

## Department of Geosciences D2L guidelines for Fall 2020 Semester

Given the strong possibility that classes may continue on-line during the fall semester the Department of Geosciences needs to begin preparation as soon as possible. This document is meant as a first step in what will undoubtedly be an ongoing conversation on how to best accomplish this, specifically in reference to the use of D2L for the upcoming semester. The University of Arizona (and more specifically the College of Science) are in the process of creating a policy requiring the use of D2L for all classes but have left the specifics of how this is to be implemented to individual departments. In this document we take the opportunity to lead this effort and define our own guidelines in light of future requirements. We lay out guidelines in terms of minimum requirements for the adoption of D2L as an instructional tool, as well as best-practice recommendations whose adoption will enhance our teaching experience. It is uncertain at this point how or whether the university will monitor adoption of D2L, but it is important for us to remain at or ahead of the curve within COS should this become an evaluation tool of departments in the allocation of more limited financial resources for teaching, such as funding for TA support going forward.

### **D2L as a Critical and Valuable Instructional Tool for Geoscience Faculty**

Those of us who have made extensive use of D2L know all too well that it has its problems. Nevertheless, it does provide several functions that are going to be critical for our on-line teaching mission:

*Connectivity:* D2L provides a means for easy, effective and systematic communication between instructors and students in a way that cannot be matched by emails.

*Storage and Organization of Instructional Materials:* D2L provides ready access to students, TAs and instructors of all class materials without requiring time-consuming individual requests from students to their instructors.

*Record Keeping and Grading Access:* D2L allows grades to be automatically compiled (and if desired, linked to the grading of individual assignments) in a way that is far superior to instructors maintaining an off-line spreadsheet. It also fulfills university requirements for record keeping, transparency and administrative access to records if needed (as in the case of grade disputes etc.).

### **Minimal Requirements for Adoption of D2L in the Department of Geosciences for the Fall 2020 Semester**

**1. All formal courses of record for the Fall 2020 semester must establish a D2L website.** The only exceptions to this rule are for individualized instruction courses like *Independent Study, Masters or Doctoral Candidate Reports etc.* Setting up a new D2L website can be done very easily as follows:

- a: Go to [D2L.arizona.edu](https://d2l.arizona.edu) and log in when prompted with your UA NetID Login
- b: Click on the *Course Site Request Tool* (green box part way down the page)
- c: Click on UA NetID login again. This should take you to a page where you have the option of Modifying a previously requested course, request a new D2L course or Request a D2L playspace. Choose **new D2L Course Site** (note, the system will only allow you to establish a D2L site for a course for which you are the instructor of record.
- d. You will be prompted to indicate the semester and number of D2L sites you want to set up, then click *Continue*
- e. A box will next appear listing all the classes you are scheduled to teach during the selected semester. *Grab and drag* the appropriate class over to the D2L course ties box and then click *Continue*
- f. At this point you will be prompted to either copy an existing course (i.e. from a prior semester) or to build a new D2L site from scratch. On the assumption that anyone who has previously used D2L knows how to proceed with copying, and that you are doing this for the first time continue with the “Build” option. This will then create the basic D2L website framework for your course.
- g. Beyond this point there are many options for how to set up the site and how to use it, which are best handled individually, drawing on prior users’ expertise in the Department or by contacting the D2L Support Team.

The Department is also exploring the possibility that D2L can automatically set up web sites for all official classes in time for the fall semester. We will let you know if this is feasible.

**2. All Geoscience courses on D2L are required to post a syllabus in the course website.** This is best placed within the *Content* area of the website. All content, regardless of how it is organized, can be easily placed in the website, using drag and drop, into the indicated box. **The syllabus needs to include information about the instructor’s office hours. Assuming these will still need to be held remotely the best option for holding office hours is to schedule them as a recurring event through the Zoom portal in D2L (see Point 2-Provision of Lectures below). This way the link will always appear on the student’s (and the instructor’s) calendar when they log into D2L-no need for anyone to search for this link in old emails throughout the semester. The UA’s current online Syllabus template and policies can be found at**

<https://gened.arizona.edu/proposal-guidelines/syllabus-template>

&/or

<https://policy.arizona.edu/faculty-affairs-and-academics/course-syllabus-policy-undergraduate-template>

**3. All Geosciences courses on D2L need to make use of the *Grades*** on-line record keeping for managing grades. The student names are automatically populated into the gradebook, but you will have to set up your individual grading scheme with graded items through the *Manage Grades* and *Schemes* tools. The grade book gives access to the students to see how they are doing on individual assignments and cumulatively through the semester.

**4. All emails to the class as a whole should be done through the emailing function in D2L rather than through private/university email accounts.** This is easily done by clicking on *Classlist*, then scrolling down to the list of names, checking the box at the upper left (which will select everyone on the list-you have the option to deselect specific names if needed) and then clicking the *Email* icon just above the selection box. This will generate a blank email that you can add a subject and message body to in the boxes below. All recipients by default are bcc'd. *Instructors should regularly reach out to their classes* (by for example sending reminders about key deadlines and sending emails to struggling students). We are learning that taking classes remotely is proving very stressful for many students and human contact is important for insuring good educational outcomes under these difficult circumstances.

**5. All D2L classes should make use of the calendar feature** where y assignments and quizzes can be set up to notify students (and they will also automatically populate the calendar).

#### **Additional Suggested Best-Practices for all Department of Geosciences D2L websites**

Based on prior experience of instructors from classes that were already on-line or making use of D2L prior to Spring 2020, or that transitioned to on-line instruction during Spring 2020 we strongly recommend that all classes also make use of the D2L website for the following functions:

**1. Posting of Instructional Materials.** This includes PowerPoint lecture outlines, homework, pre-recorded lectures, videos, lab exercises etc. These are all very easily organized through D2L and using the Assignments Tools it is possible to grade and automatically store grades in the gradebook.

**2. Provision of Either Live (Zoom) or Pre-recorded (Panopto) Lectures.** Simply providing PowerPoint slides and outlines of instructional material is unlikely to be an effective teaching strategy by itself. Students need the face-to-face “interaction” that can only come from a lecture, either delivered live or pre-recorded. Both Zoom and Panopto can be accessed directly through your D2L Homepage via the *UA Tools* button at the top of the page (many other resources are available at this same site). A tutorial prepared by Paul Goodman on the use of Panopto for pre-recording and posting lecture materials is available at your UA Box site ([box.arizona.edu](http://box.arizona.edu) then in the folder *On line Teaching Resources for Geosciences*). Zoom lectures, if scheduled through the class D2L website, can be automatically recorded and then posted to the site. Using the D2L *Calendar* functions (under *Course Admin* at the class site home page) you can create a regularly scheduled **event reminder** and links to, for example, the Zoom videoconference when you will be holding your class or holding office hours. This makes it very

easy for students (or faculty!) to join scheduled zoom events without having to remember the URL or constantly refer to the syllabus

**3. Allowing Undergraduate Advisors Access to D2L sites.** If you are teaching an undergraduate class, consider giving Shawna and/or Anne access to your class D2L site as a way for them, as advisors, to keep track of student progress and **advise students if they are confused about the class site or class requirements.** D2L also allows you as the instructor to see a log of when students log into the D2L site (e.g. for classes, discussions, exams etc.). You can easily add people who are not students (as guests, TAs, Anne, Shawna or any others with a UA NetID) to the classlist and you can set the level of access/privileges given to these individuals