Teaching Large Groups Online

# Introduction

Teaching large groups online is a collection of suggested approaches and strategies to consider when planning to deliver learning and teaching to large cohorts online. Regardless of the mode or mechanism of delivery of learning and teaching, pedagogical considerations need to be at the forefront of any determinations when delivering teaching to large groups of students online.

# Planning

* Always try and plan ahead as much as possible - you can use something like the [ABC Learning Design model](https://abc-ld.org/download-abc/) not only for modules but to help think through individual sessions.
* Agree a consistent layout of Blackboard courses (modules) across the course. This inclusive approach supports all students. The [Designing inclusive blended and online learning environments](https://www2.worc.ac.uk/inclusiontoolkit/a1-design-inclusively.html) section of the Inclusion toolkit provides some guidance on this.
* Discuss with other module leaders about using the same technology for similar pedagogical approaches - this helps students by reducing the number of new tools they need to become familiar with and is likely to reduce support issues as they go through modules and the course. For example, decide how to approach group work in either [Blackboard](https://lttu.uk/support/Blackboard/Manual/groups.html) or [Teams](https://www2.worc.ac.uk/it/microsoft-teams.html), use Teams for PAT support, if using polls use [Vevox](https://uwtel.co.uk/tel-tools/vevox/).

# Communication with Students

* Consider your [communication rhythm](https://www.pearson.com/uk/educators/higher-education-educators/course-development-blog/2020/03/recommended-weekly-engagement.html) with your students and tell students how and when you will communicate with them.
  + Be upfront about emails and how often you will check them. Use your out of office notification to help set boundaries.
* Be clear with them about feedback and when and how they will receive it.
* Keep reminding them about the course communication rhythm to help establish good blended learning practices.
* Continue with nurturing online social connections even with the return to campus. With large groups, students won't necessarily always meet each other in person as much.

# Building your presence with students

* Consider how you can purposefully build your social presence, i.e. use [Panopto](https://uwtel.co.uk/tel-tools/panopto/) to record a quick hello (< 2min) video about the module.
* Be clear about online attendance but do provide opportunities for students to catch-up through recording of teaching content, again, using [Panopto](https://lttu.uk/support/Panopto/staff/).
* Think about techniques to develop rapport with students. This can be through a MS Form ([example](https://forms.office.com/Pages/ShareFormPage.aspx?id=QYA4YykDPEOksRmij84xxqbwSQCq34FAjP6o6osOrtNUNFhUMTFaMTJOSVpHSzFEREZXTTgyNFY4Ni4u&sharetoken=i8eh4zUKmgPypVm6Ig1D)) or poll, giving you a sense of their interests or a quick sense of how your students are feeling that week.
* Make sure you have a photo in your [BB](https://help.blackboard.com/Learn/Instructor/Original/Getting_Started/Profile) and [Teams](https://support.microsoft.com/en-us/topic/add-your-profile-photo-to-microsoft-365-2eaf93fd-b3f1-43b9-9cdc-bdcd548435b7) profiles, so students know what you look like. Ask students to provide an avatar or photo for their BB account - again it gives you a sense of them as a person.
* If you’re having online office hours be clear about how students can book time with you.

# Online delivery

* Establish safe space online - be clear about digital safety and how students take responsibility for [conducting themselves online](https://uniworcac-my.sharepoint.com/:w:/g/personal/e_swift2_worc_ac_uk/EfWfZR2ZirBLroPE5kQ-L7EBLbZvUI2NCXPzgbu-1AOYEA?e=v2e8tg).
* Use anonymous polls to help ensure reserved students concerned about peer judgement can participate.
* Provide any accessible presentation slides ahead of time – this provides an inclusive approach for a range of students. (Learning more about [accessible content](https://rteworcester.wp.worc.ac.uk/index.php/2020/11/20/accessibility-for-the-busy-lecturer/).)
* Break online lectures into smaller components with plenty of opportunities for different activities and breaks if online for longer periods. These could take advantage of breakout groups or offline activities where students have to report back.
* Paired activities work well in classroom-based approaches but are harder to replicate online quickly with breakout groups. Other approaches that can facilitate students taking responsibility for their participation in learning include:
  1. Ahead of the session set up breakout groups - with small group (<5) alternative to pair/share
  2. 1 min papers - using a chat blast approach to ensure students formulate an answer before other people start responding
  3. Polling or use [Q&A approach](https://help.vevox.com/hc/en-us/categories/360001599078-Q-A) in Vevox
  4. Use the Chat to engage students with questions – this can be of help for shy students or those having audio/video issues
  5. Using collaboration tools such the Whiteboard in Collaborate or Padlet to provide an opportunity for collaboration
  6. Groups working on shared Word documents in breakout groups.
* You can find a range of practice examples in the [Digital Learning and Teaching Community](https://forms.office.com/Pages/ResponsePage.aspx?id=QYA4YykDPEOksRmij84xxqbwSQCq34FAjP6o6osOrtNUMzRUSDdDRkYwUzdaQUZWVUhPWkozTUVPUC4u) on Teams.

# Supporting students to engage with each other

* Use the [Groups tool](https://help.blackboard.com/Learn/Instructor/Original/Interact/Course_Groups) in Blackboard to set-up group areas where you can use a range of group tools for collaborative activities such as wikis, blogs and discussions boards.
* Use Teams sites to facilitate peer study groups or with personal academic group tutorials.

# Assessment (formative, peer or summative) and Feedback

* Prof Sally Brown has published a [compendium of authentic assessment ideas](https://sally-brown.net/kay-sambell-and-sally-brown-covid-19-assessment-collection/).
* Polls can be used again for diagnostic purposes and in-class to check students understanding.
* Use [quick quizzes to get feedback](https://lttu.uk/support/Blackboard/Manual/tests-and-surveys.html) and give students ideas about their strengths and weaknesses; these can be set-up as self-assessments.
* Look at peer review to help students understand the grading process.
* Use Panopto to summarise general common points of feedback alongside individual feedback.

# Additional Resources and Further Reading

Open University Collaborative Activities: <https://www.open.ac.uk/blogs/learning-design/wp-content/uploads/2020/04/Collaborative-activities-booklet-V2.5.pdf>

UCL: <https://www.ucl.ac.uk/teaching-learning/assessment-resources/designing-effective-online-assessment>

Vanderbilt University: <https://cft.vanderbilt.edu/guides-sub-pages/teaching-large-classes/>

Harvard University: <https://teachremotely.harvard.edu/best-practices>

Reading University: <https://www.reading.ac.uk/engageinassessment/assessing-large-groups/eia-how-to-tackle-large-group-assessment.aspx>

Resources from Pedagogy for HE Large Classes community: <https://zenodo.org/communities/phelc/?page=1&size=20>