



**APPLICATION TO THE NEW ENGLAND COMMISSION OF HIGHER EDUCATION
FOR GENERAL APPROVAL TO OFFER PROGRAMS THROUGH ONLINE OR REMOTE EDUCATION**

- 1. Describe the institution's experience in offering programs through distance education (e.g., before Spring 2020, X programs to Y students over Z semesters; Spring and summer 2020, X weeks offering Y programs [or Y courses] to Z students). Include and differentiate between online and remote education.**

Prior to March 2020, Brown had significant experience offering online education at the graduate level and had been building capacity and expertise in online instruction for undergraduates. First, the University has been offering blended master's degrees since 2011 through the School for Professional Studies (SPS), beginning with the IE Brown Executive MBA, which has just enrolled its tenth cohort of students. The program, ranked the 3rd E-MBA program in the world by *The Economist*, has graduated 256 students. More recent additions to the executive master's portfolio, all of which are offered in a blended format with just under half of content delivered online, include the Sc.M. in Cybersecurity (4th cohort currently enrolled; 79 graduates), Sc.M. in Healthcare Leadership (7th cohort; 138 graduates), and Sc.M. in Technology Leadership (4th cohort; 58 graduates). Over the past decade, we have collected feedback from students, including on the online modules, and have systematically reviewed this feedback to improve the online delivery of materials. Course and program changes include providing more real-time interaction via Zoom to complement the asynchronous lectures, altering the balance across modes of delivery, and continually improving the design and delivery of courses as technology has advanced.

Second, there have been slow but steady increases in online course offerings for undergraduate students, primarily but not exclusively in the summer and winter sessions. Beginning in 2016, Brown's summer and pre-college programs pioneered a small selection of fully asynchronous online offerings; a handful of online offerings were developed in the College and expanded gradually, especially after the introduction of Wintersession in academic year 2016–17. These courses were built carefully over an extended period of time through a close collaboration between instructors and instructional designers and proved attractive to undergraduate students – indeed, online courses frequently filled up before in-person offerings. The total number of online courses offered before and after March 2020 are indicated on the table on the next page.

In March 2020, Brown was able to transition rapidly to remote instruction in response to the COVID-19 pandemic – although the scale of the undertaking obviously far exceeded any previous experience. Over the course of several weeks, courses were quickly redesigned with extensive support offered to academic departments and to individual instructors by the Sheridan Center for Learning and Teaching, the Digital Learning & Design (DLD) team, Media Services, and the Library; details are provided below. Materials offering guidance for online teaching were updated and existing tools such as Canvas and Zoom were leveraged for connectedness and continuity.

During summer 2020, the summer school was able to pivot smoothly to build a significant number of courses/sections for both Pre-College and Undergraduate Summer Session. Course offerings prioritized asynchronous teaching and learning, and also served as a feedback space for DLD as they built tools and resources for the 2020-2021 academic year.

	Term	Courses	Enrollment
AY16-17	Summer 2016	9	151
	Fall 2016	1	10
	Winter 2017	1	14
	Spring 2017	1	34
AY17-18	Summer 2017	8	133
	Fall 2017	1	0
	Winter 2018	2	50
	Spring 2018	1	10
AY18-19	Summer 2018	12	185
	Fall 2018	1	10
	Winter 2019	3	63
	Spring 2019	0	0
AY19-20	Summer 2019	15	200
	Fall 2019	0	0
	Winter 2020	4	80
	<i>COVID-19</i>		
	Spring 2020 ¹	1,313	29,574
20-21	Summer 2020	63	1,367
	Fall 2020 ²	676	25,810

During 2020–21, Brown will offer a three-semester (fall, summer, spring) academic year extending from September 2020 until August 2021, with undergraduate students enrolled for only two of the three terms. This will make it possible for all students living in residence halls to have single rooms and to de-densify classrooms, libraries, and other spaces on campus. During the fall, sophomores, juniors, seniors, and transfer students are enrolled while first-year students may take one Brown course remotely for credit, at no charge; we are hopeful that all four classes can be in residence in the spring semester. Graduate students will follow the regular fall/spring calendar. All students may enroll remotely if they choose to do so, and all courses will be available online or remotely even if there is also an in-person or hybrid option for students in residence.

2. Please describe the technical infrastructure that will support remote or distance education. Indicate the investments in technical infrastructure, staff hires, training and professional development made to support online and remote education and those investments planned for the academic year 2020-2021.

As noted above, Brown’s prior experience with online and distance education relied on an existing technical infrastructure, and a number of elements were therefore already in place to support the turn to remote and online teaching and learning, including: Canvas, an online course management system; Zoom, which supports video conferencing for synchronous instruction and recording classes for asynchronous learning; Google, which permits students and faculty to communicate seamlessly and to collaborate via Google Docs and share content via Google Sites and Google Drive; and the virtual private network, which gives faculty, students, and staff access to materials available on campus servers. These existing resources have been augmented by significant investments in key areas.

Support for digital teaching and learning. In August 2019, an assessment of support for digital teaching and learning at Brown (and completely unrelated to COVID-19) resulted in a staff reorganization and the creation of a new Digital Learning & Design (DLD) group under the auspices of the Sheridan Center for Teaching and Learning, charged with partnering with faculty to foster

¹ Effective March 30.

² As of October 1. Online-only courses represent 71 percent of total courses; the remainder are in hybrid format.

innovative teaching for all Brown courses. The DLD team is the locus of support for online and remote education and includes instructional designers, instructional technologists, and media professionals who help instructors develop engaging online, residential, and blended courses; design and produce integrated media solutions and assets; collaborate with faculty to explore new possibilities; provide flexible digital solutions and classroom spaces; and generally create collaborative learning communities of individuals from across campus and (now) around the world.

The DLD was thus well-positioned to take a leading role in supporting faculty as they redesigned their courses and reconfigured their materials. Faculty receive support for online and remote instruction in many formats, including an extensive collection of [guides](#) for instructors including [course development](#), [virtual community building](#) and other topics relevant to remote and online teaching. The DLD's work is augmented by online articles and technical help offered through Computing and Information Services, such as [Using Zoom for Remote Teaching](#) in addition to support through individual appointments to review Zoom settings. The DLD's instructional designers consult with individual faculty members on course design and help to coordinate media support, including help using Zoom or Canvas Media Library (Panopto), pre-recording content, or getting audio/video equipment. Finally, Media Services orients instructors to classroom technology and is able to provide "Zoom Buddies" to assist them while teaching.

Since March, Brown has made an extensive and sustained effort to improve classrooms, equipment, and video production support. Of 232 centrally-scheduled (i.e. non-departmental) classrooms, 151 classrooms have been reconfigured to engage remote learners by improving audio capabilities; installing microphones, speakers and Web cameras; and purchasing all-in-one tabletop cameras with a 360-degree range (the "Owl"). In addition, and to ensure that instructors are skilled at teaching in classrooms that are configured to engage remote learners, the DLD has developed a [Guide for Teaching in a Hybrid Classroom](#), worked with instructors to enable them to see diagrams of their assigned classroom so they can know what to expect; conducted virtual and in-room trainings; and consulted with faculty on how to pre-record lecture content for online teaching. Resources for instructors include guides and "how to" articles to help instructors create course content. Examples include [Introduction to Creating Course Videos | DLD | Brown University](#), [Digital Whiteboarding](#) and the DLD Learning Series featured on the Brown YouTube Channel: [DLD Learning Series: DIY Document Camera](#), for example.

Finally, Brown has a robust inventory of equipment (laptops, audio recorders, video cameras, etc.) available to loan to students and instructors. At this time, equipment has been given to instructors and graduate students to enable them to engage remote students or create assets for their courses. Equipment purchased for distribution includes flexible phone tripods, overhead phone mounts, dual lavalier microphones, selfie ring lights, and drawing tablets.

Academic Innovation Team. More recently, and building on the consolidation of the different education technology teams that culminated in the formation of the DLD group, the University has created an Academic Innovation Team to lead Brown's overall strategy for online education. The Academic Innovation Team is charged with developing the technological infrastructure to support high quality online education, strategic oversight to ensure that new programs align with the university's areas of distinctive academic strength, and financial support to ensure that programs have the resources they need to deliver exceptional educational experiences for online learners across a range of personal and professional backgrounds. One key function of the new Academic Innovation Team is to coordinate related activities across the university to ensure an efficient and effective use of resources. This academic year, the AI team is working closely with SPS, Sheridan/DLD and CIS and others to identify and implement the optimal technological platform to support online learning. This work will also determine what staffing and training investments we need to make to complement the tremendous resources that already exist in the DLD team.

The University Library. The Brown University Library is supporting remote teaching and learning through investments in digitization infrastructure, including purchasing upgraded scanning equipment to ensure that all course reserves are available digitally, contracting with a vendor for Digital Rights Management on in-copyright material used in course reserves, acquiring upgraded scanning equipment, software, and file storage capacity to increase access to special collections material for faculty and students (as well as a worldwide network of researchers), and working with the Office of the General Counsel to establish "Controlled Digital Lending," allowing the Library to scan full books and circulate them to faculty and students who are unable to be on campus provided only a single copy of the book (either physical or digital) is in circulation at any time. The Library is also moving forward with implementing a new system that will provide up-to-date support for managing and accessing electronic materials and has re-purposed collection resources to acquire new materials in electronic formats.

In addition to these investments, Library staff were re-deployed and trained to support scanning operations in order to make materials accessible during the period when buildings were closed, and the Library trained paraprofessional Circulation staff to support the "Ask a Librarian" chat service. In this role, they responded to basic reference inquiries and referred more complex questions to professional subject librarians. This enabled the librarians to focus on assisting faculty with converting courses for remote teaching, responding to higher-level research inquiries, and developing new online and video [resources](#) to support teaching and research (with thousands of views to date). Other location-dependent staff were re-deployed and trained to perform remote work for important Library initiatives.

3. What orientation and professional development is offered to faculty members to teach remotely or online? Do you have a process to encourage, monitor, or 'certify' faculty to teach online?

In May 2020, all Brown faculty received a survey that asked them to indicate the level of support they required for each course they planned on teaching in the fall. (805 faculty responded, for an 82% response rate.) Options included: "This course is already online or I can easily transition it myself," online guides, requests for 1:1 support from units that offer instructional development, participation in a course development institute, and assistance from an undergraduate or graduate student co-designer. Based on their responses, all faculty were contacted individually about how to receive their requested form(s) of assistance, and these options were also publicized in the university's daily email newsletter. All new faculty also received a personal invitation to participate in a two-day orientation to teaching, and classroom orientations are available for all instructors to meet with media professionals to become acquainted with installed classroom technology and identify future needs such as in-class technical support throughout the semester. Finally, Brown's website includes an extensive array of [resources](#) for instructors.

One popular option for support was the Anchor Course Design Institute, a one-week program offered by the Sheridan Center several times over the summer that focused on online and hybrid instruction. The Institute was developed by three educational development staff, in collaboration with over 36 faculty peer facilitators. Program objectives include online community-building, clear communication, and development of essential learning outcomes and assignments to measure them. The Institute enrolled over 300 participants, with the vast majority (87%) indicating that they were satisfied with the ways the program increased their preparedness for online and hybrid teaching. In the fall term, the University is offering a five-module, five-week Anchor program oriented to instructors who are teaching in the winter or summer for the first time.

More than 150 faculty at all ranks and from all language departments participated in webinars and workshops on language learning and technology offered through Brown's Center for Language Studies. Graduate Student Orientation for Language TAs was moved online to a self-paced module on the Canvas learning system, as one part of a larger and comprehensive resource site dedicated to language teaching.

Because Brown has a relatively high proportion of Undergraduate TAs (UTAs), Brown also offers a centralized UTA training each term, which is also online and focused on competencies for remote UTA work. Graduate TAs have been offered a fully online orientation this year, which was designed with input from faculty across multiple departments about needed GTA roles for hybrid and fully online instruction. Over 400 TAs are enrolled for these programs.

4. How are you ensuring the academic integrity for students in online classes?

After the move to remote instruction in March, Brown students were living in 25 different time zones, and at least 55 courses had students in 10 or more time zones. Faculty were thus encouraged to prioritize asynchronous instruction in order to facilitate student participation. We also asked that they consider asynchronous "take-home," preferably open-book, exams that would allow students to complete assignments on their own schedule (typically within a 24- to 48-hour window), or assign final papers, projects, or other methods of assessment that would not penalize those in different time zones or whose personal circumstances made timed synchronous exams difficult. Such mechanisms for assessing student learning increase equity and access while also supporting academic integrity. Faculty were also permitted to petition to change the course grading rubric to mandatory S/NC (satisfactory/no credit) and the deadline for students to change their grading options was extended.

To expand the discussion about alternative forms of assessment and academic integrity, the Sheridan Center for Teaching and Learning held a series of roundtables throughout the summer on grading, assessment, and feedback strategies for remote and hybrid courses. 128 instructors attended at least one program in the "How I Grade" series. In fall 2020, academic policies continue to encourage instructors to offer open-book exams or other alternative/authentic assessments.

As in the past, Brown's Academic Code Committee adjudicates reported violations of the academic code. In spring 2020, during remote instruction, the number of students found in violation was consistent (at graduate level) or significantly lower (undergraduate level), compared to prior terms.

	Undergraduate			Graduate		
	Total Cases	Found in violation	Open cases (as of 9/22)	Total Cases	Found in violation	Open cases
Sp19	34	30	--	3	2	1
F19	57	47	2	4	4	--
Sp20	42	20	2	2	2	--

5. If you have signed an agreement with an Online Program Management group, please indicate the name of the OPM, the length of the contract, and the percent of revenue shared with the OPM. Please indicate the investment the OPM is making in the institution and attach a copy of the contract.

Not applicable.

6. How are students oriented toward and supported in distance education? How does the institution ensure that students have the technology and sufficient internet connection to study through distance education? How are student support services (e.g., advising, counseling, career services) made available to students studying remotely/online?

Academic advising and support resources have been made available remotely since March, with opportunities for students to schedule writing consultations, academic advising appointments, peer academic coaching, and support for English language learners; all are available across time zones. Faculty, TAs, and advisers have gone to extraordinary efforts to be accessible to students through email, Zoom, and other means. And a number of online guides have been developed to help students know what to expect from online and hybrid courses, to provide resources for research, and to inform them of revisions to academic policies that are in place.

In March and again at the start of the fall semester, surveys were distributed to all Brown undergraduates about their location and time zone, access to technology and learning resources, and any personal circumstances that might affect their learning (and which they wished to share with instructors). These results were distributed to faculty to make them aware of any special challenges facing students enrolled in their courses.

In addition, the University has established a dedicated fund for undergraduates with the highest demonstrated financial need to assist with expenses related to the transition to remote learning. Funding was provided to eligible students to purchase laptops, subsidize the cost of internet or provide WiFi hotspots, assist with buying other equipment (printers, monitors, headphones, calculators, etc.). We also funded travel, moving, and storage costs in some cases. An existing program assists high-need students with the purchase of books and course materials through the Brown bookstore, and has been extended to include electronic materials if necessary; other students are also able to apply for support from an Emergency Fund.

7. Please briefly describe how special subjects (e.g., science labs, dance classes, clinical rotations) are taught, whether remotely/online or in person on campus.

Visual and performing arts instructors are utilizing a variety of approaches to support achievement of their key learning objectives, including hybrid instruction (in-person with options for remote students to engage), distribution of kits for fully online courses, and use of instructional technology such as use of the GoReact platform for feedback. Similarly, STEM lab instructors' approaches vary greatly and include hybrid instruction, distribution of kits, use of simulations or recorded elements, and some re-thinking of core objectives and skills, such as using data analysis instead of data collection.

During the summer months, guidance was developed for faculty on how to develop research and experiential opportunities for remote learners, including examples of accessible and inclusive opportunities in STEM fields and in the visual and performing arts.

8. How has/will the institution ensure that remote/online courses operate in a manner consistent with the Commission's policy on the credit hour?

One Brown course credit is equivalent to four semester credit hours (there are a small number of half-credit courses). Consistent with Federal and Commission policies, work for a Brown course credit ("seat time," required activities, and out-of-class work) is expected to total at least 180 hours for the semester. Many courses exceed this minimum requirement. Starting in Fall 2016 and continuing through the present, faculty include information on their syllabi about required course activities with a reasonable expectation for the time students will spend on them, the expected

average hours of homework, reading, and other out-of-class work per week, and a statement of learning goals for the class that contextualizes the nature and extent of required meetings and out-of-class work. These statements are reviewed through the syllabus approval process overseen by the College Curriculum Council and the Graduate Council.

9. How does the institution ensure ADA compliance for distance education?

Brown University is committed to providing the same supports and accommodations to students during distance education as we provide during traditional learning, using broadly available technology to continue to provide services. For example, note takers attend Zoom lectures, and upload the notes to a database that students can access. Zoom lectures are also transcribed through artificial intelligence and those transcripts are available to students if they should need them. CART and ASL interpretation are provided remotely through zoom. Students still have access to livescribe pens (which have been mailed to them by the University) so they can record their lectures while taking notes. Students that need books in accessible format are being provided with electronic versions, while students who cannot use computer screens are having their printouts prepared remotely and mailed to them. The Office of Student Accessibility Services is working with academic departments to make sure that formatting on exam platforms such as Gradescope provide all of the accommodations that students require, including extensions of time. Students who require accommodations can submit all of their documentation by encrypted email. SAS continues to meet with students to handle all inquiries, by phone or through Zoom.

10. How is the institution ensuring that achievement in classes taught remotely is comparable to classes taught in person?

We have been engaged over the past six months in a robust process of gathering and analyzing quantitative and qualitative data to evaluate the efficacy of online and remote instruction. In addition to utilizing standard measures of assessment such as course evaluations, we have also conducted a number of special surveys of students and instructors. A comparison between fall 2019 and spring 2020 of all standard course feedback items shows nearly identical results: in response to a question about whether a course “had assignments that helped me learn,” 58 percent of students in the spring strongly agreed, compared to 50 percent in fall 2019; 60 percent (versus 52 percent) strongly agreed with the statement “Overall, I rate this course effective.”

Student comments suggested that many of them appreciated elements of remote teaching such as the lecture capture format, breakout rooms, and remote office hours. A survey of instructors in May confirmed that the majority had experienced a relatively fluid transition to Zoom and that they were already thinking about what had worked well and what could be improved if remote teaching continued. Data and comments were shared with instructors as they prepared for teaching in the fall, and presentations to department chairs by the Dean of the College and the Director of the Sheridan Center summarized student feedback and outlined best practices. Looking ahead, we will continue to review course feedback and work closely with faculty to ensure that the quality of instruction and of student learning remain high.

Reflective Essay: What did the institution learn from its experience with offering courses remotely/online during the Spring 2020 COVID-19 experience; describe the evidence you gathered and how it was reviewed? What improvements have you made? What are areas for needed ongoing improvement? What are institutional plans to address those areas of needed improvement?

Despite the rapid and entirely unanticipated shift to remote and online teaching and learning in March 2020, Brown University was able to navigate the change with remarkably few major disruptions. In part, this reflects the fact that we were fortunate to have important building blocks already in place: growing experience with online education in the School of Professional Studies and the College; the Sheridan Center for Teaching and Learning, which has as its mission fostering and supporting outstanding teaching, effective learning, and rigorous assessment; the (in retrospect, serendipitous) establishment of a well-supported and highly-effective Digital Learning & Design group and help from talented colleagues in Media Services; the Office of Institutional Research, an important resource in terms of the design and administration of surveys; a skilled cadre of administrators who were able to support undergraduate and graduate students as well as faculty and staff through the transition; a commitment to inclusion and an ethos of flexibility; and a faculty that is dedicated to academic excellence and curricular innovation.

In the months since March 2020, Brown has been engaged not only in the technological and logistical aspects of the transition, but in an ongoing effort to evaluate its success and develop strategies for improvement. This work has proceeded in several ways: through planning committees, surveys of the community, thoughtful reconsideration of policies and practices, and the necessary investments to make it possible to move towards a safe reopening for the fall semester. Throughout, the University has been guided by a set of core principles and a commitment to protect: (1) the health and safety of Brown students and employees; (2) the financial well-being of vulnerable members of our student and employee populations; (3) Brown's mission of education and research, including focusing resources on Brown's highest academic priorities; and (4) the long-run financial health of the University.

These principles animated the work of a number of *ad hoc* planning committees that were created in March to provide oversight on issues arising from the pandemic.³ One of these, the Academic Continuity Committee, was comprised of senior academic officers, faculty, and staff with relevant expertise; there were subcommittees for the calendar and curriculum, remote and online instruction, research continuity, and communications. Through a process of extensive and inclusive discussion, informed by evidence and grounded in a commitment to academic excellence, the ACC developed plans for reconfiguring the academic calendar, supporting online and remote education, ramping up research, and in general laying the foundation for a successful re-opening of campus while navigating an ongoing public health crisis. In what follows, we describe the steps that have been taken and sketch the path ahead.

By March 4, faculty were already being encouraged to make plans to ensure academic continuity in the event of an emergency closure by acquainting themselves with technological tools, identifying key learning goals in their courses, and developing plans for designing learning activities in a virtual space. Shortly thereafter – and at that point only in anticipation of a possible decision to close – faculty were surveyed to see what support they would require for online/remote teaching. More than 1000 responded to an array of options:

- *I could easily transition this course to remote instruction myself (~25%)*
- *I could adapt this course to remote instruction if pointed to the appropriate how-to guides (~43%)*
- *I could adapt this course with 1:1 assistance from an instructional designer (~25%)*
- *This course cannot be adapted for remote instruction based on content or format (~8%)*

³ Committees included Healthy Fall 2020 Task Force, and groups focused on Academic Continuity, Personnel, and Finance & Strategy. This report primarily reflects the work of the Academic Continuity group.

The Sheridan Center, the DLD group, and the University Library immediately began reaching out to individual instructors to offer support in whatever form they required. This early intervention was critical in laying the groundwork for success during the remainder of the semester.

Following a two-week suspension of classes during which students traveled home and instructors prepared to pivot to remote teaching, students were surveyed and asked about their access to technology (computer, email, internet, phone service, Canvas, Zoom, printer, electronic course materials, etc.). Many were adequately equipped, but (and as described above; see question 6) the University made investments to ensure that all students' needs were met. What proved more difficult to address were the challenges that derived from divergent personal circumstances: just 34% of students reported that they had a space to study where they were able to focus, 41% had a quiet space to participate in classes and office hours, and 52% had a schedule relatively free of family care or paid work. Many also expressed concerns about potential ambiguity of expectations in a remote learning environment, possible reweighting of assignments, and continued reliance on high-stakes synchronous exams.

The personal issues are obviously more challenging to mitigate, but some of the revised academic policies that were implemented were intended to address concerns about coursework. Revised methods of assessment, the option to change grading options, the encouragement to offer asynchronous exams and to develop alternative forms of evaluation were intended to support the key principles articulated by the Dean of the College: (1) to empower instructors to make adjustments to course plans to help students meet their course's key learning goals; (2) to reaffirm and support Brown's commitment to full inclusion for all students, especially considering the varying access to technology and experience with remote learning among students and instructors; and (3) to promote patience and generosity during [an] unprecedented moment, which has become a learning opportunity for all learners and teachers.

After classes finished in May, faculty were asked to describe strategies that had worked well for them and their students, as well as what they might do differently (82% response rate: 805 respondents, with 990 discrete comments). Of respondents, 796 (99%) shared positive outcomes about aspects of remote instruction that worked well. Frequent positive themes that emerged included finding the transition to the Zoom interface reasonably fluid, using recordings or text to build asynchronous course elements, and having breakout sessions for discussion. A number of instructors also cited changes in their approach to grading and assessment and the increased use of written prompts to facilitate participation and discussion.

Students also completed course feedback surveys at the end of the spring term (8,327 students, 83% response rate). Responses to global items about their learning experience were quite positive, e.g., 92% strongly agreed or agreed that their course was effective in Spring 2020, compared to 88% in Fall 2019.⁴ Similarly, a higher proportion of students in Spring 2020 (89%) agreed that the course "had assignments that helped me learn," compared to 86% in Fall 2019. Some courses elected to add optional remote learning items, based on Rovai's Classroom Community Scale.⁵ From this pool of courses, we learned of positive learning experiences during the period of remote learning, with most students agreeing that they felt connected to others in the course and that students in the course cared about each other. We also conducted a systematic qualitative analysis of comments for a subset of courses and learned that students valued specific teaching strategies that instructors adopted, particularly offering live online sessions, making recorded lectures available, and using digital tools to enhance discussions.

⁴ Spring-to-spring comparisons are not provided because the instrument changed in summer 2019.

⁵ Alfred P. Rovai, "Development of an instrument to measure classroom community," *Internet and Higher Education* 5 (2002)

As described above, the survey responses from faculty were disseminated widely and used to inform professional development efforts. Summer 2020 faculty development programs were designed to build expertise with Zoom and other technologies and to extend best practices to a broad group of faculty. For example, the Anchor Course Design Institute (300+ participants) focused on asynchronous course design, while the “How I Grade” roundtables (128 participants) spotlighted faculty approaches to assessment. The DLD and Media Services expanded outreach to individual faculty, focusing on those who had not yet come forward on their own to arrange for consultation.

In order to address student concerns, we adjusted some academic policies to reflect the particular challenges of remote instruction. As described in questions 4 and 5 above, these included waiving course overlap guidelines for courses that are taught in a predominantly asynchronous fashion, extending the “shopping period” during which students can decide which classes to enroll in, encouraging instructors to record lectures, and continuing to encourage the use of asynchronous “take-home” (preferably open-book) exams and other projects to increase equity and access as well as ensure academic integrity.

The University also developed a number of resources to support students, including academic workshops on topics such as Remote Learning, Academic Life Away from Brown, and Attention and Productivity Management (offered in collaboration with Student Accessibility Services and Counseling and Psychological Services). Academic advisers hosted drop-in online office hours, one-on-one meetings, and group study sessions, and offered individualized support to students who are experiencing academic difficulties. All of these programs were piloted during the spring and summer and continue to be offered during the fall.

As we look ahead to an academic year that remains both unprecedented and unpredictable, Brown has new and existing structures in place that will underpin our efforts. The planning committees have formally disbanded but subsets of members continue to coordinate flexible responses to issues as they emerge. The ongoing efforts of the Sheridan Center and the DLD group to build scaffolding for excellence in online and remote teaching are being augmented by the new Academic Innovation team. Dedicated faculty and committed staff are not only discovering new ways of teaching but are also finding ways to build communities of learners despite the challenges of distance. As we reflect on the experience of the past six months, one lesson that has emerged very clearly is the critical importance of consultation, collaboration, and communication. That insight, along with the principles that have guided our work to date, will ensure that Brown University is able to offer a robust and rigorous academic program through online, remote, hybrid, and traditional forms of instruction.