Facilitating Online Learning - Best Practice Tips

Instructors
Adapted from: University of Pittsburgh Center for Teaching and Learning

- If most of your teaching was done in-person and you have to quickly transition to online training, take some time to get familiarized with the online learning tools.
- Identify your constraints: size of the class, your students’ access to internet, devices and digital literacy.
- Decide how will you deliver your course (live, what activities, type of evaluation):
  - Lecture-based course: record or deliver live presentations, share readings in advance or provide time within the session for students to read and provide comments or respond to quick quizzes.
  - Discussion-based course: several platforms offer ‘breakout rooms’. If this functionality is not in your chosen platform, manually assign partners or groups and ask the students to connect via Whatsapp or Skype and then report back on what they discussed according to your prompts.
  - Lab-based /practicums: record demonstrations of activities that students can conduct safely at home. Propose case studies with discussions.
- Communicate constantly, set expectations clearly, and respond promptly: students need to feel that there is an engaged instructor on the other side of the tool.

Recommendations for your students
Adapted from: University of Pittsburgh Center for Teaching and Learning

- Make a plan to complete the assignments, study, and attend the online sessions.
- Find a space where you can concentrate and focus on learning.
- Limit distractions.
- Actively participate: contact the instructor with questions, participate in the online activities proposed by your instructor.
- Consider starting a virtual study group with your fellow students.

Open-Source Instructional Tools

- Explore your own university/institution Learning Management System to identify options for quizzes, exams, discussion forums.
- Leading Groups Online by Training for Change: this free e-book walks you through the basics of how to lead sessions online.
- Gradescope: Gradescope streamlines grading paper-based, digital, and code assignments while providing insights into how your students are doing.
Curate content

- **Wheelchair International Network**: direct students to modules, exams, and discussion forums. It includes the Seating and Mobility Academic Resource Toolkit.
- **Wheelchair Skills Training Program**: direct students to videos, research articles, and more.
- **Assistive Technology for All YouTube channel**: direct students to the World Health Organization Wheelchair Service Training Packages videos.
- **Academy of Neurologic Physical Therapy Synapse Education Center**: 10 modules on wheelchair service delivery. If you find problems accessing the modules use “contact us”.
- **Coursera**: direct students to modules or full courses (4,000+ available).

Convert and Create content

- **Screencast-o-matic**: record your screen with voice over.
- **Explain Everything**: create whiteboard videos with voice over.

Tools to facilitate activities

- **EdPuzzle**: make YouTube videos interactive by dropping questions.
- **Padlet**: create a digital bulletin board for students to post to.
- **Perusall**: Students can post comments into a document (book chapter, journal article) and essentially get a discussion going in the reading itself.
- **FlipGrid**: Video enabled discussion tool. Instructors can post a video prompt and students can post video responses. Students can also create their own FlipGrids.
- **Jitsi.org** and **Zoom**: video conferencing platforms.
- **Google Drive**: collaborative documents that can be used during live online sessions.
- **YouTube**: tutorials or thought videos for discussion, students can create their own mobile videos and share with peers or instructor.

Accessibility

Adapted from: Towson University. Improving access: best practices for developing course materials with an online component. 2015.

- Printed text can be complemented with an audio recording.
- An audio/video recording must be complemented with a script or subtitles.
- Add alternative text to images and graphs.
- Conduct an accessibility check before publishing/sending your digital documents (e.g. Microsoft Office has the option Review - Accessibility Check).
- During live discussions (e.g. chats, video calls) allow additional time to respond or facilitate the discussion in a way that everyone has a chance, not only the faster thinkers.
- Learn more about the Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG) and the Web Accessibility Evaluation Tools.

16th April 2020