

Guidelines for preparing teaching and learning, 2020/201

In 2020-21, the University's learning, teaching and assessment will primarily take place online and remotely. This document provides essential guidance in this regard and is designed to indicate what the learning experience will look like for the coming academic year. Students deserve clear information and clarity of expectations in terms of the experience that they can expect from their module leaders and from each of their modules. Embedding the student voice in the planning of the learning experience for AY20/21 can be hugely beneficial to all.

These guidelines are to be viewed alongside the institutional guidance principles, and the advice from [Quality and Qualifications Ireland](#) in relation to the design of flexible online learning programmes. What follows is not prescriptive, and the approach can be adapted to particular programme/module needs. The key message is to keep it simple, and ensure that the learning outcomes of the programme, and modules, can be achieved in the offering of a high quality student experience.

Planning and Preparation: June - July 2020

- Preparation should begin at faculty, department and programme level in terms of the approach to be adopted for learning, teaching and assessment, particularly per year and semesters (for example, year 1, semester 1, module leaders would agree approaches). It is critical that all module leaders engage in this planning in a coherent way to allow students to experience a consistent approach within their programme of study.
- It is important to include what has not changed in your planning, for example, the learning outcomes, the module content, the ECTS credits, remain the same – it is the delivery mode that has changed.
- In planning for the needs of the majority of students, the needs of the minority who learn in different ways must be considered. It is important to consider and apply three principles of universal design for online learning (1. multiple means of engagement; 2. multiple means of representation; 3. multiple means of expression) when developing materials to ensure that teaching is inclusive and student-centred. For more, please see [here](#).
- **Flexibility** is very important in all aspects of online teaching including deadlines and access to material. Consideration should be given to whether live synchronous lectures or asynchronous lectures will be used, the types of activities that will be used such as weekly or fortnightly e-tivities/ tutorials and associated delivery schedules, inclusion of continuous in-term assessments, solutions, grading rubrics and associated delivery schedules.
 - The **synchronous** learning activity provides an opportunity for connection with peers and with lecturer but access may be an issue for some students due to the diversity of contexts from which they come. Oftentimes, students may prefer the direct engagement that comes with synchronous delivery for some activities and so this area requires consideration by the lecturer.
 - **Asynchronous** (non-live) activities are often more flexible than synchronous (live) activities as learners can review the content at their own pace.
 - The choice of delivery may also be dictated by the discipline.
 - Some students may have connectivity issues, which will limit synchronous online activity.

Please note that training, support and resources will be available for all who teach.

Communication

- Full details on how the modules will be delivered and assessed should be provided to the students in Week 1, in line with Academic Regulations 1.4.3 with expected effort, hours, level of engagement outlined.
- All online learning content should be released on the same day each week (potentially on the scheduled lecture day) and students should be given clear information in week 1 about when each e-tivity and assessment will be issued and due. This detail should be provided in the module outline issued in Week 1. Share the module reading list on Sulis/Moodle, including links to e-books/articles.
- It is recommended that module leaders should have online office hours where they are contactable by one-to-one video call or chat during an agreed time each week.
- Resources on the Learning Management Systems (Sulis/Moodle) should be laid out in a weekly schedule to help students to manage their time and structure the learning experience within their different contexts. For example, the Lessons feature in Sulis can also be useful in structuring module content.

Contact time and engagement

- In planning the next academic year, it is important to note that it is not simply a matter of moving a traditional lecture online. Be realistic in terms of what is achievable in the online space and examine the skills that can be developed online. Please see some useful [‘rules’](#) proposed by Nordmann *et al* (2020).
- Maximum use should be made of the limited synchronous online contact time available by focusing on meaningful interaction and engagement with students, rather than on the transmission of information. It is rethinking how best to engage the students when working with them, albeit remotely. Monitoring and supporting student engagement is important in checking in with those who do not attend or do not engage with the online experience in a bid to ensure that they are ok. Remember that new entrants into the University will not have the opportunity to ask their peers for help as they might in the traditional face-to-face class.
- A positive student experience is the cornerstone of this approach to learning, teaching and assessment. E-tivities can be useful for engaging students and work best for small groups of 15-20 students, and so can be arranged by tutorial or lab group. The same e-tivity can be undertaken by a large group but it helps if students are only required to read the postings of a smaller group (this is where creating sub-forums for each group will help).
- There are many ways to use the (typical) three-hour contact time allocated to each module per week on the central schedule. By way of example, a module with a 3-hour contact could be revised as follows:
 - 1 x recorded lecture (Panopto video recording/PPT with audio/ Big Blue Button recording etc) or live webinar via Microsoft Teams, or using the up-to-date supported toolset.
 - 1 x weekly or fortnightly activity for students such as a discussion board, e-tivity, game, or live tutorial. The e-tivity can be used as a replacement to a tutorial and/or as a formative assessment. It is important not to overburden students with e-tivities through considering the learning outcomes of the module and how the e-tivities contribute to the students achievement of these.
 - 1 x weekly live chat session, facilitated by the module leader, where students have an opportunity to ask questions or engage with learning materials
 - Online support via discussion forum with specific contact time advised.

Further Information

[Learning Technology Forum](#)

[Centre for Transformative Learning](#)

[ITD TopDesk](#) (Remote Work and Study Tile)