



Maintain operational capacities during school closures

IIEP-UNESCO's COVID-19 response briefs



Ensuring that learning can continue in times of crisis is key. It will also help with post-crisis recovery: students and teachers will need to resume normal activities with minimal disruption or transition, if the impact of the COVID-19 crisis on teaching and learning outcomes is to be reduced as much as possible.

Each section below provides education authorities with guidance for minimizing and overcoming operational challenges during a crisis.

1. Ensure the continuity of education through open and distance learning

When schools close, ministries of education (MoEs) may [adopt alternative solutions](#) to guarantee that all children are able to continue learning. It is important that the solutions chosen are [flexible, accessible, inclusive, and gender-responsive](#), and take into consideration the specific needs of different groups, especially disadvantaged and marginalized populations (e.g. girls, children with disabilities, and children from low socioeconomic backgrounds).

- Review the technical and human resources available within the education sector with regard to distance learning. This will help inform the choice of solutions.
 - o High-technology solutions might include online or e-learning strategies, such as digital learning platforms, massive open online courses (MOOCs), live-streamed lessons, and [open educational resources](#) (OERs), including open textbooks.
 - o Low-technology solutions might include community- and national-level radio and television programmes.
 - o Technology-free solutions might include the provision of worksheets and other printed materials to learners at home. Logistics permitting, it is crucial that communities without access to information and communication technologies (ICTs) have other means of learning.
- Explore comparable distance learning programmes already in place, either in-country or elsewhere, and see which of the existing materials can be adapted to meet the needs of the current situation. For examples of national distance education platforms, consult the dedicated [UNESCO webpage](#) on national responses to COVID-19.
- Address any potential obstacles to learning among the [most vulnerable groups](#).
- Assess the financial requirements of distance education using new technologies and determine potential partners and donors (such as ICT actors) to secure access for all students.

2. Identify alternatives to holding national exams

When countries are forced to cancel their end-of-cycle exams owing to crises, education authorities may consider [alternative ways of evaluating students](#). A particular challenge is to ensure that any such alternative (a) gives a fair representation of performance and (b) does not penalize any group of students. It is also important to make sure the system is harmonized at the national level and that

students have the right to contest their eventual grade. There are several options for education authorities.

- Use previous grades from mock exams, teachers' assessments, and prior grade expectations.
- Rely on continuous assessments and coursework that took place in the months leading up to the crisis.
- Use multiple sources of information to calculate the final grade.
- Postpone end-of-year exams and holding them early in the next academic year, after the crisis.

3. Ensure the continuity and proper functioning of the teacher salary system

Even when distance learning solutions replace in-school teaching in times of crisis, meaning that [teachers are not in the classroom](#) as normal, it is important for MoEs to ensure that [teacher salary systems](#) function properly. This is essential to ensure teachers' motivation, welfare, and security during the crisis; guarantee students' continued learning; and allow services to resume as normal once the crisis is over.

- Anticipate possible impacts of the crisis on the operation of teacher salary systems, including assessing and addressing issues of payment delivery.
- Explore alternative, and where necessary innovative, payment solutions, such as mobile banking, ensuring that all teachers will benefit. For teachers lacking access to the required technology, a different solution will need to be provided.
- Tackle issues relating to temporary employment status; ensure contract teachers' motivation and welfare; and address salary difficulties by, for example, exploring the possibility of providing financial support.

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Access to all IIEP-UNESCO's COVID-19 response briefs:

<http://www.iiep.unesco.org/en/five-steps-support-education-all-time-covid-19>