20 Things to consider for
online teaching

1 **Provide clear guidance to students** with a route map of what work they have covered, where they are, and where they are going.

2 **Keep online learning design simple and not data intensive. Adopt a flexible approach to how you approach online teaching – things may not work as planned.**

The bare minimum in a module (to limit data usage) should be a Learning Guide, content, transcripts of all video/audio lectures and video content (all in PDF format), and assessments and assignments.

3 **Structure your online module in a clear, logical way that will make it easy for students to navigate and find what they need to learn.**

Information should be provided on the purpose of the module and how the learning process is structured and carried out, including the module schedule, delivery modalities, modes of communication, types of learning activities, and how learning will be assessed.

4 **Provide students with a clear learning guide/path, a place where students can find learning material and clarity in the online module structure, where they can upload assignments and do assessments.**

- Provide a Learning Guide that includes an overview of, and introduction to, the learning content and a schedule of all activities (assignments, assessments, etc.) that students are expected to complete.

- For every module, provide a general course overview, a guide or description on how to explore the module, and procedure to follow with navigational instructions.

- Add a one-page pathway, summarising the sections to be covered and important weekly milestones (readings, activities, assignments and assessments) for the current and next term or semester.

5 **Present materials (in PDF format) and activities (in Word format) in your module to enable students to download and work offline.**

6 **Keep the instructions clear and simple.**

Clear but detailed instructions should accompany all online activities. Sufficient information will allow for seamless navigation, learning and submission of work.

7   **Teaching online to small or large classes call for different pedagogical approaches.**

- The number of students in your module will determine your approach to teaching, and required activities should be structured accordingly.

- Live 'lecturing' sessions with large classes will be a big challenge and may not be successful. The purpose of live classes must be clearly thought through. Pre-recorded sessions (maximum 3 – 5 minutes in duration) that students view in their own time will work better.

8   **For large classes, you may consider breaking up your class into smaller groups on Blackboard to engage students in active learning.**

Smaller groups are easier to manage and simplify marking. Use, for example, an online discussion on a topic or on difficult concepts. This will allow for seamless navigation, learning and submission of work.

9   **Keep in mind that for big classes, students may not be able to participate virtually and synchronously. Record virtual sessions (maximum 6 minutes in duration) so that students can access it later in their own time. Plan for students with limited connectivity to work asynchronously.**

- Provide a transcript (PDF) of the recorded 'lecture' – this will allow students with limited data to download and read a document. This applies to the use of YouTube videos as well.

- Shorter, to the point video clips, are more effective for learning as they are more engaging.

- As a rule of thumb, a 5 – 6 minute video requires 10MB to view – please keep this in mind.

10   **Divide large tasks into smaller, manageable tasks. Students may be off campus for a long time, and assessment could be continuous.**

Divide topics or themes into smaller, more manageable assessments or assignments that require less reading and research time online and more application and critical thinking skills.

11   **Use technology with the purpose to support your teaching and your students' learning: the simpler, the better.**

12   **Avoid long voice-over PowerPoints, long YouTube videos and lengthy videos. If you must use videos, keep them under 5 minutes and use HandBrake (click here) to condense them. Instead, prepare short voice recordings that you link to your learning material.**

13   **Vary your assessment strategies. Make use of the variety of tools available for assessment on Blackboard (in addition to multiple-choice).**

Examples include a variety of short question types, voice answers, portfolios, discussions, journalling and blogs.

14 **Feedback is critical. Constructive feedback will enhance learning.**

- Consider smaller assignments so that feedback is possible.

- Develop a detailed rubric to simplify feedback.

- Compile a list of standard, constructive feedback remarks that can be copied and pasted into assignments when marking.

15 Conduct a **quick survey in your module** to provide you with an idea of who your students are and what their constraints may be.

16 **Ask students if they have the technology and resources** that you require them to have to participate in your module. Adjust your approach if need be.

- Supply as many materials as possible (in PDF format) in your module or provide the URL links to study material/s, as students may not have sufficient data to do research online.

- Some students only have a smartphone to access Blackboard. This may pose a challenge in typing long assignments. Give your students the option to handwrite their essays and upload screenshots onto Blackboard.

17 Students are learning online/remotely, and this may make them **feel isolated and disconnected from the learning experience**. Create a personal presence by sending regular announcements and keeping in contact in a discussion forum.

Online communication cannot be emphasised enough.

18 **Be available to students who email you.** Share a response timeframe with students, e.g. "Your lecturer will respond to emails within 24 hours".

19 **Use tutors and assistant lecturers to help facilitate and support students.**

20 **Make provisions for your students** who have **challenges using technology**.

Direct them to the **Online Learning Off-Campus** module for students that is on Blackboard (under Organisations). Or to the following support services:

CAT Helpdesk ujhelp@uj.ac.za

ICS Helpdesk helpdesk@uj.ac.za