INSTRUCTOR KIT:
Online Teaching Essentials for Instructors

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This resource guide is designed to orient MNU instructors to teach in online and remote learning modalities during covid19 pandemic. This kit provides guidance on the following areas:

- Key differences between online and face to face teaching and learning
- Asynchronous and synchronous modalities of online learning,
- Creating a social presence for students
- Online communication
- Basic competencies and skills required as an online instructor
- Providing feedback
- Optimum online contact hours for online learning
- Basic equipment and tools required for an online session

Online vs. Face-to-Face Learning

One of the principal differences in online and face-to-face learning resides in the realm of affect, but there is little consensus with respect to which modality is conducive to generating the most effective social and cultural community. It is possible to have effective communication and/or a meaningful cultural ethos online or in face-to-face environments, yet the communication itself and the means to that communication is quite different.

The differences between the two learning environments suggest that different learning styles and levels of academic proficiency can be addressed by certain features of each instructional approach. Learners who tend to avoid face-to-face learning will find online communication more adaptable to their needs, while those who prefer nonverbal cues to their communication style may need and require the instructional benefits which accrue to sessions which occur in person.

Perceptive instructors are generally cognizant of the needs of their students and can and do adapt their communication styles accordingly, regardless of the learning environment in which they are teaching. The important thing to consider, for the purposes of this resource pack, is that both methods of learning are equally conducive to effective means of communication, regardless of the idiosyncratic nature of the communication.

The following table highlights the key differences between face-to-face and online learning. (Synchronous vs. Asynchronous?, 2018) (Drion, 2013)

	Face-to-Face	Online
Inherent charac-teristics	• Synchronous learning • Learning occurs in specified time and space. • Teacher directed pace	• Synchronous and asynchronous learning • Time and space for learning is flexible • Self-paced learning allowed
Methods of communi-cation	• Verbal and non verbal communication	• Heavy emphasis on writing
Technical knowledge	• Not a pre-requisite for course	• Technical knowledge required
Access to learning materials	• Lectures or discussions are real time. No detail records archived.	• Lectures and discussions archived and can be accessed anytime.
Cost	• Cost for setting up physical space, commuting, parking, etc. may be high	• Cost for initial installment of hardware and software as well as constant upgrade may be high.
Learning Process	• Allows learners and instructors to bond socially • May inhibit reticent learners to participate. • Human interaction tends to reduce high dropout rate • Discussion is limited to the pre-defined time frame. • Immediate adjustment to repair misunderstanding is possible. • Teacher exercises strong leadership. • Feedback is immediately delivered through	• Allows learners and instructors to exchange idea in a more thoughtful fashion. • Allows reticent learners to speak up more easily and actively. • Conducive to learning new skills in technology • Dropout rates are higher due to lack of human contact and technical problems (Si_or & _ernochová, n.d.). • Discussion is not limited to the class time. • Misunderstanding in discussion may not be adjusted in time, causing unnecessary rift in class. • Conducive to student-

Asynchronous and synchronous modalities of online learning

There are two options for instructors to facilitate class sessions remotely:

1. **Synchronous:** instructors and students gather at the same time and interact in "real time" with a very short or "near-real time" exchange between instructors and students.
2. **Asynchronous:** instructors prepare course materials for students in advance of students' access. Students may access the course materials at a time of their choosing and will interact with each other over a longer period of time.

Instructors may choose to engage their students synchronously or asynchronously depending on the course content or material that needs to be taught. There are many advantages and disadvantages to asynchronous and synchronous teaching options.

Advantages of Synchronous Teaching

- Immediate personal engagement between students and instructors, which may create greater feelings of community and lessen feelings of isolation
- More responsive exchanges between students and instructors, which may prevent miscommunication or misunderstanding

Disadvantages of Synchronous Teaching

- More challenging to schedule shared times for all students and instructors
- Some students may face technical challenges or difficulties if they do not have a fast/powerful wired or Wi-Fi network available or accessible

Advantages of Asynchronous Teaching

- Higher levels of temporal flexibility, which may simultaneously make the learning experiences more accessible to different students and also make an archive of past materials accessible.
- Increased cognitive engagement since students will have more time to engage with and explore the course material.

Disadvantages of Asynchronous Teaching

- Students may feel less personally exchanged and less satisfied without the social interaction between their peers and instructors.
- Course material may be misunderstood or have the potential to be misconstrued without the real-time interaction.

(Mick & Middlebrook, n.d)

Asynchronous Tools	Synchronous Tools
• Email	• Text-based chat
• Discussion/message boards	• Voice-based chat, to include the phone
• Blogs	• Audio and/or video conferencing
• Social media sites	• Web conferencing
• Listservs	• Virtual worlds
• Streaming audio or video	• Whiteboards
• Wikis	• Real-time document sharing (e.g., Google Documents)
• Non-real-time document sharing (e.g., Google Documents)	

Note: To know the pedagogical use of tools in a synchronous and asynchronous session refer:

Creating a social presence for students

Social presence involves a level of connectedness among instructors and students that determines how motivated participants are to take an active role in their own and their peers' meaning-making processes.

Social presence can maximize the reification and participation in the online learning process. As a student in one of our studies suggests, "A sense of community helps reduce stress and the sense of loneliness. The instructor absolutely needs to get involved in learning and the students absolutely need to be able to communicate!" This student's comment is exceedingly perceptive because, as human beings, we crave connectedness. (Drion, 2013)

Here are five ways you can build social presence in your online class:

1. **Have your online students introduce themselves.**

   This may sound simple but the first module of my online courses asks students to introduce themselves to their peers. create a discussion board on Moodle where students share short introductions with the group either through text or while video conferencing.

2. **Introduce yourself to your students.**

   create a short orientation video where the instructor provides an overview of the course and share a little about yourself.

3. **Create a "commons area" for off-topic discussions.**

   In online classes, create a discussion board labeled "Commons Area" or "Water Cooler" on Moodle and offer some guidance to the purpose of the area.

Instructors should often peek in to add a question or respond to a post, generally give the students some free rein over this forum.

4. **Use synchronous tools for office hours.**

Most course management systems offer chat rooms or synchronous online classrooms as tools for teaching and communication. Schedule online office hours where students can meet to discuss course content and ask questions. While not every student takes advantage of the office hours, publishing their availability communicates to students that the instructor is committed to their success in the course.

5. **Don't be the center of every discussion.**

Many new online instructors try to respond to every post in a discussion board. This habit can actually limit student-to-student interaction and discussion. In a face-to-face class, few instructors would break up lively classroom discussions by evaluating every remark from students. In online classes, however, instructors will do exactly that. Instead of excessively participating in discussion boards, provide some thought-provoking questions and allow the students to discuss course content openly on their own.

Offer guidance when necessary and communicate that you're present in the discussion through carefully chosen posts. Give the students some space to interact with one another and build their understanding through collaborating with their classmates. (Drion, 2013)

Online communication with your students

Planning how, when and why you will communicate with your online students in advance is a great way to ensure that you are able to provide your students with meaningful, timely, and consistent communications. It would be useful if you wrote out your communication plan and kept it handy for future use, that way you will always know what your communication plan is for different situations (Mitchell-Holder, 2020) .

Your communication plan should include:

1. Methods you will use to communicate with your online students such as email, announcements, messages, podcast, video messages, video conferencing or even phone calls. It is important that you decide how you will contact your students so that when the time comes, it will be easy for you to choose the right method to contact them. it is also equally important for you to tell your students which methods you plan to use to contact them so that they know where to look for your communications.

2. How often you will communicate with your students. For routine communications such as announcements, you need to plan in advance how often you will post announcements for your class. Will it be bi-weekly, weekly, or once a day? It's up to you how often you want to make class announcements, my only suggestion is that you be consistent with the timing of your announcements, so if you choose to make announcements weekly, always make announcements weekly so that your students expect and look for your weekly announcement.

3. How do you want your students to communicate with you? Do you prefer to be contacted via text, messages, email, or phone? Whatever your preferred method

of contact, make sure that you clearly communicate so your students know how to contact you. It is also a good idea if you give them another way to contact you in case the first method of contacting you does not work. How will students and instructors communicate in emergency systems if the regular communication methods are not available? Such as through: messages through Moodle, email, text or phone call

Using different methods to communicate with your online students can aid in their retention in your class. Personalizing your communications can help foster a sense of community in your class and help avoid the sense of isolation that some online students experience.

Basic competencies and skills required as an online instructor

The following list of expectations outlines what is expected of an online instructor and related tutorials. This list contains the basic technical skills and pedagogical best practices that have proven to be essential in creating well designed courses that facilitate student success

When creating a course, instructors should:

1. Provide students with adequate time and resources to master the learning technologies prior to the delivery of course content (e.g. early ungraded quizzes and discussions). This can include practice quizzes, introductions discussions, and practice assignments.

2. Provide clear and detailed instructions for online discussions, assignments, and quizzes.

3. Learning activities should be closely aligned with all course learning objectives, particularly those stated in the syllabus, and adequate practice should be provided to master them.

4. Promote student-student interaction through asynchronous or synchronous tools (e.g. discussions, blogs, live chat, screen sharing, etc.)

(CORE COMPETENCIES REQUIRED TO TEACH ONLINE, 2020)

Before teaching an online course, instructors are expected to:

1. Uploaded a current syllabus: contact information, course goals, textbook information, grading criteria, description of assignments and course schedule, response time expectations for feedback on student assignments, grade posting and other communication, instructions about how the online components are organized.

2. Modify the "Welcome" page: An introductory message welcoming student and explaining "what to do to get started."

3. Provided current contact information.

4. Create dated Announcements.

5. Create Web Links: Verify links are current before the course begins

6. Create Assignment: Verify due dates and release criteria.

7. Create Discussion Boards

8. Create Assessments: Verify due dates and release criteria.

(CORE COMPETENCIES REQUIRED TO TEACH ONLINE, 2020)

While teaching an online course, instructors are expected to:

1. Set aside an appropriate amount of time each week dedicated to teaching and managing the online course.
2. Respond to student inquiries within 48 hours.
3. Responding within 24 hours is highly recommended.
4. Provide dated class announcements at least weekly in the online classroom.
5. Announcements can be used to remind students of due dates, to let students know that a new conference or lecture has been posted, provide encouragement and positive feedback, etc. Provide regular grades and feedback within a course, based on expectations outlined in the syllabus.
6. Communicate to students through email, discussions, assignment feedback, or other tools based on the expectations defined in the syllabus.
7. Students should be informed of extended instructor absences in advance.
8. Update content as necessary including: spelling, release dates, assessment dates, passwords, and question settings.
9. Check in with students they haven't been heard from, or who are late with assignments.
10. Compare student roster with online roster to ensure enrolled students have access.

(CORE COMPETENCIES REQUIRED TO TEACH ONLINE, 2020)

After the Course has finished, instructors:

1. Reset Quiz dates.
2. Update assignment and school dates.
3. Check that web links are still current.
4. Make changes to course for next semester while ideas are fresh in mind.

(CORE COMPETENCIES REQUIRED TO TEACH ONLINE, 2020)

Providing feedback in online teaching

Students want feedback with specific, detailed directions for future improvement, offered in a manner that is both constructive and encouraging. And they want that advice sooner rather than later. Many studies have shown that the ideal time for learners to receive feedback ranges from two to 15 work days. Beyond that point, students have moved on to other topics and learning activities and the feedback is much less helpful (Fiock & Garcia, 2020).

The various types of guidance and direction that instructors provide: corrections or positive reinforcement after an exam, explanations on written work, details and notes included as part of rubric grading. Monitoring student learning through regular assessment is an important element of an instructor's job. By providing individualized feedback, you help students stay on track, personalize their learning, and build trust and connections.

By "feedback tools," means digital applications or extensions used to give responses to your students' work. There are a number of options available:

1. Rubrics: online scoring guides to evaluate students' work.
2. Annotations: notes or comments added digitally to essays and other assignments.
3. Audio: a sound file of your voice giving feedback on students' work.
4. Video: a recorded file of you offering feedback either as a "talking head," a screencast, or a mix of both.
5. Peer review: online systems in which students review one another's work.

(Fiock & Garcia, 2020)

Each tool offers the opportunity to communicate directly with students and guide their learning.

Optimum online contact hours and class size for online learning

One of the most recommended ways to cope with the additional time required for teaching online classes is to reduce the class size. Zuckweiler et al. (2004) recommend adjusting class size using the following formula that takes into account the amount of time spent teaching online classes compared to the amount of time spent teaching traditional classes: Total time for online class/Total time for traditional class) x 100 = Adjustment index Traditional class size/Adjustment index = Online class size The Zuckweiler et al. (2004) findings suggest that an online class, on average, takes 39.9% more time to teach, and, thus, the class size should be 39.9% smaller than that of its traditional counterpart.

Other researchers suggest that online classes take at least one-third more time to teach, and, thus, the class size should be reduced by one-third the size of its traditional counterpart (Finley et al., 2005).

What Factors Affect How Long A Student Can Concentrate?

Interest in the subject. If someone is passionate about a subject they'll be able to focus on it a lot longer than something that they find boring. You might be able to get away with longer course sections in an online course about motorcycle riding compared to academic courses like learning biology. It is recommended to not extend online classes beyond the one-hour mark unless there are activities and breaks in between to engage students.

Interactivity. People feel much more engaged when they're playing an active part in their learning. Just think, is it more fun to play a game yourself or to watch someone else play it? Break up your lessons with moments of introspection and ask your students to come up with their own answers and write them down. This can help keep them interested and makes them feel more in control of their own learning. Throw in quizzes, question and answer periods, feedback forms, surveys, and other interactive pieces to keep students involved.

Production value. It's more pleasant to watch a video presented in 1080p than one in 360p quality. And it's easier on the ears to listen to a quality microphone with noise canceling compared to one with settings poorly adjusted that's constantly popping. Cheap visuals or not having your material logically organized can take away from the learning experience as well.

Basic equipment and tools required for an online session

1. **A functioning computer / laptop / tablet :** It can seem obvious and you may already have one, but a functioning computer or a tablet is a must. Whether it is a desktop or a laptop, any computer will do and will allow you to take your classes in good conditions.

2. **A good and stable internet connection:** Therefore, an internet connexion via optical fibre is the best. Thus, you will have a smooth conversation with your teacher, making the exchanges easier and so the learning process. For this reason, it is necessary to have a minimum data rate of 5MB.

3. **Video conferencing software such as Google Meet :** For example, it can share screen, view students, add students, etc,

4. **A headset with microphone:** Being able to communicate smoothly with your teacher is more than important when taking classes online. Indeed, a course does not only go in one way, it is a dialogue between the instructor and the student, the latter must be able to express himself, ask questions etc…

5. **A webcam or the built in webcam of your work device :** Finally, being able to hear the teacher is necessary, seeing him is not mandatory but is highly recommended. It allows a better grip between the student and the teacher and to develop a real human relationship. In addition, they can understand each other better, show things physically and not only digitally etc… For these reasons, it is important to see your teacher.

To conclude, before starting your distance lessons, make sure you check that the camera and the microphone are properly configured as predetermined. It is possible to do it from the Google Chrome parameters. Sometimes it is the reason why it may not work.

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