

Covid19 pandemic

AIU TRANSITION TO ONLINE TEACHING AND LEARNING

INTRODUCTION



Due to the untimely and unexpected circumstances of the COVID 19 Pandemic, we at AIU were thrown into Online Teaching and Learning Scenario without much preparation. However, we did not panic because we have teachers with wise and cool minds. Immediately we agreed on the online teaching learning process.

So, do you need sophisticated technology for this? Actually, most learning management systems (LMS) only require a good Wi-Fi connection, a laptop with a webcam and keyboard and a set of earphones.

In recent times educational technology has adapted very quickly to enable online learning to be better than ever. Today we have built-in cameras and microphones in our computers, the ability to quickly and easily watch video. The current “Web” (www) structures allow for lectures, discussions and even exams with basic technologies that most people have access to.



READINESS AND WILLINGNESS TO START

What do we need to do to prepare ourselves to start an online class? If you are a first timer here are some tips that may be useful.

a. Setting Goals

The first thing you'll want to think about is what you're trying to achieve with this online course. Consider whether the entirety of the course will be on online teaching platforms or as a supplement to a course, or meant as a prerequisite before joining a future course, e.g. an online course on basic math skills which might be required before taking an advanced live class, etc. In our case it is meant to take over traditional class in entirety at least during the Movement Control Order.

b. Create a Course Plan

Just like a face-to-face course, courses on online learning platforms need to have outlines or course plans for what you'll cover each week. If these are courses that you've previously offered live, you're one step ahead of the game. Your course plans will be your maps for what kinds of materials you will need to create for your lessons.

c. Gather Your Equipment

After you've considered what lessons you want to teach and what online learning platform you want to use, think about what types of equipment, software, and other tools you have at your disposal. Do you have a video camera or other device capable of capturing HD video? Do you have a screencasting software program? If not, look up free screencasting software program such as Screencast-O-Matic or Jing etc. Will you need to create PowerPoints? Do you have a microphone to capture audio? Once you figure out what your technological capabilities and limitations are, you'll know what kinds of content you'll want to create.



d. Set Aside Time for Creation and Editing

If you're going to create videos and screencasts for your lessons, consider not only the time it takes to record these, but also how long it takes to edit them, create title slides, render and upload them to online teaching platforms, etc.

STARTING OUT WITH ONLINE CLASSES

Online classes have traditionally been asynchronous which means students engage with the course materials on their own time. Now there are programs that feature live sessions, where the teacher and students meet online for a live-streamed lecture and discussion. While this can be a huge advantage for students who stand to benefit from in-class discussions with other students, live lectures and real-time interactions it can be overwhelming for a teacher who is conducting an online class for the first time.

If you're into this then your first step is to prepare such as class is to familiarise yourself with the technology you need to instruct the class, all the functions you may need and actions you'll perform. For e.g. you know how to present a slideshow, share your screen and transfer to a student who is giving a presentation. You can check with your IT team to be sure you understand how to perform the basic functions of your class by;

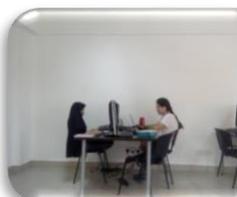
- not being intimidated by the process.
- not neglecting to seek support.
- embrace the flexibility.

Virtual Live Classes give students the ability to:

- Listen to the teacher in real time and interact with other students as the lecture evolves.
- Be visible via webcam (which holds students accountable to paying attention and engaging in the lecture). As with real-life classes, participation makes for better online learning.

a. Communication While Teaching Online

All teachers have office hours, so you need to ensure you know how to help students reach you. For e.g. hosting a Google Hangout at the same time every week, or scheduling phone calls and texting as needed, staying after class with students who have questions and others. It is important we establish a schedule for the course and have clear expectations. This is especially true for online classrooms because the environment may seem less formal so that students have an understanding of their responsibilities. It would be a good idea to keep your course in line with your program's best practices so that you can shape your online teaching according to what has been proven to work. There're fewer



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opportunities to give feedback in an online classroom, so it's a good idea to provide feedback quickly when you can with external link. It's also a good idea to ask for feedback yourself on how students are doing and what they need more.

b. Adapting a Curriculum for Teaching Online

Online teaching requires special considerations. A simple example is what you're used to telling your students verbally now needs to be translated into text. You would also want to know what technology options are available to make sure you are taking advantage of all options available such as: timed quizzes available; learning management system (LMS); links to YouTube, students videoing themselves, answering discussion questions and posting of assignments. You'd also need to do the following to ensure the successful adaptation of your curriculum from face to face to online:

- Understand the process of your course material creation
- Prepare homework and reading materials accordingly
- Get answers from experienced online teachers
- Vary assignments for all learning styles
- Understand what your class size means

c. Choice between Dedicated Learning Management System (LMS) and Free Learning Platform

A good learning management system is key to making things easy for the teachers as they will need to quickly share media without too many technical issues. Students, too, will want a simple, reliable system for contributing their own notes, discussion threads, and most importantly, tests and assignments. In AIU we do have our LMS but teachers are complaining it is inadequate and does not meet their needs. As such we may need to use relevant external link platforms but we need to make sure we are taking advantage of all that online learning has to offer our students. Knowing the system well will reduce mistakes and fumbling in working with the system. It'll save us time, add variety to our lessons and get better insights that is not possible with a traditional classroom. A few components to focus on:

- to Identify the most common technical issues.
- to discover the platform tools to make learning and discussion more efficient.

d. Interactive Course Content

For those of us who have sat through hours of boring lectures and turned the pages of our textbook only to entertain ourselves, we can definitely appreciate the main advantage of online learning and that is interactivity. Today online classrooms have evolved and simply reading and documents is something in the past. Many platforms quizzes, discussion questions, and real-time features, like conversations lively and learning active.

For the lectures what is more important is to be able to transit lectures first. Of course when transitioning your class online variety of choices to deliver your essential course content. For

would need to transfer your lecture contents to a digital setting. For some teachers, putting PowerPoint slides, notes and even creating video lectures could be natural for them. For example, creating videos of your lectures in some cases may simply involve recording key pieces of lecture material. It may be simple but that is already a good start. Nevertheless, before you record what exactly you would want to do in class may not meet the needs of online learning so please consider the following before jumping in and recording a lecture exactly as you would have given it in class. Perhaps we should take some time to consider the following:



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i. Avoid Large Files and Long Recordings

For both technical and pedagogical reasons we need to keep all multimedia recordings of your lectures as short as possible. Your video files should be smaller than 250 MB which means your video lecture materials should be broken up into very small parts of 5-15 minutes maximum. This is important because watching a lecture online is not the same as attending a real class. Recent researches have shown that many students don't watch the whole videos if they are too long in one sitting and often get disinterested after only 5 mins. Therefore, file size is important because students may have limited access to internet and downloading large files could take forever.

ii. Narrated PowerPoint.

PowerPoint allows us to embed audio files on our slides. Students can hear our explanation, clarification and description alongside each of our slides. Students seem to appreciate more if you include your talking points and course notes in addition to the audio recordings.

iii. Screencasts

A screencast is a video recording or transmission of the data displayed on the screen of a computer or mobile device, typically with accompanying audio. It allows you to walk students through a process (e.g., demo software or how to work through a calculation) or talk through a slide presentation. For guidelines on how to create a narrated Power Point and video screencast you can Google it and there are plenty sites you can learn from because there're many different tools and software for creating screencasts.

iv. You in the Video

Normally students' attention and engagement online are not the same as in the classroom. Research shows that videos that include visuals of the instructor may be a source of distraction and impair learning. However, if you believe you are the source of inspiration to your students then you may consider including a video recording of you on screen in the beginning or end of the video such as creating a short introductory video to the week's lesson or topic and or a short concluding video where you can appear in full.



MINIMIZING THE DRAWBACK OF ONLINE TEACHING AND LEARNING

In a face-to-face class, students can ask questions at any point of a lecture but in online environments, this can only happen in synchronous learning (online education that happens in real time). In real life teachers can adapt and adjust their lectures quickly based on their sense of whether students are understanding the material or struggling with it. However, an online lecture is less flexible because it is delivered in a one-way process and in an undeviating manner. Yes, students can ask questions about the online lecture after they watch it through email or in discussion groups but this isn't the same as being able to ask questions as the lecture is being delivered.

Therefore it would be a good idea for our teachers to supplement their online lectures with materials that provide alternative ways of explaining the same content such as documents or links to YouTube or any video that explains it from a different angle or provides additional, relevant examples.

a. Creating Variety

Variety is the quality of being different and diverse and young people normally hate uniformity or monotony. So, you must consider at least some of these options to create some variety in delivering online lectures:

- I. Break things up between your lecture content and reading.
- II. Build a text-only version of an existing power-point presentation.
- III. Create an audio presentation from your slides.
- IV. Simply write your lecture as prose instead or include your detailed course notes.

b. Lecture Less without Cutting Content

The transitioning we make to our course online does not mean we get rid of any vital course content. Nevertheless, the online format can often create the opportunity for lecturing less without any reduction in the type, amount, and quality of the content that students encounter. In order to reduce the amount of lecture content we may need to create and add other new things such as;

- I. **Link out to material that already exists online.** This can include things like open textbooks and other Open Educational Resources, as well as existing publicly available multi-media that covers your topic.
- II. **Substitute an extra reading in place of a lecture.** Perhaps there is a good article on one of your lecture topics that could be assigned in lieu of the time that students would have spent watching a lecture recording.
- III. **Emphasize existing course readings.** In class, you may at times cover certain material through both assigned readings and lectures, using lectures to reinforce or comment on things that students have already read. When transitioning online, it may be more effective instead to signal to your students the important sections of the reading and add comments and clarifications with minimal repetition or summary of the content. You can also combine readings with a simple comprehension activity to help make sure that students have mastered the material.

c. Students' Assignments Submission

In online learning, not only can we the teachers deliver content through videos, but we can also ask students to submit a video presentation individually or in groups. Video projects often work well for full online programmes and courses but could be a challenge in our situation of this transitioning period. For example, asking students to submit large files (250 MB or more) is not recommended.

The main drawback of using Dropbox for these submissions is the limit to the file size a student can upload. Therefore, teachers have to find alternative ways to allow students to upload larger files such as LEARN (BONGO) or offer alternatives such as audio-only and text-only methods of completing the assignment for students who have difficulty creating or uploading a video for technical or accessibility reasons.

PREPARING TO TEACH ONLINE

The past few years have seen a significant growth and shift in online education for reasons such as easier access and general flexibility. This growth opens up new avenues shifting from classroom teaching to online teaching and needs us to make adjustments. However, with a little research and practice, we too can gain the flexibility and easy access that the students themselves are searching for.

We have to plan our classes well as our students are not front of us. We need to master technology as we won't get IT time. We also need to set up an adequate working as we don't have the luxury of the university's office. Without environment and a good amount of self-discipline, our stay-can become a nightmare. It is essential that we innovate and discussions to encourage participation, much like how we traditional class. We must communicate regularly and consistent online presence. We also have to motivate our because everyone learns differently and motivation plays a big part in the ability to learn. Always ask for help and feedback from your students because it can provide you with valuable input that can help move your class forward.



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So, in summary if you could do the following we could have a great start to achieve our online teaching-learning;

a. Better to record your lectures then stream them

If students are unwell or are struggling with internet access, they will miss a live streamed lecture. Record videos instead and send them to your students so that they can watch at their own time.

b. Show your face and presence

Lecture videos that show teachers' faces could allow the students to familiarise themselves with the present circumstances, however it would be a good idea to intersperse your slides with video of yourself.

c. Keep your videos short

Videos longer than 15 minutes can cause issues of slow downloading and learner distraction. If you have more to say, record two or three short videos.

d. Test out slides

Make sure you test slides on a smartphone before shooting your lectures so all text is readable on small screens. Font sizes, colours, template designs and screen ratios can be double-checked.

e. Use existing resources

It is unrealistic to expect that you, on your own, will produce a semester's worth of high-quality videos. You can use pre-developed resources available online and provide students with clickable links.

f. Make sure what you give are open access

Using open resources helps prevent access problems for students. If any of your suggested resources are not accessible, you will receive an inbox full of student emails and eventually waste all your time troubleshooting. Spending a few extra minutes carefully searching for fully open access materials will save you a headache later.

g. Give specific instructions

For example when you suggest an online media which runs for longer than 15 minutes, students will be put off watching it. Instead, suggest the exact parts they need to read or view (eg 13:35 to 16:28) as this can even make students more curious.

h. Provide interactive activities

Most learning management systems, such as Google Class, Moodle, Edmodo and Blackboard, include a range of functions to create interactive learning activities such as quizzes. Step-by-step guides to creating them are widely available online.

i. Set reasonable expectations

When you create quizzes, you should make sure all questions can be answered by referring to the given learning resources. When you ask students to write a summary of lecture videos, you should make it clear that this is not a serious report. Making this as a mandatory assignment but a low-stakes task will produce the best outcomes and responses from students. A set of 15 quiz questions or a 300-word limit will be enough to engage students for 30 minutes.

j. Use auto-checking to measure attendance

If you tell students that their attendance will be measured by their participation in a quiz, it will increase compliance. However, you won't have time to check them all, so use the automatic checking and grading features on the learning management systems.

k. Use group communication carefully

Group communication shouldn't be used for direct teaching. Instead, set up "virtual office hours" on a video conferencing tool like Zoom, Google Meet, skype etc. Simply log in at the appointed time and wait for students. Focus on providing social support and checking if any issues need to be addressed immediately. This can be a great way to collect student feedback on your online teaching as well.

l. Let students take control

You can set up online group spaces for small groups of students and ask them to support and consult with one another before sending emails to you directly. You can post a couple of questions to help students break the ice and start conversation. Encourage students to use the communication tools they prefer. Some groups will click well and some will not but this little tip can make students feel socially supported and reduce your inbox traffic.

m. Don't hide your feelings

Online teachers' emotional openness is a great instructional strategy. Tell your students that it is your first time teaching online and you are learning while teaching. Explicitly ask them to help you, reassuring them that you will do your very best to support their learning as well. They will be sympathetic since they share the same emotions, and you will be set up for success.

n. Repeat what works

Online students do not like frequent changes in their learning style. They are happy to repeat the same structure and activities to get some form or normality. Once you find a teaching style working for you, feel free to repeat it each week until you are back in your classroom.

CONCLUSION

A Japanese proverb says; *Better than a thousand days of diligent study is one day with a great teacher.*

In most cultures teachers are highly appreciated because they are the source of not only knowledge but character building. In AIU we put emphasis on the 5A's of adab (mannerism), akhlaq (moral virtues), amalan (practice), aqidah (faith) and amanah (honesty) with the objective to develop students to be responsible citizens who will in turn develop their own communities with love and kindness. We intend to give them strong roots just like the Malay proverb; *A tree with strong roots laughs at storms*". As such a great teacher is still much needed, what more a great teacher with new tools.

That new tool for the great teacher to impact strong roots among the students is the Online Learning. We don't intend to have total online learning with the demise of Covid -19 but will use the experience garnered to establish a strong alternative and supportive mode of learning. Overall, online education is a wonderful opportunity with undeniable benefit. We could have the potential to reach students you would never or could never meet in a physical classroom. Online teaching and learning is not a bed of roses either as it has its limitations. As such if we could combine the traditional humanistic touch with online flexibility our 5A values would be well within reach.

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