty take to provide clarity to GSIs regarding such things as attendance policies for students in the remote environment and how GSIs should divide their hours between teaching synchronously and asynchronously?

Communicate expectations about attendance policies with students. If attendance is to be taken, ensure GSIs are aware of how to do so with Zoom, Google Meet or other technology tools. Ensure that bandwidth is not a limiting factor if GSIs are planning on giving synchronous instruction and encourage GSIs to test videos, etc. ahead of class to ensure that streaming is not laggy.

What steps can faculty take to help GSIs understand the pros and cons of recording synchronous sections and the steps they need to take to protect student privacy if they record sections?

While recordings are useful for students who are unable to attend due to time-zone differences or other issues, they may discourage participation from students who may prefer not to have their questions or comments permanently "on the record". Give students alternate options for sharing questions and answers, for example, by using the private chat feature in Zoom. Remind students of your policy for sharing class materials and specifically address your policy regarding recorded sessions.

What steps can faculty take to stay aware of GSI workload so that adjustments can be made, if needed?

The transition to remote instruction can be stressful for GSIs as they may feel the need to make significant changes to their content to better suit the online format. Communicate with students about your expectations for such changes and give them clear guidance on what is a reasonable workload. Make sure they understand that the switch to online instruction is difficult for everyone and things may not be perfect first time.

What steps can faculty take to guide GSIs in grading remote assignments and exams efficiently?

Help reduce the workload of your GSIs by designing assignments that can be auto-graded with bCourses or Gradescope or by formatting your exams so they are more easily graded by these software tools. This can be a huge time-saver for your GSIs and also makes regrade requests easier to handle. On that note, be sure to put in place clear guidelines about how regrades will be handled (deadline for submitting requests, etc.).

 What steps can faculty take to help GSIs create inclusion and community among students when teaching remotely?

Encourage use of breakout rooms to promote smaller group discussion and a sense of community with peers and GSIs.

What steps can faculty take to help GSIs work well as a team when everyone is working remotely?

Take the time to hold online meetings with GSIs through the semester to discuss progress and ideas to improve online instruction. Encourage the team to share ideas and resources in a shared Google Doc so that all GSIs have access to the information.

What steps can faculty take to guide GSIs in the selection and use of technology tools such as bCourses, Zoom, etc. so that they are making choices that promote student learning?

Ensure that GSIs have access to campus-licensed Zoom so they are not time-limited in their teaching sessions. Encourage them to test out the functionality of these tools before giving their first class.

What steps can faculty take to help GSIs get feedback on how their students are experiencing remote instruction?

Suggest use of Zoom polling for real-time feedback or use Google Forms. Encourage GSIs to share the poll results with you so that you can track progress and offer suggestions on areas for improvement.