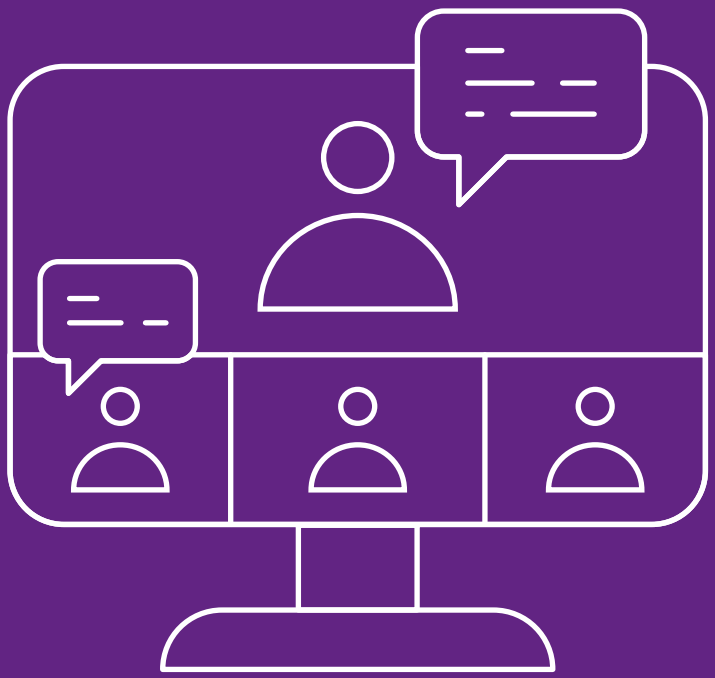
www.itecworld.co.uk/find-a-qualification

www.vtct.org.uk/find-a-qualification

Remote delivery hints and tips



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1 Supporting remote teaching and learning

Remote teaching and learning creates new opportunities for delivering effective learning and collaboration remotely. It is very important that the following be kept in mind before you investigate the various online tools available:

The focus should be on teaching and learning and what you think will work with your learners, rather than technology
All the tools require the skill, experience and expertise of a teacher to be fully utilised
They will probably involve approaches and techniques that you would not normally use
The tools you choose should be in line with any centre policy related to learners being on line

When considering how to deliver remotely it is worth remembering Synchronous and Asynchronous Learning and choosing the right method of online learning is essential for the success of your learners. Deciding whether to use synchronous learning, asynchronous learning or a combination of both depends on your group of learners and your learning objectives.

Synchronous Learning

Synchronous learning takes place in 'real-time', where learners are engaging in learning at the same time just like a regular classroom experience. It allows your learners to ask questions and get answers immediately. It is also useful when you want learners to engage with each other. You will need to adhere to a specific schedule just like a timetable and this can have a feeling of familiarity for learners who are used to the structured study times. However, some learners may need more individual attention or they may struggle to understand some of the lesson. As a tutor you need to be very aware of group dynamics and manage them accordingly

Try using:

- Video conferencing e.g. Microsoft team, Zoom
- Live webinars
- Virtual classrooms
- Instant messaging

Video conferencing

Live webinars

Virtual classrooms

Instant messaging

Asynchronous Learning

Asynchronous learning has a more learner centred approach. It benefits learners who might otherwise struggle to complete learning tasks at the same speed as other learners or who might feel uncomfortable speaking in front of a group. It may also help learners on part-time programmes who need a more flexible approach to their study time.

You could try:

- Documents, content and assessments uploaded to the VLE (Blackboard/TU Online)
- Pre-recorded video lessons or webinars
- Email discussions
- Online discussion boards
- Learners can work on collaborative documents on a cloud platform
- Blogs

Remote learning fits well with theory aspects of vocational subjects, but naturally some learning will need to take place in a practical environment. So any remote delivery must be developed with this aspect in mind.

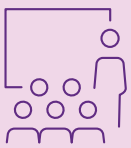
A blended approach will probably suit most centres as it brings together three core elements:

- classroom-based activities with the teacher present
- online learning materials
- independent study using materials provided by the teacher, either online or in hard copy, to reinforce concepts or develop skills

This blend of activities means that the teacher also has a blend of roles, acting as a 'facilitator' as they organise and direct group activities, both online and offline.

Blended learning can help to bring together the main advantages of synchronous learning such as teacher presence, immediate feedback and peer interaction. It can combine these with the main advantages of asynchronous learning as it makes learners independent, allows for flexibility and self-pacing. Best of all it can help to avoid the pitfalls of asynchronous learning like learners feeling isolated and difficulty with then motivating themselves.

A blended approach



classroom-based

online learning

independent study

2 Interaction

Learning remotely raises concerns about isolation, learner welfare and lack of interaction. Therefore, it is important to identify ways of keeping all learners in regular contact. This could be achieved by arranging discussion forums or chat groups. VLEs like 'Moodle' often have discussion forums built in. These can be utilised to allow learners to interact with the tutor and each other in a controlled way, which will encourage interaction in the future. It does not matter what the platform is – your implementation to create impact for learners is the most important aspect to consider.

Lecturers need to ensure their presence in the digital classroom is known, and there are many ways to make yourself known by utilizing a range of different communication methods and tools. Some organisations have the capacity to text learners to communicate with classes, check in with them in virtual world via group chats or if a learner is struggling check in daily or hourly if needed. Other methods of making your self-known are the use of emails, announcements, and general college forums. Set clear guidelines for your learners about when you'll be present.

Creating routines is important, as learners will know when and how they can contact you. It also manages expectations allowing learners to relax and know when things will be happening. Create and publish a schedule to facilitate this. It should include;

- A drop-in tutorial slot
- An individual scheduled tutorial slot to ensure clear action plans with outcomes and dates agreed by lecture and learner
- A timeframe of when you will respond to messages

Ensure that your study programme is published with key dates and milestones, as this helps manage the learner's time and priorities, it should include as a minimum the following;

A learning plan of when they should achieve various milestones

A calendar of deadlines for submitting work

A calendar of when marked/graded work will be returned

Clear resubmission dates for work that needs further development

Online classrooms can feel a little free-form as you are not in the same physical proximity. To overcome this for yourself and your learners, you'll need to provide clear set of expectations before the class commences. The expectations ideally should include what they can expect from you as their lecturer, as well as what they will be expected to do during the session. You may wish to remind them of due dates for assignments, which should also be published on discussion boards and emails. The learner's sessions and course will also benefit from knowing how often you plan to communicate with them, how much online participation you require of them, and the conduct you will expect them to display throughout the session/course.

When working online it is important to think about what you have written before posting/sending the information. This is very important principle for lectures to follow, but this should also be emphasised with learners. It is well known that written text can be open to interpretation or misinterpretation at any time, therefore it is vital to ensure well thought out responses and posts are published.

When writing responses on assignments and other evaluations, the best tone to adopt is a simple, clear, and polite one. Remember these responses may be all you learners have in relation to feedback, you must leave nothing open to interpretation.

Closing an online session effectively is very important. Always complete a final summary or informal assessment of learning. This activity helps ensure learners are able to reflect on what they have heard or learned. Encourage learners to reflect on the content and shared experiences, allow them to share so that everyone is aware of what they are taking away from the session.

Top Tip

Provide a clear set of expectations before the class commences to give a structure to the 'classroom' environment.

3 Engagement

You will want learners to feel as supported as possible when they are in the digital classroom, in the same way they would in the physical world. To help support this try to use a variety of dialogue formats (games/quizzes/group work/assignments/presentations), this way you will ensure your classroom caters to all learners and allows them to flourish.

Encourage learners to use the general forum for discussion, but also ensure there are small groups set up within the class so that learners can engage with and receive feedback and support from their peers. Some learners may sit back and learn from the periphery, whereas others will benefit from actively engaging in this type of medium.

As mentioned above implementing routines that allow learners to be organised so they can be engaged is important. Remember to motivate learners with positive feedback to encourage engagement. Often written feedback can be seen as more formal and it can appear as harsher criticism than spoken feedback. To counter this, identify video tools to use instead. Some examples are Microsoft Teams/ Skype/Skype Classroom/Google G Suite, Moodle also has third party "plug ins" that can be utilised. Thought needs to be given to how lecturers can help learners overcome potential issues to responding and how to ensure that learner do not feel isolated online?

Check your learner's engagement by asking your learners for direct and honest feedback on how things are going after 3-4 weeks. This feedback can cover everything from content to teaching methods, and ask them for any areas that require improvement, or that they dislike. Doing this openly via a discussion board will allow open and transparent communication.

Build an online relationship with each learner, you may find some learners open up to you differently on line. Always ensure that you allow time for a one on one period with each learner, it is just as important as effective group communication. Learners studying online can sometimes feel alone or abandoned in a digital classroom, so it is your responsibility to ensure they are engaged by reaching out to them.

Always use a blend of communication methods, and always personalise responses to their discussion board's posts and emails. At the start of the course/session, you must set out in your expectations and the communication methods you will be employing. Remember to abide by your organisations policies and procedures in respect to the online/digital world and never give out your personal email address or contact details to a learner.

Recognise Accessibility

Do you need to use Assistive Technology? This refers to any technology that makes it possible for a disabled person to use a computer, makes their use of that computer more efficient or enables them to access online information such as online learning materials. This might include:

- Display enhancement tools
- Audio tools
- Screen readers
- Writing tools
- Planning tools

There are many types of learning disabilities but you should ensure that:

- materials are laid out in a consistent manner and with clear explanations
- information contained in visual elements (e.g. images, video, and text) can be accessed without needing vision such an audio commentary
- information contained in auditory elements (e.g. video or sound clips) can be accessed without needing hearing such as a transcript
- display elements can be modified to suit the needs of the user (e.g. magnification, correct colour background for learners with dyslexia)
- any tasks can be performed without needing rapid text input skills, manual dexterity etc.

Other ways that you can ensure that text is easy to follow for all learners are:

- Use of side headings to break text down
- Use left aligned text rather than justified
- Don't rely on colour alone in case the learner is colour blind, for example use a green tick rather than a green dot so the learner can recognise the symbol as well as the colour
- When using powerpoint, copy the text to the notes section. This is because learners using a screen reader may find that it reads the notes on the slides in the order they were added not the order they show in
- Avoid using PDFs where text is saved with the image as screen reading software may not be able pick up on the text
- When using tables in a document, make them tall & thin rather than short and wide. If the table has more than 10 rows, repeat the column headings regularly so the table is easier to follow
- Use descriptive wording for web links rather than "click here" as screen reader tools may miss this
- Make visual elements accessible by providing a description

Assistive Technology

Display enhancement tools

Audio tools

Screen readers

Writing tools

Planning tools

4 Individual and collaborative work

Organising collaborative work for learners supports interaction and remote teaching and learning. Giving learners topics to develop into presentations with the opportunity to deliver these via the digital platform can encourage engagement. Learners could be assisted in developing a seminar using online tools to engage their audience.

Setting clear deadlines and schedules help in maintaining routine. Allowing learners to share workloads with these type of tasks, encourages them to interact outside of classroom reducing any feeling of isolation.

There are many ways to approach this. A class could meet online one day, share their challenges and then agree to meet a few days later to explore their initial thoughts. A lecturer's role is key to implementing and driving the learning expectations. Remember there are many opportunities to open up the work further to the learners themselves.

Maintain routine. Try this by setting clear deadlines and schedules for yourself and learners.

5 Tools and resources

There are no specific hardware or software requirements beyond an internet connection. Your learners are already engaged with the mobile world, via phones and tablets and computers. They will have logged on to the session via a device, so the best resources are going to be online. Look to use an assortment of relevant and easily accessible resources such as digital publications, news channels, online videos (even bad ones can be used to point out errors) and resources your college may have purchased or have access to such as those on the Blended Learning Consortium or Jisc websites. Focus the session on mobile content as it is ideal for them to incorporate into their smartphone or mobile device.

Below VTCT has listed some online tools available for teaching and learning purposes, be aware that they are not all free. Seek out the tools that best suits your learners and look for creative solutions. A lack of familiarity with the tools or approaches can be an advantage as trying new things can be fun for lecturers and learners and this encourages discussion, which helps engagement. Stretch your learners and ask for their ideas as they will be familiar with digital devices without even realising it, listen to their suggestions, as they will be looking at it from their perspective. Finally, keep all your classes talking, sharing and collaborating.

VTCT is not responsible for the content of external websites. We are sharing the links below as examples, which we hope you find useful.

Tools

There are many online resources, both free and paid-for, which you can use with learners. The quality of the content can vary so it's important to check any sites you recommend to your learners carefully.

Top Tip

Focus on mobile content as it is ideal for use with smartphones or mobile devices.

Office software

Standard office software tools are particularly effective to collate ideas online and develop collaborative responses. Some examples are Microsoft Office, Google Docs, Libre Office, Apache Open Office. Always remember that learners will tend to use what they are comfortable with on the device that they have, be it Microsoft, Android or Apple based. Using these tools will allow learners to develop skills for their future working life, as well as completing their course work.

Tools that facilitate discussion and collaboration

These tools empower teachers and learners to continue their learning – supporting existing teaching methods yet also enabling new ways of delivering lessons. They include both synchronous (real time) and asynchronous (different times) opportunities online.

Flipgrid

Padlet

Skype Classroom

Kialo

Explain Everything

Educreations

Tools that allow you to create interactive learning quizzes and games

These tools help learners have fun and enjoy the learning experience. They are great ways of engaging remote learners to collaborate in real time using questions/ challenges you have set. Learners can even use them to create their own micro assessments to share with others in the class.

Kahoot!

Breakout EDU

Socrative

Quizizz

Classcraft

Tools that allow you to create online learning content

Why? With these tools you can create bespoke learning activities based on your existing content. It takes time to build more complex activities, so ideally integrate them into an existing website or learning management system. It is even more effective to encourage learners to create their own.

Adobe Spark

PlayPosit

EdPuzzle

H5P

Quizlet

Do Ink

Storybird

Pixton

Flipsnack

Piktochart

Visme

Formative feedback tools

These tools allow you to choose from existing questions and set online assessment tasks. You can track progress and identify specific teaching content that requires more support.

Yacapaca

Learning by Questions

Nearpod

Spiral

ClassFlow

Seesaw

Collating ideas and content online

This is an opportunity to use online tools to gather a range of ideas collaboratively. You could start this as part of an online discussion and then ask learners to complete it with follow-up tasks.

Coggle

Wakelet

Zotero

Survey/voting tools

These tools allow you to keep track of learner progress as you deliver lessons online. Ask for immediate feedback, gather comments and track engagement.

Crowdsignal

GoSoapBox

Poll Everywhere

RLO/OER

Reusable Learning Object - RLO

This is a resource that has been shared and adapted by others

Open Education Resources - OER

These are similar to RLOs but OER typically refers to electronic resources, including those in multimedia formats, and such materials are generally released under a Creative Commons, or similar, license that supports open use of the content. OER can originate from colleges and universities, libraries, archival organisations, government agencies, commercial organisations such as publishers, or faculty or other individuals who develop educational resources they are willing to share (Educause, 2010).

OER repositories

Merlot

Open Learn

OER Commons

Vimeo

Flickr

Copyright and the role for Creative Commons licenses

If you are using information, image, video, or textbooks always check that the owner/author gives permission. In some cases this may be attributing the work to the producer.

It is your responsibility that you abide by any relevant law or license.

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