Universal Accommodations in a Large Course

Fall 2023
Disclaimers

- This was a pilot project known to AA+academic staff (Registrar’s office, undergraduate office, department office)
  - Example: no exam uploads into Ventus (not delinquent in uploading)
- Proposed accommodations were vetted by TLSS+AA staff
  - I should not be the judge of what is a proper accommodation
- No material was cut and maintained total amount of evaluations
- My proposed accommodations worked for my course
  - My solutions work for me, not necessarily for other professors
  - But solutions are always possible: think « inside the box »
The Course

- *Principes de chimie* (CHM1701 and CHM1711)
- five sections:
  - CHM 1701-A00 (in person)
  - CHM 1711-A00 (in person) and CHM 1711-AV00 (virtual)
  - CHM 1711-B00 (in person) and CHM 1711-BV00 (virtual)
- five activities per week:
  - WED/FRI lectures for CHM 1701-A00, CHM 1711-A00, CHM 1711-AV00
  - THU/MON lectures for CHM 1711-B00 and CHM-BV00
  - MON tutorial for CHM 1701-A00
- laboratory component of course not included in pilot project
The Professor and the Students

- professor (me) is by no means an expert in inclusive pedagogy
- my 24th year in a row giving the course
  - well-established expectations for the evaluations
  - considerable experience with in person, online synchronous, online asynchronous, and bimodal teaching
- 1000 students started the course, 901 remained after drop date
  - very diverse set of students (Canadian/International, French/French Immersion, SCI/HSS/GNG/PSY)
  - many drops the result of visa issues for international students and five evaluations before the final drop date in late November
Why Did I Volunteer for this Pilot Project

- requests for accommodations are on the rise
  - increased costs to the University
  - some students not yet entered into Ventus until after first midterms
- not all students who need accommodations get accommodations
  - of 33 students in Ventus for the final exam, all 33 came from a Canadian school (36% of my students were international admissions)
- « Le projet d'accomodation m'a vraiment touché car je suis sur une liste d'attente pour un diagnostique depuis des années, et je n'ai ainsi le droit à aucune accomodation. Merci beaucoup. » (anonymous comment, official course evaluation)
Delivery of the Course

- lectures delivered in MRN 150 (420 seats)
- with Zoom, all lectures delivered in bimodal fashion and recorded
  - all lecture notes for the semester available online by the first class
- students officially registered as in person or virtual
  - virtual option allowed for 160 more students to take the course
  - however, all evaluations were written in person and proctored
- after first lecture, each student free to choose in person or virtual
- many students in person would also log into Zoom for the chat
- all students present in the classroom were there entirely by choice
  - leads to a more pleasant class ambiance
UA #1: Zoom Broadcasting + Recordings

- an extremely popular service, trivial to provide
- online students could also participate live for Wooclap
- students who missed the lectures could view recordings
  - roughly 400+ views per recording posted on YouTube
  - totals indicate many in-person students also viewing recordings
- *ad hoc* fully online tutorials before tests and final exams (DGD’s)
  - roughly 1000+ views per recording
- no volunteers for notetakers (this was not by choice)
  - recordings made available to everyone may have dampened the enthusiasm of others to supply personal notes to fellow students
UA #2: Automatic Extensions for Assignments

- in previous years, deadline was Friday night at 11:59 PM
  - material on assignments typically seen two weeks prior to deadline
  - assignments should take no more than one hour
  - unlimited attempts, algorithmically assigned data for each student

- official deadline maintained at Friday night at 11:59 PM
  - "final" results posted on Saturday morning
  - reminder e-mail that the official deadline had passed

- however, 72 hour grace period automatically given to everyone

- 900+ students, 10 assignments, and only one extension request
  - typically 50+ such requests in past years
UA #3: Automatic Transfer to Final Exam

- use of Wooclap to promote participation (and to have fun)
  - one point for submitting the right answer (groupwork encouraged)
  - nothing for the wrong answer or no answer
  - synchronous online students can participate as easily as in person
- cognizant that there will be absences and technical issues
  - the 90th percentile (or top 10th percentile) establish the "standard"
  - each of these students get 10/10 (Wooclap can be 10% of final mark)
  - all other students are compared relative to the "standard"
  - for example, if a student gets 75% of the "standard"
    - they receive 7.5/7.5 for Wooclap
    - 2.5% gets added to the weight of their final exam
UA #4: 100% Extra Time, Two Test Dates

- This required the greatest amount of change to my course.
- Course had an established tradition of three 80-minute midterms.
- Midterms held during class time or weekends (student’s choice)
  - Weekend option a necessity as more students than physical seats.
- Split into six 40-minute tests where everyone gets 80 minutes.
  - No student chose to write at Academic Accommodations.
  - Students chose between regular class time or the weekend option.
  - Students encouraged to use weekend as their backup option.
  - Students with a max of one exam/day or no AM exams accommodated.
- Three lost classes replaced by ≈1 hour of asynchronous podcasts.
UA #5: Memory Aides

- every student was entitled to one page (8.5” x 11”)
  - two such pages for the final exam
- anything is permitted (no need to verify the sheet)
  - single/double sided
  - printed/handwritten
  - formulae/procedures/solutions
- all data provided within the tests and final exam
- no formulae provided to the students as in the past
  - students now have to actively prepare rather than passively receive
UA #6: Flexible Final Mark Formula

- default formula is 5% for each of 5 best tests, 30% for final exam
- final exam is cumulative
- to reward students who "put it all together" by the end
  - the final exam replaces any test not written or less well done
  - policy encouraged students to write the midterms (nothing to lose)
  - policy eliminated any need to manage authorized absences
  - admittedly, policy misused by undisciplined, underperforming students
- many international and non-traditional students benefited
  - tests allowed them to adjust to our Canadian university system and show their true potential on the final
UA #7: Low Visual/Auditory Distractions

- MRN 150 can be a hectic location (420 seats, tight seating)
- All student allowed to wear headphones if they wished
- For each test and the final, a free small classroom was booked
  - Many small rooms are always available on 3rd floor of CRX
  - Easily booked by departmental assistants
  - Students in Ventus with low visual/auditory distractions invited
  - Many invitations declined (students wish to write in regular setting)
- No student chose to write a test at Academic Accommodations
- One TA was assigned to monitor the small classroom
UA #8: 50% Extra Time for Final Exam

- consistent with keeping things as much the same as previously
  - 3 hour exam was retained
  - students had however 4.5 hours to write it (50% extra time)
  - many with 50% extra time chose writing at Academic Accommodations
  - 4.5 hour blocks for final exams are not sustainable/scalable (getting 4.5 hours was a one-time deal)

- in future years, 3 hour exam will become 2 hour exam
  - students will however have 3 hours to complete it
  - essential to make sure final exam is indeed 33% shorter than in the past
  - in a similar vein, will likely scale back six tests down to five tests
The Results: Student Evaluations (F2022 vs. F2023)

- 598 respondents in Fall 2022 and 642 respondents in Fall 2023
- 5.00 scale (5 – strongly agree / excellent, 1 – strongly disagree / very poor)
- *The course is well organized.*
  - Fall 2022: 4.70    Fall 2023: 4.72
- *The teaching and learning methods used in the course facilitated my learning.*
  - Fall 2022: 4.28    Fall 2023: 4.39
- *I find that the professor as a teacher is...*
  - Fall 2022: 4.58    Fall 2023: 4.68
- *The professors shows respect towards the students.*
  - Fall 2022: 4.71    Fall 2023: 4.80
The Results: Academic Performance

- using uOttawa’s 10.00 scale
  - Fall 2022: class average of 5.29
  - Fall 2023: class average of 5.91
  - 5 corresponds to C+ (64.50 to 69.49)
  - 6 corresponds to B (69.50 to 74.49)

- the increase of 0.62 on our 10.00 scale equates to a 3.1% increase
- N.B. in Fall 2023, the gap between people attending my identical Wednesday/Friday and Monday/Thursday lectures was 0.40
  - a 0.62 increase is pleasant to see, but also confirms that academic rigour has not been compromised