THE UNIVERSITY of EDINBURGH

IAD — INSTITUTE FOR ACADEMIC DEVELOPMENT

TUTORS & DEMONSTRATORS

Quick Tips and Resources for Teaching Online
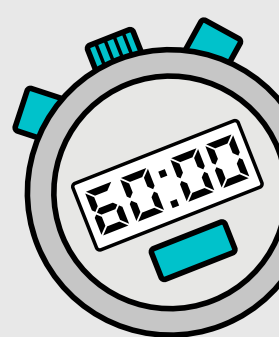
Preparation

USE TECHNOLOGY WISELY

Take the time to learn the technology in advance. It will increase confidence and help you to understand how the tools can support your teaching. Consider doing some training to know what is possible and how to use them well. Check what your students have access to. Don't overload your students with too many new and flashy things.
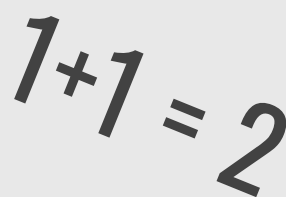
KEEP IT SHORT

Online teaching and learning is exhausting. Keep synchronous online sessions to 1 or 1.5 hours. If it needs to be longer incorporate a break.

KEEP IT SIMPLE

You may not be able to cover as much material as normal in an online session as it often takes longer for students to process, discuss and respond. Consider if your discussions or questions are too complex and if they could be simplified or split up for easier understanding and communication. Don't cram too much into your sessions.

RE-THINK THE FORMAT

Don't assume your usual format will work well online. Use your limited synchronous online time to target your students' needs and prioritise engagement and interaction. Consider using flipped classrooms or quectures to tailor the content to make it as effective as possible.

THE VALUE OF ASYNCHRONOUS

Make the learning content and materials available asynchronously so students can access them at a time and pace that suits them. Consider using videos, making slides and reading materials available in advance, and use discussion boards.

TIME

Preparation for teaching online can take longer, especially if it's new. Take extra time to prepare for your online teaching and have a backup plan in place that your students are aware of should the technology fail for you or them.

FOSTER COMMUNITY

Building a sense of community is crucial online, as it can help overcome feelings of isolation and keep engagement and retention high. Many of the methods we normally use can be used online, such as encouraging discussions and interactions, and making the environment inclusive and safe.

YOU ARE STAFF

As a tutor or demonstrator you should be able to access all the training available for staff if you use your staff uun to search and register for training. You might not be eligible or be able to see it if you use your student uun.

If you require this document in an alternative format please contact IAD.TutDem@ed.ac.uk

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Live Sessions

SHARED PROCEDURES

It can be useful to start off with a quick tour of the virtual learning environment and set up some basic shared procedures. Will you use video? Will you record the session? How can they ask questions and respond to questions? How will you manage technical difficulties? These may need to change depending on your students and their circumstances.

SILENCES ARE OK

Silences are harder to judge as you cannot 'read the room'. Give your students time to respond to questions and provide options for communicating them such as text chat, voice or video.

TO VIDEO OR NOT

You may want to use your video to add teacher presence to your sessions, but for some this may cause difficulties if their broadband isn't good enough. If you do use video, consider using it for shorter periods and check in with your students that they are happy to proceed.

TO RECORD OR NOT

There are many reasons you might want to record the session, but also several reasons why it may not be appropriate. If you choose to record the session make sure that attendees are aware of it and tell them how it will work. What is being recorded? Can you anonymise it? Do you need to record the whole session? How will it be made available to them?

BE FLEXIBLE AND HONEST

You may need to adapt your material if you find that you have run out of time or the technology isn't working as expected. Be honest with your students if you need to change the planned activities or content. They will likely be understanding if you tell them why.

DON'T PANIC

If the technology fails or your internet cuts out stay calm. Everyone will understand if you cannot continue the session. Consider having a backup person or moderator in the session who could step in should it be necessary. Have backup plans in place that your students are aware of.

BE KIND

Your students may be unfamiliar with online learning and may struggle with their bandwidth or be in different time zones. Be kind and understanding if students don't seem to be engaging or taking part as much as normal. Productivity will be affected for all.

DO THE BEST YOU CAN

All will be well!

Resources