



Going Online: R(e)imagining Teaching and Learning webinar series

May – June 2020

Responses to webinar questions

Technology

Twenty-first century learning is becoming blended learning by default. Even before the pandemic, students were much less likely to spend all day on a campus waiting for their lectures, studying and socialising than earlier generations. Students multi-task in many ways, including work and personal commitments, and they expect to have access to learning resources without having to cross town to find them. Contemporary students make study choices which may surprise academic staff, for example preferring a recorded lecture to a live one, because they can discuss it with friends, pause, repeat, watch it from home, and even play at double speed to save time. The COVID-19 lockdowns and teaching restructures have thrown these developments into high relief. How do academic staff succeed in this space?

The work of organising up the LMS, putting protocols in place, unlocking features, etc, is undertaken at the provider level. There are, however, a number of issues that unit co-ordinators should consider when making a quick pivot to online learning.

It's likely that your institution will have considered optimising for phones and tablets as well as desktop computers. Students work on mobile devices a lot more than academic staff tend to do and there are a range of associated issues. For example, PDFs may require annoying horizontal scrolling to be read on a phone. Ask for student feedback about what is causing problems for them. It is likely you'll have learning designers who can help you solve the difficulties, and sometimes students can make useful suggestions. You can help by ensuring that big files are

broken into manageable chunks, that you don't strain students' data budgets with too much synchronous work. You could consider modelling good practice: record some short videos on your computer while sitting where you normally work. Don't do retakes – if the cat walks across the key board, let students see that you keep calm and carry on. Try to model a not too crazy workspace, though, and discuss setting up a work corner with students perhaps on a discussion board

Support for staff and students

As noted above, both staff and students must have resources and training available. These would be provided at the institutional level, but you can link to them on your unit home page. Library resources should be linked to the units. Some librarians are delighted to provide a presence in the unit, and they can provide much advice, including how to manage virtual or sometimes hard-copy loans.

In addition, some students may not have adequate private access to technology. Institutions address this in different ways, for example by establishing a system of equipment or financial loans; but it is something for academic staff to be aware of.

Staff development

Institutions must ensure that all units conform to TEQSA's minimum online delivery standards, and that all academic staff have access to skills development and to learning design assistance.

Continuing professional development for academic staff should encompass necessary technological and pedagogical skills and should ideally be offered in a mix of face-to-face, fully online and blended formats. It might be helpful if professional development activities were to be developed so that they function as 'stackable' micro-credentials that would help the staff member progress towards a Graduate Certificate or Diploma.

It can be useful to have minimum standards templates available to guide online unit development.

That said, it is inevitable that some academics will not be interested in developing cutting edge or innovative online units, and it is perhaps not a good use of energy to try to bring more resistant colleagues along for the more ambitious parts of the journey. All staff, however, must ensure minimum online delivery standards.

