Good Practice Guidelines for Remote Teaching

These guidelines are intended to inform remote planning process and teaching practice for the 2021/2022 Academic School Year. In considering these guidelines, it is important to note that we are all learning together. We recognize your time and effort in planning and teaching your course in the best way possible for your learners this year.

We are here to work with you as you plan and undertake teaching.

Consider the COVID-19 Context

All learning happens in a context that shapes one's ability to engage and learn. Circumstances for learners and faculty continue to be complex and uncertain. These circumstances impact some learners more than others, and raise new issues of equity in our learning environments (e.g. variability in connectivity for rural and on reserve learners, accessibility for learners with a disability).

- **Be Flexible:** Develop a plan for how you can be flexible around assignments, assessments, and deadlines. Allow flexibility for learners to access content and participate in learning experiences at their own pace. Consider recording any synchronous activities for learners who may be unable to participate.
- **Provide Choice:** Choice in learning will help mitigate some of the equity issues (e.g. some choice in frequency and mode of participation, provision of assignment options).
- **Be Compassionate:** Approach your learners with compassion and understanding regarding their circumstances. Communicating caring and flexibility whenever you can will reduce student anxiety and increase learning.
- **Be Remote Ready:** Ensure you are familiar with your computer and the technology you are using. Practice beforehand if possible and if you are experiencing any difficulty, contact ICT for support.

> *I really enjoy the Student Response System feed as it gives students the ability to ask questions as they would be able to if the class was in person. As well it has a nice community feeling to it, which is a huge positive for my mental health.*
>
> *USask student Winter 2020 feedback*

1. Create your Course Framework

- **Take inventory:** Gather and reflect on your teaching practices, learning & lecture materials, and the learning activities you used in your face-to-face course. Also consider your assessment plan and how you provided feedback and connected with learners.
- **Confirm your course outcomes:** Review the learning outcomes in your existing course. Ensure these clearly articulate the things you want students to be able to do at the end of your remote course.
- **Outline a clear and consistent structure:** A typical structure includes weekly segmented sections of content broken into chunks called *learning modules*.

> *Having lectures that were narrated was especially effective; I wish all my classes had that! Posting interactive exercises which were instantly graded was also a good way to practice course content.*
>
> *USask student Winter 2020 feedback*

2. Build your Remote Course

For each learning module:
A. Identify desired outcomes
B. Create active learning experiences & engage learners
C. Plan for assessment and provision of feedback

- **Activate prior knowledge:** Think about how you can help learners connect the ideas you will present and discuss to their previous experiences and/or learning. Positioning your course in relation to what learners already know helps with engagement, knowledge retention, and deeper learning. (e.g. create visuals showing connections between ideas, build in questions that ask learners to think about or share what they know about the subject, begin a course/learning module with prompts like 'have you ever wondered why…' that connect the subject matter to familiar experiences).

- **Plan and integrate structured activities where learners engage, think, create and do:** Learners should be able to practice skills or complete tasks that will help them become better at what you want them to learn. When planning learner activities think about the time they would put into a face-to-face course and check your expectations in the remote context.

> *The instructor posted all our notes and PowerPoints as well as created a discussion board so we are able to comment and talk about today's lecture and answer questions based on it. This still gives us a chance to interact with one another and read what others are saying about the material.*
>
> *USask student Winter 2020 feedback*

- **Create opportunities for connection and interaction:** Build opportunities for social connection and interaction into your course design (e.g. have learners create profiles within the course, send a pre-course email survey on interests and goals for the course, have a course lounge, create smaller student groups for discussions, assignments).

> *The discussion boards were actually a good tool to learn from my peers and get additional perspective on textbook materials.*
>
> *USask student Winter 2020 feedback*

- **Check student understanding regularly:** This can be done at the start of a course and throughout using brief assessments or through the active learning where learners practice activities or skills you wish them to learn (these could be for marks but do not need to be). These can be used to adapt your learning activities where there appears to be a broad lack of understanding or a consistent knowledge gap amongst student in the course. This approach also allows you to point groups of learners having more difficulty toward additional resources or learning opportunities focused on the topic of issue.

- **Provide quality, timely, and early feedback:** This helps establish your presence and build trust. Providing opportunities for peer feedback helps establish richer learning communities, engages learners in understanding assessment criteria and expectations, and reduces the time needed for instructor feedback.

- **Create accessible summative assessments:** Guidelines are forthcoming that will consider efficiency, academic integrity, accessibility and evidence-informed assessment practice, including the technological tools needed to facilitate it and other options.

> *The ability to complete weekly online quizzes and 3 remote assignments that were previously embedded into this course made me stay on track during the pandemic.*
>
> *USask student Winter 2020 feedback*

3. Connect and check-in with learners regularly

- **Consider what student learning you want to facilitate through your presence:** Plan how you wish to use your time (e.g. answer questions, discuss a topic, work through a problem/case, provide feedback). It is important that you connect with learners through your activity in the virtual space. In considering how much time you dedicate to each course, think about the time you would be present for a face-to-face class (office hours, responding to queries, providing feedback, etc.) as a minimum.

- **Provide frequent, clear and consistent communication:** Provide clear directions to learners about your course and expectations for engagement. Prior to the first class, introduce yourself and clarify the first steps (e.g. click through the course, review the syllabus, calendarize assignments and assessments). Start each week with a post listing the outcomes for the week, specific instructions related to learning activities, and reminders about tasks/assignments that need to be completed. Explanations of why you are asking them to do certain activities will increase engagement (e.g. I am asking you to watch this video because…). Remember - clearly communicated expectations for learners will limit time spent clarifying and allow you to dedicate your time to supporting learning.

> *During these tough times he always kept us up to date on his class and gave us time to prepare for assignments during these troubling times. He also gave us clear instructions on how he wanted it done and why each assignment was important.*
>
> *USask student Winter 2020 feedback*

- **Ask for feedback:** An online environment does not always allow you to pick up the cues from learners (e.g. body language) that would be present in a F2F environment. Teaching and learning remotely is new for everyone - asking learners for feedback about what is going well and what you could change allows you to adjust your course. This could be done via a short, anonymous survey, within Canvas, through mid-course SLEQ feedback, or via an open class discussion.

- **Check student engagement:** Use Canvas analytics to determine if learners are logging in regularly. If someone is not, a quick email inviting them to re-engage can make a big difference to the likelihood of completion. These analytics can also show you where learners are spending their time and help you understand patterns of activity.

> *Our group was able to call my instructor and have a thorough conversation regarding the assignment. Anything we discussed that was relevant to other groups was summarized and sent by email to all students. This was very beneficial.*
>
> *USask student Winter 2020 feedback*