

Difficulties reported by students registered with the DSS office as Loyola transitioned to online courses

DSS did not formally survey students about their difficulties. However, we gathered input from students who contacted DSS about anticipated and actual difficulties.

- Many students came to DSS the moment online was announced and they were anxious and concerned because of not knowing how their courses would be held, what were new expectations, and how their accommodations would be arranged.
- They were also concerned because of not knowing if their disability and its symptoms would mesh with online learning. For example, one student was extremely anxious because she gets migraines with too much screen time.
- Some expressed a dislike for online courses because of the past. These students said online was difficult for them because of their disability and they were upset because they never would have signed up for an online course. Many of these students stated they needed face-to-face learning.
- Many students were initially overwhelmed with the move to online. One student with ADHD said she figured out her in-person classes, and then everything changed on her. She said the transition was difficult for her because of her ADHD.
- After students settled, some reported liking synchronous because they wanted the interaction with the class and professor. Others liked the ability to view classes whenever they wanted, so they liked asynchronous.
- Some students reported online was chaotic and disorganized between courses, and even within a single course. For example, some professors communicated through email and others through Moodle, and some communicated both ways. They were asking for consistency.
- Some students “went missing” from classes or stopped handing in work/responding to emails. DSS heard from worried professors and we reached out to the students. I was impressed with professors’ concern about students and how some of them were incredibly flexible (such as allowing incomplete grades to help an overwhelmed student catch up).
- Some students were upset because they perceived courses changed drastically and, perhaps, unfairly. For example, a former lecture class might have been switched to an asynchronous class and introduced different measurements for participation (such as writing a reflection about a reading).
- Some students found the new course structure was one that emphasized their learning difficulties. For example, one student with writing difficulties was told she had to write a

25-page paper to make up lost hours for her internship class. DSS worked with the faculty to come up with a modification for the paper's length.

- Many students reported struggling with the ability to organize the work for all of their courses. They were missing the reminders from in-class or the ability to talk to professors face-to-face for clarification. These struggles were magnified for students who have executive functioning difficulties.
- Most Loyola students we spoke to felt isolated and missed professors, classes, and classmates.
- We asked professors to make sure their print materials were in an accessible format for the students for blind or visually impaired students and we provided information on how DSS could help. One professor continued posting inaccessible materials in the spring for a blind student. This was a total disregard for the student's rights and cost the University money to remediate documents at the last minute. The behavior could also have been interpreted as a bias incident.
- We asked professors to make sure videos had captions for students who requested this accommodation and professors were willing to make sure students had this access to this information.
- Test-taking accommodations were arranged by professors, and most were without incident from the professor. Students were concerned about the arrangements for their exams because DSS was not proctoring, and we referred them back to their professors.
- Some students reported spotty internet, difficulties finding a quiet place to study because many family members were working or taking classes at home, and difficulties with relationships at home.
- Many reported all they did was schoolwork, and there was not much difference between classes and homework.
- Some reported difficulty with class organization caused by a lack of consistency with the course structure.
- Students with anxiety and executive functioning difficulties expressed being overwhelmed, and sometimes their motivation was impaired.

Suggestions from DSS:

Consistency, Organization, and Clarity

- The University requires professors to use the same framework in Moodle to structure their courses. This would help all students, but it would be extremely helpful to students with executive functioning difficulties.

- The University requires professors to communicate through Moodle rather than email. Students expressed being overwhelmed with emails. This would be consistent and there would be less back and forth between email and Moodle.
- Clear expectations of classes should be outlined and described in the syllabi, Moodle, and the first day of class. This would help reduce anxiety for some students, and it would also allow students to drop/add if they felt they could not handle the course.
- This information will students determine if they need note-taking assistance, and it would be great if it was in Moodle by the first day of classes.
 - Whether the course is synchronous or asynchronous
 - Whether the professor provides a transcript for any lectures given on Zoom or Panopto
 - Whether the professor saves recordings of courses conducted via Zoom on the cloud
 - Whether the professor posts regular notes/slides that correspond with each course meeting

Electronic Accessibility

- DSS notifies professors who have students in their courses with accommodations that will require extra time to arrange. This is usually for students who are blind/visually impaired or deaf/hard-of-hearing. It is imperative faculty work with DSS to make the arrangement needed to ensure access to course content and materials. For information about how to create captions and accessible documents, [please refer to this handout](#) or go to the [University's accessibility website](#)
- Scanned PDFs are not accessible. Faculty should submit any scanned image PDF to the Loyola Notre Dame Library for remediation via [this form](#). The Library provides this service for all courses and it is recommended faculty submit all scanned documents. This helps avoid violating both accessibility and also copy write laws.
- Picking videos that captioned, which provides immediate access and saves the University money. This is helpful for students with hearing impairments, but also students who are not native English speakers appreciate captions. For help with captions, [please refer to this document](#) or go to the [University's accessibility website](#).
- When teaching online, if possible provide captions or transcripts of your lecture. [The Office of Digital Learning and Technology can help](#) and these videos were developed to help faculty with captioning.
 - [Adding captions to a YouTube video](#)
 - [Adding captions to a YouTube video \(video tutorial\)](#)
 - [Adding captions to a Panopto video \(video tutorial\)](#)

Disability Support Services Resources for Faculty

- This DSS syllabus statement mentions accommodations for online and remote learning:

If you are a student with a disability requesting accommodations for this course, please submit your Faculty Notification Email (FNE) request to Disability Support Services as soon as possible. After the FNE has been sent, please schedule a brief meeting with me during my office hours to discuss accommodations. If you need academic additional accommodations because of remote learning, please contact your DSS advisor immediately.

If you have are not registered with DSS, but feel you might need accommodations or modifications for my course because of a physical, medical, emotional, or learning impairment, you must register with Disability Support Services.

To register with DSS, or if you have questions about disability accommodations, please contact the Disability Support Services Office at (410) 617-2750 or dss@loyola.edu.

- If a student is registered with DSS (which a professor would know because of receiving a Faculty Notification Email) please contact the person who emailed the FNE if you are concerned about a student. DSS can try to speak with a student and make sure he or she is connected with appropriate resources. DSS is a part of the University's CARE team and can bring up the student if needed. Here is the contact information for the DSS staff:
 - Marcia Wiedefeld, *Director*
410-617-2062 or mwiedefeld@loyola.edu
 - Abigail Hurson, *Assistant Director*
410-617-7380 or ashurson@loyola.edu
 - Kathleen Bruns, *Accommodations Coordinator*
410-617-2750 or khbruns@loyola.edu
 - Leslie Chiles, *Learning Disability Specialist*
410-617-2663 or lachiles@loyola.edu
 - www.loyola.edu/dss
 - dss@loyola.edu
- DSS is working with the Counseling Center and developing an online resource and support group. The group will be drop-in and starts this fall. If a faculty member knows a student is registered with DSS, he or she can refer the student to DSS for more information.
- DSS has two handouts that explain procedures for some remote accommodations. They will be updated for the fall and the links will remain the same.
 - NEW - [Student information accommodations for online courses](#)
 - NEW - [Faculty information about accommodations for online courses](#)