

RESPONSIVE BLENDED LEARNING: TOP TIPS FOR TEACHING IN PHYSICALLY DISTANCED CONTEXTS

Teaching on campus as part of Responsive Blended Learning will be rather different to before the pandemic. Whilst not all students or staff will be on campus, those that are will value the ability to meet in-person. Think carefully about how you will use this time to support student learning and strengthen a sense of belonging to our Heriot-Watt community. Keep learning active and engaging, build in opportunities for students to discuss and ask questions, and create opportunities to link online and on-campus learning.

1. **Keep yourself and your students safe.**

Follow the Covid-safe campus guidance relevant to your location and ensure that students do too. Plan for movement into and out of class taking longer than previously – and tailor your teaching sessions accordingly.

2. Be kind. This continues to be a challenging time for everyone. Build in space for informal discussion. This can help give you a sense of how people are coping and what support may be helpful. Be approachable and make it clear how and when students can speak to you if they need to. Acknowledge students may not be starting at the same level that they have in previous years, given all the disruption to their learning. They may need support to adjust to new ways of studying. Be flexible and supportive in how you address this.

3. Plan ahead. Clearly communicate to students what they should do before, during and after the class. A 'flipped classroom' approach may be appropriate. Consider what technologies / resources you and your students will need or will have available to use. For example, you may need students to access material online as part of your class, rather than pass around handouts or resources.

Learning is not a spectator sport! Even with physical distancing, you will still be able to build in opportunities for meaningful engagement.

Ensure students know what is expected of them well in advance: The announcements page on your Course site on the VLE (Vision) can be helpful in supporting this.

4. Make the most of campus time. Use the time to help students to orientate themselves to the course, to build confidence as active learners and to consolidate and critically engage with learning. Focus on those activities and interactions that are more effective on campus or harder to deliver online. This may include use of specialist equipment, collaborating in specific learning spaces and activities that build community across the group.

5. Keep learning active. Learning is not a spectator sport! Even with physical distancing, you will still be able to build in opportunities for meaningful engagement and interaction. For example, you will still be able to do 'think, pair,

share' activities, small group activities and polling (with or without the use of technology).

6. Make teaching accessible. Remember to check learner profiles to ensure you can meet individual needs. However, others may not have declared a disability but still experience barriers. For example, wearing a mask prevents people from lipreading and it can also impact on ability to read facial expressions. If possible, use a mask with a clear panel over the mouth to alleviate this issue. Make use of microphones or other voice amplification where available as this improves accessibility. It also protects your voice from strain if wearing a mask. And remember, existing good practices on accessibility still apply.

7. Make use of appropriate technology. Technology is available in some classrooms so check what is available in your teaching spaces and plan any use in advance. Students may have internet connected devices e.g. smartphones, which enable them to access the course site or other technology which can support their learning. For example, use OneNote or Word to record shared notes or group activities, Sway to develop shared presentations, or Excel to record shared data.

8. Connecting on campus and online. This is not an easy option but may be appropriate in some cases. If you are going to connect across campuses or between on and off campus students careful planning will be required. Ensure you plan any 'connected' session so that all participants can engage and you are not just focused on those physically present in the room. Plan how you will address any technical or connection issues. Be pragmatic about what can be done in such contexts in terms of multi-way communication and interaction: keep activities

and communication clear and simple. Take time to test out any new approaches and build your confidence in the use of new technology prior to your class!

Even if you are teaching some students on campus, your online course site remains the hub where students will access course resources and come together.

9. Making the 'blend' of learning work for your students. Think about how the online and on-campus aspects of your course and your students' learning fit together. Even if you are teaching some students on campus, your online course site remains the hub where students will access course resources and come together to discuss and develop their understanding of the course. Make the connections between online and on-campus activity clear. For example, ask a question or set a challenge for them to consider in class. They can then share ideas after class in the online discussion boards. This can work as an effective tool to keep your whole course cohort working and sharing together.

10. Enjoy being back on campus and meeting your students in-person. Make the most of the opportunities this provides to build community and connections within your course and across your programmes. Students will value the opportunity to engage with the wider student experience of being on campus, as well as connecting with their classes. Continue to make the most of online and on-campus spaces and the creative opportunities that a Responsive Blended Learning approach provides you and your students.

FURTHER RESOURCES

Healey, M. and Healey, R. (2020) **Embedding active learning in your teaching practice.** [Online] Available at <https://lta.hw.ac.uk/wp-content/uploads/Embedding-Active-Learning-into-Your-Teaching-Practice.pdf>

This guide provides examples of active learning which you can embed in your teaching practices to enhance student learning. Many of the examples will work in a physically-distanced learning space with little or no adaptation, other might require some creativity to make them work. It provides examples of activities for use within a teaching session and those which are carried out over the space of several sessions.

Hughes, G. (2020) **Supporting student wellbeing through curriculum design and delivery.** [Online] Available at https://lta.hw.ac.uk/wp-content/uploads/Guide-NO20_Supporting-Student-Wellbeing-Through-Curriculum-Design-and-Delivery.pdf

This guide provides some key considerations for staff on creating healthy and successful learning environments. It includes practical tips on supporting transitions, scaffolding learning and developing a collaborate classroom culture, as well as looking after your own wellbeing.

Race, P. (2019) **In at the Deep End: Starting to Teach at Heriot-Watt.** [Online] Available at https://www2.hw.ac.uk/mediaservices/pageflip/LTA/In_at_the_Deep_End_Document/

This resource provides practical guidance on the key points to keep in mind whilst teaching. It provides tips, ideas and tactics alongside insights and approaches to teaching in higher education.

Further support on pedagogy and practice is available from the [Learning and Teaching Academy](#) and **support on using technology** is available from the [Learning and Teaching Enhancement Service](#).

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