

MAINTAINING
LEARNING, TEACHING
& ASSESSMENT
CONTINUITY

Swansea Academy of
Learning & Teaching

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Maintaining Learning, Teaching and Assessment Continuity

There are a number of circumstances that might require teaching staff to move traditional and blended delivery to a wholly online environment with minimal notice. The aim of this document is to provide information on key points to consider, techniques to continue teaching and assessing online and to offer links to further resources available at Swansea and across the internet that may help you to reduce the disruption to your students.

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Key considerations

Plan

This is not always possible but by identifying how you would address an emergency and setting expectations from the outset provides your students with information of what to expect if classes are cancelled and the procedures that will be implemented.

Plan for all

Keep the complete variety of students at the forefront of your planning to ensure as many students can continue to learn during the period. Designing interventions and changes to the delivery that benefit those with specific learning difficulties, disabilities and the wide range of socio-economic backgrounds within our student body ensures all students are better provided for. If you already employ a blended approach, some students may be able to adapt to the sudden change, but there are a myriad of complex factors and situations that students deal with that may not be evident; illness, poor internet connection, needing to support and care for family members. These will come into play when a schedule is changed at short notice, impacting their capacity to continue with learning online.

Collaborate as a team

Working with colleagues across the module/programme/Department/College impacted will aid consistency in the approach taken. Coordinate the delivery method that will be used; this will help students as they will not have to learn and adapt to multiple approaches or new tools across all the disrupted teaching. As a team, review assessments in order to identify any that may prove problematic; group work, presentations, laboratory work and formal examinations. As a team formulate alternatives.

Communicate

Inform your students now, even if a plan is not in place. Inform them that changes are coming and what the expectations of both parties are for keeping in contact so that further details can be disseminated in a timely and consistent approach. Set expectations on how you will communicate, frequency of communication, how students can get in contact, office hours and the timeframes for a reply. Students will have lots of questions and providing a structure so that they know how and when to contact and how long to wait for a response will help all parties.

Set realistic goals

What do you feel is realistic within the time period of the disruption? Can you maintain the face to face contact via online methods (webinar/online chat/discussion boards)? Should students continue with key readings supplemented with assessments to provide structure and accountability? Are you happy for students to self-serve and work through materials online until normal teaching resumes? Keep it simple, be mindful that providing too much content or utilising lots of new approaches may overwhelm students and reduce their ability to learn.

Review the teaching schedule and identify new expectations

Can aspects of the schedule be brought earlier or moved later to accommodate the disruption? For example, can group work continue, can you replace immediate activities which can be undertaken when normal teaching resumes? Build in flexibility in case the situation takes longer to resolve than anticipated. Will submission dates need to change?

Students will appreciate early communication of such changes and requests for extensions should be dealt with fairly.

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Use tools that are widely available and approaches that are familiar

Using new tools can increase anxiety for both parties, try to utilise those supported by the institution. If the disruption is due to a crisis this may already impact the cognitive and emotional energy of everybody. Bringing in new tools or approaches could leave less energy and attention for learning. Ensure your virtual learning environment (VLE - Blackboard, Canvas) pages meet the [minimum requirements](#) and consider the overall [accessibility](#) of any documents or resources being shared.

Continuing learning

Communicate with your students

Early and frequent communication can ease student anxiety and reduce the number of individual questions you receive as opposed to all students asking the same or variations of a question. Set expectations on how often you will email or post messages on the VLE. Inform students how often they should check their University email or the VLE and set expectations on how quickly you will respond.

Try to effectively manage your communications load, your students may have the same recurring questions to start with. Keeping a track of frequently asked questions and sending replies out to everyone on the course/module. Consider creating an information page in your VLE site and encourage students to check that first for answers before emailing. Reinforce this resource by redirecting students back to that page if they continue to ask questions already covered. An online discussion board could be created and self-managed by the students for learning and content related queries. Teaching staff should check in regularly to ensure students are not circulating incorrect information or topic misconceptions.

Distribute course materials

Make use of the VLE and reading list software, supplementing core materials with additional content to support students learning online. This may include an updated schedule, additional readings or instructional information. Inform students that new material has been added and where it is located, remembering to use meaningful titles and contextual information within the VLE.

Many students may only have a mobile phone available to them so try to use [mobile-friendly formats](#). Consider saving files in PDF format and uploading both versions to the VLE or distribute via email. Try to reduce the file size to make access on mobile networks quicker and more efficient for the end user. Microsoft Office applications have options to [compress image sizes](#) which in turn reduces the overall file size without loss of image quality.

Video files can take up a lot of bandwidth, use only when you are confident students will be able to access them and use methods for streaming rather than having to download the file to a device for playback.

Deliver learning

The continuation of delivery is still possible via [synchronous and asynchronous](#) methods. Recording video or audio is available via tools within the VLE and other methods and the recordings can be uploaded to the VLE for students to playback at a time convenient to them. Alternatively, webinar software can enable live lectures/seminars/tutorials to continue at a distance. Be mindful that depending on the nature of the crisis your students may not be able available at the same time as the scheduled time.

If your course makes use of laboratory time, there are online resources that may replicate the experience. If this is not an option schedule this time to undertake additional forms of interaction; online chat, online tutorials, directed learning etc. buying time back for when normal teaching resumes.

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Foster collaboration and communication amongst students

Fostering collaboration allows you to maintain a sense of community that can help motivate students to participate and learn. Make use of discussion boards, online chat as well as enabling students to support each other using webinar tools available within and outside of the VLE.

Undertaking assessment

Many Departments already make use of the tools available for the submission of assessments; Turnitin, VLE assignment submission, quizzes and test functionality. During any period of teaching online such as campus closure, some students may no longer have access to a computer. Keep the following in mind:

Assignments and tasks that require specific software may not be available to all students. Have a backup plan in this situation.

Have a recommended naming convention for filenames; *FirstnameLastnameModuleCode_EssayTitle*. Looking through a list of files all titled *PhotosynthesisEssay.docx* to identify the students who have submitted will be time-consuming.

Avoid the temptation to ask students to email you their submissions. This may swamp your inbox and potentially cause your data allocation to reach its maximum, therefore preventing further emails to be received until others are deleted. Email services have restrictions on the size of files that they will allow, students may not be able to send data heavy or large multimedia files.

Be prepared to make allowances, make clear the process students need to follow to request extensions but be ready to allow flexibility. This may also include extending the marking and feedback turnaround time.

If the disruption to learning and teaching will impact written or physical examinations how will these be maintained? Consider alternative assessment methods that will still enable students to meet the learning outcomes. Would proctored online assessment be required or even feasible?

Resources

At Swansea the following tools and technologies are currently available to staff to support the delivery of teaching:

- [Blackboard Learn](#)
- [Blackboard Collaborate](#)
- [Canvas](#)
- [Zoom](#)
- [Microsoft Office 365](#)
- [Microsoft Teams](#)
- [Pebble+](#)
- [Xerte](#)
- [eStream](#)
- [Camtasia](#)

Support for staff and students

For technical issues staff can contact the customer service team:

Webpage: www.swansea.ac.uk/it-services/help/
Phone: 01792 (29) 5500
Email: customerservice@swansea.ac.uk
Social Media: @SwanseaUniLib on [Facebook](#) or [Twitter](#)
Online Service Desk: <https://servicedesk.swansea.ac.uk/>

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Alternatives Learning Situations

Learning Situation	Alternatives	Supporting tools	Staff and Student Requirements
Lecture	Live stream from office/home Prerecord from office/home Reuse previously recorded material Use widely available material – YouTube , Vimeo , TED	eStream Zoom Blackboard Collaborate Canvas Conferences Microsoft Teams	High Speed internet Suitable device with microphone* webcam* and audio playback *optional depending on approach taken
Seminar	Run webinar from home/office	As cell above	As cell above
Tutorial	Run a webinar from home/office	As cell above	As cell above
Laboratory / Practical sessions	Online simulations Upload additional materials and online activities as an alternative	https://phet.colorado.edu/en/simulations Blackboard Canvas	As cell above for simulations Internet connection and suitable device for accessing VLE
Asynchronous discussion	Discussion boards	Blackboard Learn Canvas	Internet connection and suitable device
Synchronous discussion	Online chat Time bound discussion forum	As cell above plus: Canvas Chat Zoom Microsoft Teams	Internet connection and suitable device
Distribution of learning materials	Utilise the VLE or other appropriate platforms	Blackboard Learn Canvas Office 365 Microsoft Teams	Internet connection and suitable device
Collaborate on documents	Office 365 OneNote	Office 365 Microsoft Teams	Internet connection and suitable device
Submission of assessments	Utilise electronic submission points via the VLE	Blackboard Learn Canvas Turnitin – Feedback Studio	Internet connection and suitable device
Assignment marking and feedback	Utilise electronic marking in the VLE	Blackboard Learn – NewBox view Canvas – SpeedGrader Turnitin – Feedback Studio	Internet connection and suitable device

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Learning Situation	Alternatives	Supporting tools	Staff and Student Requirements
Formative assessments	Utilise electronic submission points via the VLE to provide feedback Create formative quizzes within the VLE	As cell above plus: Blackboard Tests Canvas Quizzes and NewQuizzes	Internet connection and suitable device
Additional learning resources	Electronic resources in the Library: e-resources and e-journals, electronic reading lists Make use of multimedia	Library Guides YouTube , Vimeo , TED	Internet connection and suitable device
Course related communication	Use announcements and notifications within the VLE	Blackboard Learn Canvas	Internet connection and suitable device
Examinations	Undertake proctored examinations	Solutions are being actively investigated	High Speed internet, suitable device with microphone , webcam and audio playback

Useful links

Tool	Link
Blackboard Learn	https://help.blackboard.com/Learn/Instructor
Blackboard Collaborate	https://help.blackboard.com/Collaborate/Ultra
Canvas	https://community.canvaslms.com/groups/instructors/pages/home
Zoom	https://support.zoom.us/hc/en-us/articles/206618765-Zoom-Video-Tutorials
Microsoft Office 365	https://support.office.com/en-gb/article/office-365-basics-video-training-396b8d9e-e118-42d0-8a0d-87d1f2f055fb
Microsoft Teams	https://support.office.com/en-gb/article/microsoft-teams-video-training-4f108e54-240b-4351-8084-b1089f0d21d7
Pebble+	https://help.pebblepad.com/helpfile.aspx?v3k=d2a5149c-1595-4e4e-a02a-494a9f52d7c5&v=16&tg=3bf540bf-f5a7-4714-a00e-bca93111676b&vn=5.0&t=1&f=0
Xerte	https://www.xerte.org.uk/index.php/en/support-menu/support
eStream	https://planetestream.co.uk/knowledgebase.aspx
Camtasia	https://www.techsmith.com/tutorial-camtasia.html
Digital Accessibility SAILS Guidance	https://salt.swan.ac.uk/digital-accessibility-regulations/ https://staff.swansea.ac.uk/inclusivity-academy/ - see section titled Making Resources Inclusive
Turnitin	https://help.turnitin.com/feedback-studio/integrations.htm

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