Edinburgh Napier
UNIVERSITY

12 Principles for Preparing for Online Learning and Teaching

1 STUDENT FEEDBACK

What happened in Tr2 2019/20?

Reflect on what happened during the emergency provision in trimester 2. Seek feedback and invite students to tell you what they would like to see next year.

2 DIGITALLY INCLUSIVE

Access and skills

What are your students' online access limitations, digital skills and general confidence about learning? Consider how to work inclusively to benefit all students.

3 REVIEW YOUR CURRICULUM

Start with your module and programme descriptors

What online materials and support would enable students to meet the learning outcomes?

4 ALTERNATIVE METHODS

Focus on student activity

Consider student-centred tasks to support learning rather than replicating face-to-face teaching online. You do not need to provide large quantities of content.

5 MIX SYNCHRONOUS AND ASYNCHRONOUS

Though access to live video may be difficult for some students

Provide a small number of real-time opportunities for engagement, but record them if possible. Use online tools for ongoing collaboration and engagement tasks, and avoid broadcasting at students.

6 KEEP MOODLE SIMPLE

Minimise clicks and scrolling

Clear layout of instructions and materials on Moodle helps students know where to focus their effort. Use the tools in Moodle to keep it clutter-free and user-friendly.

7 COMMUNICATION

Open and private spaces

Consider how you will communicate with students, both openly and privately. Encourage students to build their own online networks for peer support.

8 WORK WITH COLLEAGUES

Review programme modules together

Agree on what needs to be consistent, and what can be more individualised, across modules in a programme. Seek advice and share practice with colleagues.

9 A SENSE OF BELONGING

Studying remotely can be isolating

Promote the module, programme and university as communities for your students. A sense of belonging contributes to students' wellbeing and motivation to learn.

10 BUILD IN FLEXIBILITY

Consult with students

You might need to change teaching approaches during the trimester. Be open with students that this may happen and you welcome their feedback.

11 TEACHER PRESENCE

Be visible and accessible

Students value seeing teacher presence online. Find ways of making yourself visible and accessible. They need to see that you care.

12 THERE IS NO ONE WAY

Find what works for you

There is no one right way of preparing and running online modules. Find what is right for you, your subject and your students.

It takes time and experience to teach online, so this is a steep learning curve for many of us. Time is limited, so be realistic what you can achieve by the start of trimester 1. Students do not need, or expect, the latest technologies nor highly polished materials in order to have a meaningful and connected learning experience online.

1 STUDENT FEEDBACK

What happened in Tr2 2019-20? *Reflect on what happened during the emergency provision in Tr2. Seek feedback and invite students to tell you what they would like to see next year.*

How was your experience of the emergency provision; would it be sustainable had it been a full trimester?

Check back over Moodle forums, emails from students, webinar recordings for how students were finding the emergency approach. Access Moodle activity logs; how and when were students engaging with your materials?

There may have been no formal module evaluation, so it is worth emailing cohorts now for feedback on their experience. Keep it brief and ask for recommendations too: what online tools do they find helpful in other contexts? It is likely that they will be learning online in work-contexts and will have experience to offer us.

Gathering student feedback is crucial now and throughout the academic year.

Tools and support

Email Students in Moodle

Tracking Progress in Moodle, Webex and Panopto

Links

JISC

'Close the evaluation loop from the last cohort' from 'Developing a sense of belonging' OpenLearn course

2 DIGITALLY INCLUSIVE

Access and skills. *What are your students' online access limitations, digital skills and general confidence about learning? Consider how to work inclusively to benefit all students.*

Planning for inclusive teaching practices online can save time later. While planning to meet support needs identified in learning profiles, consider how you can use principles of universal design for learning to meet undisclosed support needs and benefit all students.

Start with:

- **The written word:** If providing instructions or materials in text form, is the formatting accessible and helpfully structured, and is it written clearly and succinctly to avoid any ambiguity for students with visual impairments or dyslexia? These approaches also help students whose first language is not English.
- **Audio:** How will a student engage with a video if they can't hear it due to hearing loss, audio problems on a device, or a noisy environment? Have you engaged with the Disability Inclusion team and checked students' learning profiles to find out whether any of your students rely on lip reading or captions/transcripts?
- **Video:** Even if you are sharing slides or other content during a video call or recording, keeping your face visible has been found to help students stay connected and aid learning. It is also important for those who lip read and, similarly, for those whose first language is not English.
- **Images:** Add in alt text if you are using pictures to in slide and other materials.
- **File size:** If a resource is large, e.g. a PowerPoint file with images and narration, how can a student access it if they have capped internet data, limited device storage or unreliable connectivity?
- **Mobile:** Test what it is like to interact with your Moodle module on a smart phone using the browser. Use the 'Switch role' function in Moodle to view your module as a student.
- **Plan ahead:** Keep these inclusive practices in mind, even if you have no learning profiles in your current cohort; you may have students with undeclared disabilities and you may wish to reuse materials with future cohorts with, as yet, unknown needs.

Where an approach may disadvantage some students, provide alternative formats.

Learning online may exacerbate students' lack of confidence in their ability to learn. Find opportunities throughout the module to remind a whole class where they should be focussing their efforts and reflect back at them how far they have come (see Principle 6 Keep Moodle Simple). Use your experience of teaching previous cohorts to identify key concepts which can be a struggle, and provide extra support and emphasis around them. Teaching online is an opportunity to make learning itself more visible by openly sharing with students why you have chosen particular approaches.

Provide links to the many academic skills and support sites provided by the university.

Tools & support

Closed captioning on Panopto, PowerPoint (coming soon)

Disability and Inclusion team (coming soon)

Supporting students with disabilities and additional learning needs (Moodle Community course)

Academic study skills

How to make the move to online delivery and assessment as inclusive as possible

Handy Tips: Student View in Moodle

Reading

Univeral Design for Learning

Stanford, Daniel (2020) 'Low-Bandwidth Teaching'

3 REVIEW YOUR CURRICULUM

Start with your module and programme descriptors. *What online materials and support would enable students to meet the learning outcomes?*

Working backwards from the learning outcomes, think about how to scaffold students' learning towards meeting them. Before deciding on tools, consider what evidence you would expect from students and what formats would be appropriate. Is there an opportunity for student choice?

Consult the module descriptor and consider what alternative online methods would enable students to achieve the learning outcomes. If the learning outcomes cannot be assessed via online methods, please refer to Managing Change Approvals 2020/21 provided by Quality & Enhancement.

Tools and Support

Managing Change Approvals 2020/21

Guidelines on tools which offer automated transcription captioning [coming soon]

eSubmission Guidance

Moodle Assignment

Turnitin Assignment

Panopto Guide for Student Presentations

Reading

The changing landscape of assessments (Brown and Sambell)

4 ALTERNATIVE METHODS

Focus on student activity. *Consider student-centred tasks to support learning rather than replicating face-to-face teaching online. You do not need to provide large quantities of content.*

Think about technology as a means to connect students with each other and learning, rather than solely to deliver content. If you would use a lecture face-to-face, the session's learning outcomes can be achieved online through a mixture of resources such as a short video, followed by directed reading and a reporting back task using a Moodle forum or Padlet board (see Principle 5 Mix Synchronous and Asynchronous).

Where materials to support learning are required, investigate what existing resources are available first before creating your own. Leganto Reading Lists can be used to curate content from the web, in addition to items in the library catalogue. You can link to an item (using Permalink) anywhere in Moodle, so that you can contextualise the reading for students. Do not upload papers, images or other materials which infringe copyright and always use the Reading List to link to journal articles, ebooks and library resources which have been digitised for the module.

Creating your own short (recommended less than 15 minutes) video presentations can be done with Panopto. Short videos can be used to give module overviews, explain tricky concepts and provide revision summaries at the end of topics.

An alternative to providing materials for students is to task them with sourcing and sharing materials to support their learning. Ask them to share what they find with their peers in a Moodle forum and why they found it helpful.

Tools and Support

Panopto Lecture Recording (tip: always use Panopto for video content, not Moodle)

Uploading Course Notes and Recordings to Moodle

PowerPoint's 'Record Slideshow' Tool

MEDIALecture: desktop screen recorder

Moodle Discussion Forums

Padlet boards

Library help

[Cite it Leganto tool](#)

[Reading lists](#)

[Digital extract service](#)

[Leganto discussions](#)

[Copyright & CC](#)

[Box of Broadcasts TV recordings](#)

5 | MIX SYNCHRONOUS AND ASYNCHRONOUS

Though access to live video may be difficult for some students. *Provide a small number of real-time opportunities for engagement but record them if possible. Use online tools for ongoing collaboration and engagement tasks and avoid broadcasting at students.*

Sustained attention in an online environment is more difficult than when face-to-face. Use timetabled time selectively; you do not need to provide online teaching in real time to fill each slot. Synchronous sessions such as webinars can provide up to an hour of contact time which can help engagement and build connections between learners. Beware of one-way broadcasts where students are always passive. When running a webinar, use a mixture of presentation and activities using tools such as chat, whiteboard and annotations.

Live video may be difficult for some to access for various reasons; recording all or part of a session can help mitigate this, or alternatively provide PowerPoint slides with explanatory notes (not just bullet points). Think through, and design out, potential challenges that might face some students, for example, live chat typing might be off-putting for some dyslexic students, so encourage use of dictation options (see Tools and Support below). Provide handouts like case studies in advance for students who might have difficulties processing large amounts of text quickly. Consider how autistic students need additional support to engage with other students such as calibrating their tone, etc in break-out or chat room spaces, especially if they haven't yet met in person. Full access for non-medical personal helpers agency staff (note-takers and autism mentors) needs to be set up for any break-out spaces as well as main Moodle/Webex areas as requested by Disability and Inclusion Advisors in learning profiles. Running a preview practice session can be very helpful for all students, and especially for those students working with support from a British Sign Language interpreter and note-taker, or an autism mentor.

Moodle text chat provides a low bandwidth means of synchronous communication.

The majority of the online learning experience should be asynchronous; that is, the students can do it at a time of their choosing. Setting a clear a timeline and setting small milestones can help keep a cohort on track. See Principle 6 Keep Moodle Simple for how to use Moodle tools for this.

Tools and Support

Webex

Panopto

Moodle chat

Dictation Options for Students [coming soon]

Reading

When to use synchronous and when to use asychronous learning

6 KEEP MOODLE SIMPLE

Minimise clicks and scrolling. *Clear layout of instructions and materials on Moodle helps students know where to focus their effort. Use the tools in Moodle to keep it clutter-free and user-friendly.*

Work with colleagues (see Principle 9 A Sense of Belonging) and consult the Moodle Minimum Standards guidelines and start with its recommendations.

Lay out content clearly and indicate when students should be engaging with each part of the module; a planner or timeline can help signpost what to expect.

Always provide a context for uploaded documents and label them logically. It should be clear before a student clicks on a link what it is and how they are expected to engage with the resource, for example, "watch this video and take notes", "read this paper" and "write three questions". Use the tick box to 'Display description on course page' on an item to provide context if the title is insufficient.

To avoid clutter and long scrolling, use these tools:

- **Folders**: for documents like PDFs, Word docs and PowerPoint slides
- **Book**: A sequence of pages with text and links to resources, useful for providing a structure sequence through materials and activities
- **Workbook**: Like a book, but with self-assessment questions

Title each tool appropriately indicating its context or place within the module, for example, "Week 5 learning activities", "Unit 2 Additional resources".

Plan how the module will be updated throughout the trimester. Keeping some elements dynamic can encourage students to login in more regularly. A small text update at the top every week can remind students what is coming up for that week. Moodle has facilities to release or restrict content by date or activity completion; use these judiciously to encourage continued and timely engagement with the module.

Ensure that the assessment brief and links to eSubmissions are easy to find and include deadline date and time in the title. Give students the opportunity to practice using any eSubmission tool before using it for a summative assessment. This will also allow you to trail run giving feedback online.

Tools and Support

Moodle minimum standards

eSubmissions

Examples

Module planner (coming soon)

7 COMMUNICATION

Open and private spaces. *Consider how you will communicate with students, both openly and privately. Encourage students to build their own online networks for peer support.*

Maintain regular communication with your cohort, and provide means for them to contact you privately and openly. Moodle forums can be a means to respond to one student query to the benefit of the whole group.

The incidental conversations between students which happen in gaps between formal teaching on campus will not happen online unless you make space for them. For cohorts without established social ties, consider setting up smaller peer group with access to their own forums using the Groups facility in Moodle. Alternatively, direct students to MS Teams chat as a way of keeping in touch with their support group.

Communication builds social bonds and can also be a powerful tool for learning. Using digital tools for students to share, debate and create can be a very engaging learning experience. Setting up a task with clear expectations and tight parameters will scaffold them as they build confidence in expressing opinions. Structured online activities can be underpinned by inclusive values where students from different backgrounds and countries are given equitable opportunities to participate, and all students are encouraged to listen, be supportive and tolerant.

Ensure the module team contact details are posted on Moodle and provide a second point of contact if you are unavailable, which is also in your out of office email reply.

Tools and Support
Moodle forums, announcements and email
MS Teams
Padlet boards

Examples
[Coming soon]

8 WORK WITH COLLEAGUES

Review programme modules together. *Agree on what needs to be consistent, and what can be more individualised, across modules in a programme. Seek advice and share practice with colleagues.*

Work in collaboration with colleagues from your programmes and subject group. Each subject group has a representative in the DSP project and colleagues in other roles, view the membership list and get in contact if you find yourself in need of support.

Ask a colleague to be a back-up when you run live sessions with students, so they can allow you to focus on the main event while they help individuals with technical problems or respond to questions in the chat. Team teaching online can alleviate the intensity (and frustration) of interacting with some technologies. Invite colleagues to give a short guest lecture, or ask external guest speakers who may be professionals or in other institutions. Offer reciprocal arrangements and include students in external collaborations so they can see their learning apply a real-world context.

Seek advice from experienced colleagues. Use your external network and seek out those who are doing similar work in other institutions or organisations. If you are experienced, share your practice and show examples of your work.

Tools and Support
Webex
MS Teams
SharePoint for document collaboration
Share an example of your practice

Reading
Coming soon

9 A SENSE OF BELONGING

Studying remotely can be isolating. *Promote the module, programme and university as communities for your students. A sense of belonging contributes to students' wellbeing and motivation to learn.*

> "Use informal and friendly language, establishing a welcoming tone from the outset. Using less formal academic language can encourage confidence and engagement with students. This leads to the students feeling more part of the class." (OpenLearn toolkit)

Online learners need to feel socially and emotionally connected to have an engaged and successful experience. Fear and anxiety are likely to be experienced by students in the early stages of a new online module. Provide scaffolding for students to support them in becoming online learners.

A carefully planned orientation which links to university support resources will communicate that there is a wider support structure available. Introduce yourself (see Principle 11 Teacher Presence) and the module team. Within a programme and module, a sense of belonging can be generated through building connections between student and establishing a programme identity.

Emotions and the expression of emotions are an essential part of any learning process, and in online environments tutors can help learners normalise these by acknowledging and reflecting them back to learners. This can be done as part of 'milestone' checkpoints to orientate student in where they are in the module e.g. this is where we have been, this is where we are going next and this is what you might be feeling right now, using feedback from previous cohorts as appropriate.

There are plenty of examples online of ice-breaker activities for cohorts, often involving asking learners to share something about themselves. Pinboard style tools such as Padlet can be an informal space where you can ask students to post photos, images or other items. Similar tools and tasks can be used throughout the trimester and integrated with the curriculum, thereby continuing the emphasis on sharing as part of the learning experience.

Tools and Support

Webex training breakout rooms

Moodle Programme Sites

Padlet boards

Reading

Cleveland-Innes, M. & Campbell, P. (2012) *Emotional presence, learning, and the online environment*

OpenLearn: Developing a Sense of Belonging (toolkit)

10   BUILD IN FLEXIBILITY

Consult with students. *You might need to change teaching approaches during the trimester. Be open that this may happen and you welcome their feedback.*

A tool might not work as expected or circumstances may change which affect your teaching approach. Links may stop working or files may display differently on their devices, so always ask students to get in contact with you if they have problems. Consult with students when making changes and always let them know when you have made changes, and where to find content if you have moved it.

Where changes may impact learning outcomes or assessment refer to [Managing Change Approvals 2020/21](#).

You do not need to have all content ready for the start of trimester, in fact it would not be wise to do so as the first few weeks will have a substantial 'bedding in' period.

While it may be tempting to provide a full trimester of digital materials in Moodle, planned gaps allow you to be responsive, incorporate up-to-the-minute resources or invite students to contribute to the curriculum. As they become more confident with module topics and learning online, invite them to design learning experiences for their peers or co-teach a live session.

Tools and Support
[Managing Change Approvals 2020/21](#)

Examples
Student as collaborators
Co-construction of learning

Reading
[Student participation in co-creation (QAA)](#)

11 TEACHER PRESENCE

Be visible and accessible. *Students value seeing teacher presence online. Find ways of making yourself visible and accessible. They need to see that you care.*

A short video introducing yourself to students will do more to personalise you than any length of text. Show them as much of yourself as you are comfortable, and use the opportunity to be open about finding yourself teaching in an unfamiliar situation. Students respond well to honesty. Your presence in a classroom gives a subtle message of support and reassurance, so online you need to be explicit that you are still there to support them.

Set expectations around how long they can expect to wait for an individual response by email or Moodle forum. Moodle announcements are a simple means to give timely updates and make yourself visible. A short audio file (podcast) regularly uploaded to Moodle can be an effective means to connect with students and give the brief updates.

Be careful that digital content or technologies do not become a barrier to the human side of teaching. The fact that learning and teaching is taking place online does not alter your role as an expert and educator. Your knowledge and passion for your subject remain at the heart of engaging students in learning.

Examples
[Podcast: Shared Practice Examples](#)

Reading
[The 7 elements of a good online course](#)

12 THERE IS NO ONE WAY

Find what works for you. *There is no one right way of preparing and running online modules. Find what is right for you, your subject and your students.*

Be selective if you are investing time in learning about new tools. You don't need to know everything about Moodle to run a highly engaging module. Pick a few tools and use them well. Beware of experienced colleagues giving advice who may have forgotten the learning curve it took to get them where they are. When in doubt keep things simple, and only read and take advice when you have capacity to adapt it to your context.

Recognise that colleagues may be having very different experiences to yours and have different support structures. Find your path and a way to prioritise your wellbeing.

It takes time and experience to teach online, so this is a steep learning curve for many of us. Time is limited, so be realistic what you can achieve by the start of Tr1. Students do not need or expect the latest technologies nor highly polished materials in order to have a meaningful and connected learning experiences online.

This documentation is an evolving resource. We welcome feedback and contributions. Please contact dlte@napier.ac.uk to contact the project team.

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The Digital Support Partnership Project

There is a wealth of online education experience in Edinburgh Napier University. The Digital Support Partnership project is building networks to collate and disseminate that knowledge, along with research-based evidence on what works when teaching online. Further documentation and events will be made available to staff during the project.

The Digital Support Partnership project runs from June 2020 to July 2021. Its intention is to ensure an engaging student learning experience which will facilitate the successful completion of modules and programmes in the academic year 2020–21. The project also addresses the need to attend to staff wellbeing in the face of continuing change and uncertainty. The project has three workstreams: 1) curriculum development and delivery planning, 2) staff development, and 3) student participation, engagement and support.

Further information is available at https://staff.napier.ac.uk/services/dlte/dsp