

Digital Education Effective Practice Guide

Advice for implementing digitally enhanced teaching and learning within modules.

Clear: easy to perceive, understand, or interpret

The module site should include a clear statement about its purpose and expected learning outcomes. It should include information for students on the core set of digital tools they will use and what is expected of them as well as provide links to any support materials that are available to help students prepare for their upcoming teaching sessions, activities, and assessments.

The relationship between learning activities should be clearly communicated, including the order in which they should be completed (aka the schedule of learning) and how they link to or demonstrate module outcomes.

Learning content should be clearly structured and organised, using meaningful file names and descriptions so that students can easily find the resources they need. In order to achieve this:

- Every content area should begin with a description.
- All items should include descriptive information to guide learners.

Module sites should include advice on communication expectations within online platforms such as email, Blackboard, including discussion boards, and MS Teams.

Text is clearly presented using the VLE's in-built text editor.

Accessibility tools within Blackboard (Blackboard Ally) and/or MS365 should be routinely used to ensure equal access and equal opportunities for all learners to all learning content.

Documents should also be available in PDF format to support use across a wide range of devices.

Where possible, consider the challenges some students may have with limited access to broadband and/or computers and offer simple alternative formats (e.g. plain text documents) where needed.

Consistent: acting or done in the same way over time

Incorporating consistency into your VLE involves regular use of Announcements for urgent notifications and reminders or promotion of activities by default (providing a record of all communications to students and encouraging regular module access). Where appropriate, this may include shared Programme level sites.

It is recommended that module sites include a staff profile page with contact details, an avatar or picture, and contact details (including your preferred form of communication). You should also include your office hours and availability - it's helpful to differentiate between when you will be available in person and online. Try to be aware of potential time zones and differing public holidays if you have international students studying overseas.

Module sites should include a link to the Module Handbook or equivalent (we recommend use of an online tool like Sway and linked to within Blackboard). Where appropriate,

information on alternative formats and support should be provided where accessibility is identified as a possible issue due to the nature of the learning activity.
Module sites should include clear and consistent instructions on assignment submission using dedicated tools such as Turnitin.
Where possible, provide explicit examples of previously assessed work.
All grades and feedback should be available through the Grade Centre.
Resources from the internet should be added as links (rather than uploaded). Please ensure you check the resources have been made available with the owner's permission and reference the source appropriately. Any hyperlinks should be accessible and give clear information about where the link will take the user.
Ensure students have sufficient time to engage and familiarise themselves with the learning materials.
Recap often to help support student progress.
Links to external resources should be routinely checked before publication to students.
Direct links should be provided, ideally in the same location across all modules and programmes) to the following resources: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • An up-to-date TALIS Aspire reading list for each module. • The appropriate Referencing Handbook and submission guidelines. • Panopto (videos). • Discussion forums. • Policies, University standards and Programme requirements the students are expected to comply with.
Direct access should also be provided to all available additional tools used to support your teaching and learning activities (e.g. MS Teams for meetings or seminars/webinars).

Coherent: forming a unified whole

You should use of programme sites to welcome and orient new students to learning in a blended learning environment.
Encourage students to introduce themselves to their cohort using preferred communication channels (socialisation activities and community building).
It's important to provide a balanced mix of synchronous and asynchronous activities throughout the Programme, with (where appropriate) flexibility built into pacing in order to take account of any phased activities - not all students will work at the same pace, and some may require more support than others.
Consider your module in the context of the Programme and align your VLE structure, naming conventions, and the ways in which available tools are used (where appropriate).
Consider your module within your disciplinary context. Are there any broader structures (e.g. professional bodies) or disciplinary specific requirements that need to be applied across the Programme?
To ensure relevant and timely availability of resources, consider the use of adaptive release for groups or timetabled content (where appropriate).
Use rubrics for assessment and grading across all modules and make digital copies of these rubrics available to your students.
A variety of appropriate learning activities should be shared across the Programme and encourage student participation with active blended learning.

Culture: valuing international difference and diversity

By Ian Pownall, Malgorzata Drewniok, Alison Raby, Olanrewaju (Larry) Olaye, Deborah Lock, Elaine Clark & Change Ge (Lincoln International Business School).

Consider students whose cultural backgrounds place emphasis on interpersonal relationships who might find that online teaching lacks the cues they would expect when working face-to-face. Consider allocating time for such students to review materials that might be commented upon as unclear.

Give more time for the completion of, and Q & A about, particular set learning tasks. Set learning activities can require more time to complete when delivered online to a class/group(s) and/or some students may be inclined to take more time as they feel under less pressure. You may find that asynchronous discussions or activities can be helpful to use here.

Reflect on your use of synchronous and asynchronous delivery styles and learning materials. Synchronous delivery induces a sense of promptness, timeliness and is reassuring for learners whilst asynchronous delivery helps to remove the logistical and ethical barriers as well as permitting learners time to reflect and prepare contributions. The outcomes of asynchronous delivered learning materials may require summarising to support students who need more time to digest materials quickly.

Be more prescriptive when working with multi-cultural groups of students. Clarity and focused guidance are important in reassuring international learners and ensuring they have confidence with your learning materials. You may need to ensure for example to address cultural power asymmetries and uncertainty avoidance evidenced in some cultures of students, by for example, allocating group roles.

Use inclusive learning materials to reflect student diversity.

Encourage students to draw from personal experiences and share those reflections.

Explicitly include opportunities and time for personal guidance and support. This ensures all students have time and opportunity to raise issues/clarifications with you (cognizant of different global time zones).

Respond to students' values and interests that might be included in digital correspondence. For example, the culture of some students can encourage them to inquire about well-being of your family and they would appreciate a similar inquiry from yourself.

Be flexible towards expected later requests for support. Online learning can result in a lengthier time between the need for help being recognised and the request for help being made by a student. You may wish to allocate a block of support time towards the second half of your module's delivery for this reason.