COVID-19 Impacts on Geoscience Academic Instructional Environments, June — August 2020

This data brief examines the changes in instructional environments as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic. During the Spring 2020 term, nearly all academic departments shifted to online instruction. Throughout the summer, departments offering courses were able to gradually re-incorporate in-person instructional formats with safety measures such as social distancing and limited class sizes, and also providing hybrid formats such as flipped/blended courses that provide scheduled times for in-person and online instruction, and HyFlex formats where students can choose to attend either in-person or online class sessions.

During the Spring 2020 term, 93% of departments converted lab sections into virtual or at-home activities, and one-third converted lab sections to computational approaches. Only 4% of departments reported terminating lab sections with the then-current grade or a pass/fail grade, and 5% of departments reported no change to the Spring 2020 lab sections.

Throughout the summer, an increasing percentage of departments offering lab sections and classes used in-person formats. By August, 60% of departments were offering in-person labs and half or more of departments were using virtual formats and at-home activities (64% and 50% respectively).

During the Spring 2020 term most departments converted field courses into virtual experiences (63%), and just over one-third cancelled their field courses (34%) with students either needing credit later or with a waiver of credit requirement.

AGI Geoscience Currents: www.americangeosciences.org/geoscience-currents

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Data Brief 2020-020; September 25, 2020
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Throughout the summer, field instruction and activities moved from predominantly virtual field experiences to an increasing percentage of local field activities. Some respondents commented that local field experiences included self-guided local investigations and local in-person instruction with a small number of students per instructional cohort.

We will continue to provide current snapshots on the impacts of COVID-19 on the geoscience enterprise throughout the year. For more information, and to participate in the study, please visit: www.americangeosciences.org/workforce/covid19

Funding for this project is provided by the National Science Foundation (Award #2029570). The results and interpretation of the survey are the views of the American Geosciences Institute and not those of the National Science Foundation.