Co-funded by the
Erasmus+ Programme
of the European Union

iDream

Interactive – Digital Readiness
for All Education Mentors

Best Practice Guide for Digital Learners

Intellectual Output 5

Developed by IRIS

Table of Contents

Introduction

FOREWORD

In 2020 the world affected by COVID-19 pandemic changed irreversibly. In these turbulent times we were not aware that the coronavirus would be engaging the world much longer than initially assumed. The far-reaching effects also concern the learning process itself. When the coronavirus escalated into a global pandemic, school districts all over the world made the difficult decision to shut their doors — forcing an abrupt and nearly universal shift to distance learning that proved disruptive for teachers, students, and parents alike. As a matter of fact, lack of infrastructure and insufficient knowledge of digital tools or resources hindered the provision of qualitative remote education during the pandemic.

For teachers, the shift to online education has meant rethinking lesson plans to fit a very different format. "You sort of have to redo all of the curriculum so you can teach it online, because a lot of it was dependent on you being there and leading the students through certain things," says Tina Morris, science teacher and sustainability director at The Pike School in Massachusetts. For students, the coronavirus crisis triggered a rollercoaster of feelings, also those concerning their digital skills, self-confidence and social isolation.

Bearing this in mind, the main objective of our publication is to provide learners with appropriate knowledge and guidelines on successful and effective online education through a thorough analysis of their goals and expectations and the provision of a variety of relevant digital tools that could facilitate educators the development of customized courses and students – active participation in them, taking into consideration any technical requirements. In the second chapter we will also cover study space and time management issues which are quite significant while teaching and learning remotely. We will also highlight the importance of interaction, collaboration and rewarding/ motivation systems during online sessions.

Through the scrutiny of a learner's perspective and private insights into online education, we will explore the areas which require more intervention, adjustment and improvement.

Best practices in online education taking into account i.a.: consolidation of material, students' involvement in the activities proposed, knowledge verification or widely-understood evaluation, will surely enrich the Best Practice Guide for Digital Learners.

We really hope that thanks to our Guide learners will find some peculiar solutions, boost their motivation and this thoughtful effort will also awaken their interest and curiosity about what the future education may look like.

iDREAM Consortium Team

Chapter 1

How to learn successfully and effectively online?

A. **Goals and expectations**

The online learning environment presents a unique set of challenges that require clear rules. It is very important to set up the major goals of e-learning. Each learner is aware that in order for distance education to be effective, the specific needs of an individual must be met, for sure.

The main goals include:

- raising the quality of learning and teaching,
- meeting the learning style or students' needs (to be able to elaborate on tailor-made curricula),
- increasing the effectiveness and efficiency of the learning process (to bridge the gap between face2face and online sessions),
- improving user-accessibility and time flexibility to engage learners in the learning process.

In order to maintain a quality online learning environment Learners would like to:

- follow the established rules, course start and end dates,
- follow consistent and quite "stable" guidelines for managing online course in terms of study space and time management,
- receive regular notifications (from the teacher) of the upcoming deadlines to monitor assignment submissions,
- establish communication rules with the teacher,
- receive prior notification from the administrative unit overseeing the course of any technical problems (e.g. logging into the course),
- receive timely and meaningful feedback in a clear and concise language on their progress,
- receive regular responses from the teacher – feedback to student inquiries,
- communicate with the teacher regularly, especially while verifying knowledge, taking tests and returning assignments,
- be sure that they have immediate and predictable access to the same technology that is required for all students,
- be motivated and encouraged to complete end-of-course tasks that aim to consolidate the given knowledge/ material,
- contribute to the development of the course content, stay as interactive as possible,
- be provided with a friendly learning environment that supports freedom of speech (to be able to express their opinions without fear of ridicule, intimidation, or retaliation by any instructor).

B. Response to my needs

- Tailor-made courses
- Use of relevant e-tools

Response to my needs

Everyone is unique and therefore our needs are also unique, so in order to achieve the best , it is good to understand how best you learn. What one student needs will not be the same as another. For example, I might need to see and do a task in order to understand whereas another learner might need to read up on it. Tutors in general will aim to cover the generic needs.

Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs for Learners | Blog | ELN

But there are also ways to respond to our needs more specifically.

Maslow's Hierarchy of needs gives tutors some generic rules to ensure we are in a safe   and comfortable environment, it lays out what research has shown we need to learn.

Tailor-made course

A tailor-made course is a course that has been devised to meet your needs.

They consider your characteristics, requirements, objectives, and of course individual needs.

They may even be a response to a particular scenario e.g., a survey in your community, an additional workshop to assist an ongoing course.

As a learner, attending a tailor-made course is of course, beneficial, it is designed for you (and/or your group) with your objectives and goals in mind, everything that will be covered is relevant to you and your learning, it is very rewarding to get the information you need and only that, which also leads to better use of you time.

Learners have different learning styles and not all of these can be covered in all educational environments, what one student needs will not be the same as another. For example, I might need to see and do a task in order to understand whereas another learner might need to read up on it.

Although a class may not seem tailor made to you, we often complete registration forms, questionnaires or interviews before we start learning and this allows the tutor to identify your skills, knowledge and even learning style.

Benefits

- Increase your learning and your want for future learning – if a course matches your needs ,you will be eager to learn and get the love for lifelong learning.
- Higher than expected learning/grade
- Reduction of barriers – tailor made, will be at your level and consider any additional requirements you need.
- Get the information you want in the style you want

Benefits of tailor-made E-learning

- Better engagement – people can join from anywhere
- Flexible – will be at a time that suits you
- Effective
- Flexible
- More efficient – time spent will be focused on the learning not disruptions in the class.

Classroom vs E Learning

	Traditional Classroom Learning	E-Learning
Advantages	• Immediate feedback • Being familiar to both instructors and students • Motivating students • Cultivation of a social community	• Learner-centered and self-paced • Time and location flexibility • Cost-effective for learners • Potentially available to global audience • Unlimited access to knowledge • Archival capability for knowledge reuse and sharing
Disadvantages	• Instructor-centered • Time and location constraints • More expensive to deliver	• Lack of immediate feedback in asynchronous e-learning • Increased preparation time for the instructor • Not comfortable to some people • Potentially more frustration, anxiety, and confusion

Source: Dongsong Zhang et al. (2004): Can E-Learning replace Classroom learning?,
Communications of ACM, Vol. 47, No. 5, pp 75-79

[Cost Benefit Analysis of E-Learning in Organizations | MBA Skool4](#)

Challenges/negatives for tailor made classes

- Availability – finding an educational facility to supply tailor made may be difficult.
- Additional learning –Teachers/tutors sometimes include other areas/skills in the general curriculum if they feel it's relevant.
- Not being pushed out of comfort zone

Challenges/negatives for tailor made E Learning classes

- No face-to-face interaction–the best learning can sometimes come from peers, interaction may be difficult during online classes.
- Connection concerns
- Less pressure to attend

Use of Relevant E tools

What is an E-Tool?

"An e-tool is a piece of software that can run on the Internet, on a computer or on a phone, tablet or any other electronic device. The 'e' — as in 'electronic' — differentiates these tools from traditional paper-based tools or publications.

E-tools are 'interactive'. They require some input of information by the user, whether in the form of knowledge (e.g. through completion of a checkbox or data field) or measurement of the environment (e.g. smartphone measurement of noise or light levels)"

OSH e-tools | Safety and health at work EU-OSHA (europa.eu)

E-tools can also be beneficial for tailor made classes, as they can be student centered and enable you to work how and at a pace you like.

Benefits

- Availability – there is a wide selection you can log into at regular times,
- Interactive/fun – not typical "learning" often games, quizzes etc.,
- Suitable for nearly all,
- Engages most style of learners,
- Cost – effective – most E-Tools have free options.

E-Tools can be used for a variety of ways during training,

you may be requested to answer questions through an app like Mentimeter Interactive presentation software - Mentimeter, perfect for those who don't like speaking, complete a presentation using canva Home - Canva or even do an assessment via kahoot Enter Game PIN - Kahoot!

Most trainers/tutors will find what is good for them, the activity they need and the students' individual needs.

These will keep your interest throughout training and allow the tutor to gauge learning without always having exams and/or assignments.

[30 Of The Best Tools For Remote Teaching And Learning - (teachthought.com)](https://teachthought.com)

Challenges

- Not tech savvy

- Devices not up to date

- Connection problems – websites may not load, pages can close, students can get left behind

- Fast paced

Responding to your needs as a learner, will make a tutor more aware of how you will best process and use the information they are sharing.

This is an ongoing process and your needs may also change throughout the duration of learning.

C. **Technical requirements**

All online courses require at least some basic but specific computer hardware for your online or blended learning to have the best chance of success. You need it in order to access the course materials, to interact with your classmates and the educator, and to create and submit the appropriate tasks and assignments.

It is recommended that you contact your instructor before starting the course or check the course syllabus for more information on technical requirements, but in the meantime here is a basic but specific list of things you should have:

Required Hardware

- A computer, it can be a desktop or laptop. Chrome books are not recommended as they may not be compatible with all the third party tools used in online courses. You can also use a mobile device such as a smartphone or table

- Speakers/headphones/earphones to listen to the audios or videos presented in the courses.

Optional Hardware

- A webcam for a fruitful interaction in course activities that require video feedback from students, for taking video tests, or for other third-party tools.

Required Software

- Internet browsers for accessing the learning management system, such as the latest versions of **Mozilla Firefox** and **Google Chrome**, are preferred as they are the fastest and most up-to-date. It is also recommended to use both browsers so that one can serve as a backup in case the other has problems.

- **Adobe Acrobat Reader** (the latest version), as it allows you to view PDF files online and offline (outside a web browser).

Optional Software

- **Microsoft Office** (includes Microsoft Word, Excel and PowerPoint, which are commonly used in all types of courses).

- **Windows Media Player** is a media player that can be used to play videos offline.

- **Cloud-based video conferencing service**. Many virtual classes (online courses that have classes with scheduled meetings) require the use of a communications platform that allows users to connect with video, audio, phone, and chat. The most used and successful ones are Zoom, Google Meet, and Microsoft Teams.

Internet Connection

- A stable internet connection of 56K or more is required as a connection lower than that may degrade the quality of the learning experience.

All the required equipment is essential for the delivery of an online course, as lack of access to technology and equipment significantly affects the quality of learning. Connectivity issues and lack of appropriate hardware are one of the biggest obstacles for learners and educators while distance learning.

For this reason, technical requirements must be one of your top priorities before starting an online course or class.
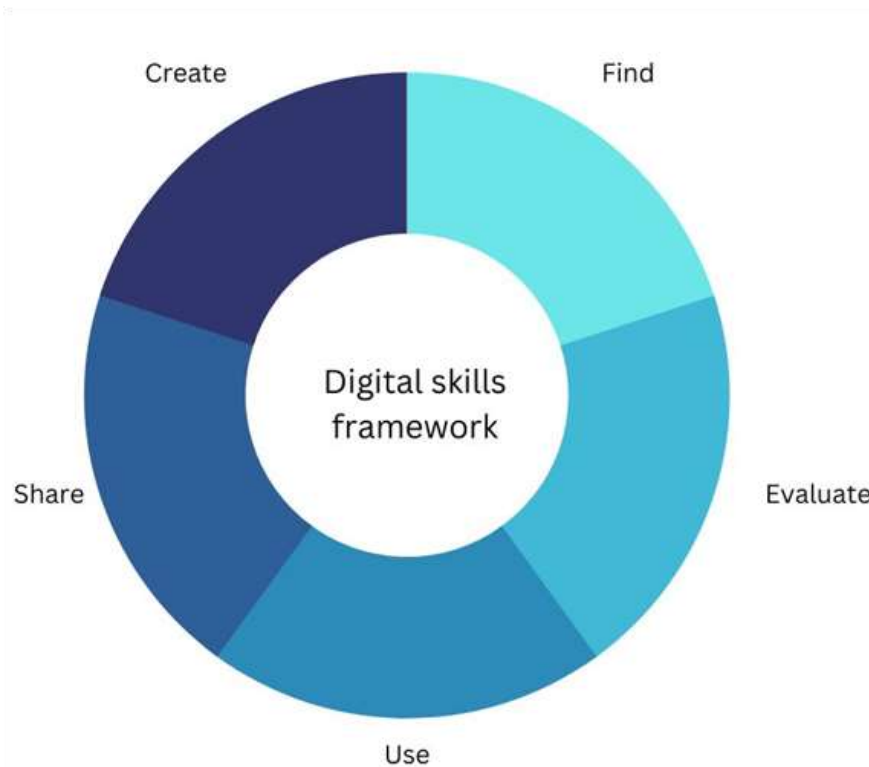
Digital skills

As said before, technological equipment is essential to actively and successfully participate in your online courses, but you also need to have the right digital skills to properly utilize these technical requirements when you need to. Digital skills are those required to use any digital device. They are defined as the ability to find, evaluate, use, share and create content on digital devices.

There are many digital skills but according to the *UK's Essential Digital Skills Framework Foundation* the most important ones that learners need for online learning are:

- Using all the controls in a device
- Using assistive technology
- Opening an accessing an application
- Connecting to the internet
- Setting up an email account
- Communicating using email or messaging apps
- Sending photos via messaging apps or email
- Using and sharing word processing documents
- Using search engines
- Using proper netiquette

Depending on the course or the requirements of the course itself, this list of necessary basic digital skills may need to be expanded or they may vary.

Digital skills framework

Learning digital skills

If you are not familiar with digital skills and you basically lack of computer skills there are different solutions in order to keep up and learn all the new skills required in an online learning environment:

- **Google Digital Garage** (https://learndigital.withgoogle.com/digitalgarage/): it is a non-profit program designed to help people improve their digital skills or even learn from scratch. It offers free training, courses and upon completion certification that you have completed the course/training. All via an online learning platform.

- **Applied Digital Skills** (https://applieddigitalskills.withgoogle.com/): it is the next step, or the perfect solution if you are not a beginner and have some knowledge on digital skills. It is an online digital skills curriculum free of charge. The lessons and the materials are appropriate for a wide range of learners, from middle school to college, and beyond.

- Ask and look for courses founded and carried out by the **government** of your country or the **city hall** of your city.

- **Accenture Digital Skills** (https://www.futurelearn.com/career-advice/grow-your-digital-skills): it is a free, interactive series of courses offered by the professional services company, Accenture, and Future Learn. The topics offered include web analytics, social media, and AI. The goal of these courses is to equip people with the skills they need to get a new job or start a business.

- **Microsoft Learn** (https://learn.microsoft.com/en-us/training/): it offers training on its various products. Each course consists of several modules at the end of which you have to take one or two exams. You can either teach yourself, which is the free version, or you can pay for an instructor-led course.

- **LinkedIn training** (https://www.linkedin.com/learning/topics/linkedin-learning): this professional networking site offers free courses to help develop new skills in general. These include digital courses such as learning how to use Skype, Zoom, and different tools and software.

D. **Study space and time management**

One of the most valuable skills you can have as an online student is **effective time management**. The better you manage your time, the easier it is to achieve your goals. Everyone has the same 24 hours in a day, meaning, it's not about how much time you have, but how well you can manage it. This is especially important for online students, who are often working full-time, taking care of family, or juggling other commitments. Without the camaraderie of a class to motivate you or having a set time where you need to be on campus, effective time management is crucial to helping you stay focused.

Effective time management not only helps with your learning but **can also make you more productive at work and in your personal life**.

Below are **7-time management tips to help you stay ahead of your coursework**:

1. Plan ahead.

Your hectic schedule, combined with daily distractions, can easily get in the way of finishing tasks. The best online students know how to set aside time to focus. This includes having a consistent time and workspace, tuning out those distractions, and avoiding surfing the internet.

Despite the flexibility in being an online student, it's important to have frequent engagement with your studies throughout the week. Provide plenty of time to space out your required readings, assignments, and online discussions. Consider purchasing a calendar you can use to plan your daily and weekly assignments, highlighting:

- Assignments due, including drafts and final submissions
- Activities related to your program, such as study group meetups or networking events
- Virtual or in-person office hours with trainers

Melanie Kasparian, associate director of assessment for the [Northeastern University College of Professional Studies](#), shares a sample schedule of what a typical week might look like:

Monday	Begin required readings and multimedia
Tuesday	Continue reviewing materials
Wednesday	Post to discussion forum and begin assignments
Thursday	Continue posting and working on assignments
Friday	Read and respond to posts and work on assignments
Saturday	Read and respond to posts and finish assignments
Sunday	Check your work and submit assignments

2. Don't multitask.

Avoid multitasking — which can actually decrease your productivity. Focus on one assignment at a time and zero in on the specific task at hand, whether that's studying for an exam, reading a textbook, emailing a professor, or participating in an online forum. Arrange your tasks in order of importance, and pay attention to the three or four crucial tasks that require the most effort.

If you need help staying focused, then consider creating lists using a project management tool, such as [Trello](#) or [Smartsheet](#), to help organize tasks. If you prefer a traditional to-do list, then look at digital notebooks like [Todoist](#), [ClickUp](#), or [Evernote](#).

Lastly, concentrate on what needs to get done in the present and avoid anything too far-off. If it's a small assignment that you don't need to address for several weeks, put it on your calendar to focus on when the deadline is closer.

16

3. Set up your virtual office.

Whether you study at home or your local café, it's important to work in the optimal setting needed to complete your work. Make sure there's high-speed internet, and that you're in a comfortable space with the right lighting, sound, and background. For example, some people prefer to work with headphones on, while others prefer silence or an ambient backdrop with people quietly chatting. Sit in a comfortable chair, and make sure the lighting isn't too dim. Close out your browser windows, and put your phone away.

Along with these elements, make sure you have all the required materials, such as textbooks and industry-specific software. Set up as much as you can ahead of time to stay on task with your coursework.

4. Block out distractions.

Make sure to avoid surfing the web excessively. It's easy to become distracted by the news or your favorite celebrity gossip site. Stay focused, and avoid Facebook, Twitter, and other social media tools when you need to concentrate.

If you're struggling to stay focused, then consider the Pomodoro Method. This technique helps with productivity by arranging how you work to increase efficiency. The tool builds on 25-minute work sessions, optimizing your time to focus on your online studies. The best way to use this method is to:

- Set a timer for 25 minutes and work uninterrupted for the scheduled period.

- Take a five-minute break to grab a coffee, check emails, or do something else.

- Once you've completed four work sessions, treat yourself to a longer, 15-minute break.

If you're still struggling with procrastination, download a website blocker for your Pomodoro sessions. Freedom, KeepMeOut, and Switcheroo minimize online browsing and let you follow through on your daily tasks.

5. Reward yourself

It's important to reward yourself after a job well done in order to avoid burnout. Otherwise, it will be difficult to concentrate on even the simplest tasks. You can reward yourself by celebrating your accomplishments and treating yourself to something you truly enjoy, whether that's watching your favorite show on Netflix or going out to a nice dinner and a movie. If you've been working on an assignment for several months in a row, then take a week off when you're finished.

6. Create a balance.

In addition to rewarding yourself, it's also important to find a balance between coursework and your other obligations, especially if you're juggling school and work. To help create an effective balance and avoid burning out, be sure to prioritize your time in a way that allows you to focus on online learning, work, and your personal life when you need to. Creating a predictable schedule can help you get into a routine that works for your lifestyle and allows you to dedicate your full attention to each aspect of your life at a given time.

7. Get a good night's sleep.

Sleep is essential to rest your body and keep your mind fresh for the next day. Try to get seven to eight hours of rest a night. Pulling all-nighters is less productive than studying consistently.

Your Space

Each learning space will be slightly different, but try to **make sure your space has these characteristics**:

- In a well-lit place (natural light is great if you can do it)

- If you are able to set up a small desk or table near a window, that would allow for
  natural light to filter in to you during your studying time. Natural light is healthy for you physically and emotionally.

- Comfortable sitting and table top height (avoid sitting at the living room coffee table)
- Near a power outlet if computer access is required
- Well Lit

Find a Quiet Space for Attending the online training

When you are taking online training, the classroom is wherever you are. You will want to find a place that is quiet and free from distraction, yet provides enough room for you to take notes, either on your computer or by hand. You may also need an electric outlet nearby to keep your device charged while logged in to the class.

Classes may be live or recorded, and in a live class, you may be asked to turn on your webcam or your microphone when you participate during the session. One advantage of online classes is that you can attend from the comfort of your home. However, you will want to pay attention to what other attendees and the instructor will see when your webcam is on.

Create an Effective Work Space for Studying

It can be tempting to be a little too relaxed about creating a dedicated workspace for your school work. If a potential study space is already associated with activities such as eating, watching television or sleeping, it's probably not ideal. Instead, select an area you already associate with learning. The more time you spend in it, the stronger the association will become. Eventually, you will find yourself feeling more focused as soon as you enter the space.

If your space is limited or you can't create a dedicated study space, store your school materials in a rolling cart, backpack, or something else easily transportable. Whenever it's time to study, you will have everything you need already organized for a smooth transition. If you frequently find yourself needing to study or attend class away from home, make sure to keep your phone or computer charger with you so that you can remain connected.

Make sure your space is comfortable

When ensuring your study space is comfortable, one of the most important things to keep in mind is ergonomics. Both your study table and chair should allow good posture, and when you're seated, the top of your desk should rest somewhere between your chest and rib cage. This way, you'll be able to rest your elbows on the desktop without having to hunch your shoulders forward. Additionally, the chair should be comfortable, fit the height of the desk and allow your feet to rest flat on the floor.

Organize Your Files

Your course materials should be easily accessible whenever you need them. If you prefer working with hard copies, you can invest in a physical filing system, but online students also have the option to enjoy the ease and flexibility of working digitally. Store your computer files in folders and use descriptive names to facilitate identification.

Setting up an effective learning space that is conducive to good mental, physical, and emotional health is important when you must transition to online learning. With a little forethought and planning, you will be able to set up a learning space that will work great for yourself.

E. Connection, collaboration and interaction

Connection

Depending on the structure of remote learning, some students may struggle to keep up with the work, concentration and focus. It is important to keep the virtual classroom connected both online and offline (outside of class). To have strong connections, time investment is needed.

Staying connected with the other learners

We recommend the learners to stay connected with other learners.

This can be done through various ways. For example, through virtual classrooms, creating relationships and connecting outside of classrooms.

Virtual classrooms offer the learners various opportunities related to flexibility such as no limit of time, place and distance. It is also less costly for learners to visit virtual classrooms as there are no commuting costs involved. Virtual classrooms make online learning much less robotic, as it allows for human interaction and ensures that learners are able to interact and chat with peers and teachers. In many cases, virtual classrooms are often an enabler for learners to meet and learn with students from all over the world and from different cultures and backgrounds. This diverse classroom can provide insights to the learners on the topic of problem solving and help them also better their own skills.

Learners can also connect outside of classrooms and start creating relationships. Creating relationships with peers is also very important. Relationships foster a sense of belonging, which is an important basis for learning. Having relationships can create an inclusive environment and enable learners to support each other and work together. Wissing, et. al., published a study in 2022 related to the peer relationship in online education. Their research showed that higher amounts of online education were associated with lower levels of study engagement and satisfaction. However, peer relationships buffered this negative indirect association. Other studies (e.g. Vania et. al.) also researched how high quality of peer relations affect academic motivation and once again supported that building good peer relationships can support students' academic motivation. There are various ways through which learners can create relationships, for instance such as Video Chat, Video Check In's, Coffee meetings, etc. These can be facilitated through online platforms such as Google Meet, Zoom, Teams, etc.

Staying connected with the instructor

We recommend that learners stay connected to instructors.

Learning takes place when students are given the opportunity to express their ideas and get feedback from instructors. Being in touch with the instructor can help the learner with their motivation and enhance the sense of belonging and connection to the school or course. In order to stay connected with the instructor, a learner needs to be aware of the school's communication channels. Each organizational institution has a different way of communicating with their learners and a different platform they use to upload content. It is very important for learners to familiarize themselves with the online environment and communication channels. In addition, it is important to introduce yourself to the instructor, so the instructor knows who you are.

Collaboration

Online student collaboration in collaborative group discussions is important. Learners can learn to listen attentively to each other. It also helps learners to be a part of an interactive learning experience. The eLearning Industry also mentions that it leads to positive student performance outcomes.

As one of the primary goals of collaborative learning should be to actively engage students in their own learning, helping them take ownership of the process and experience, it's important to partner with your students throughout. This partnership can take many forms, depending on the goals and context of your course.

– Columbia University

Forming virtual study groups

Virtual study groups usually consist of several classmates connecting remotely outside of class to support their success in classes. Usually, these groups connect through a video conferencing tool or online collaborative space. For the learner, a virtual study group can enable them to meet their peers and begin a working relationship. Setting up a virtual study group is rather simple. It can be done through a 5 step process:

1)   Find a platform. Zoom is a great platform that can host many people and enable breakout rooms.

2)   Identify the learning objectives and goals of the course. It is important that prior to a virtual study group the learners familiarize themselves with the syllabus which would include the learning objectives and goals.

3)   Utilize (virtual) tools. There are many tools that are available online such as mood boards, slides, etc. Also, a lot of platforms allow document collection and shared collaboration. Also, it could be also very beneficial when working on projects to look at different methods of thinking – e.g. Design thinking – when working on problem solving.

4) Identify a moderator. Appoint one of the participants to moderate your session and lead the discussion.

5) Set an agenda. It is important to have a topic which is to be discussed during a study group. During the first virtual study group, it is also good for the learners to create a planning and schedule on the frequency of the study groups, the task delegation amongst the group and a to-do list. This way learners can stay on track throughout the course.

6) Take breaks. Also keep in mind the time! Time goes very quickly when learners are in discussions. It is important to take breaks frequently.

Open Communication

Communication helps foster a sense of community in class. This helps with the feeling of belonging and connectedness of the learners.

It is important for learners to communicate openly with peers. For example, learners can make peers aware of their availability so that all students can participate in virtual study groups and informal sessions. We know that life and responsibilities can get in the way, so instead of learners not responding to the group, learners can communicate openly on the struggles they face and gain empathy from the other learners. In addition, in an international class setting, it is also important to establish a common communication language so that everyone understands what is being said in the group discussions and chats. In addition, learners are encouraged to give each other feedback so that there is room for improvement. If any issues arise in group work, the learners are encouraged to notify lecturers. This also is related to issues during online classes, including technical problems like power outages, computer and internet failures. When faced with technical problems, learners are also encouraged to communicate this with the instructor and the class. Open communication is not only important between learners, but also between learner and teachers. The advice is to communicate with the teacher regularly, especially while verifying knowledge, taking tests and returning assignments. This way learners can improve their knowledge, communication skills and goals with the instructor.

Interaction

Social interaction is at the core of learning. The more a learner interacts with people, the more a learner learns. In addition, interactions can improve the mental health of learners. It can also increase happiness and is a method of promoting a sense of belonging, safety and security. Interaction also encourages self-motivation and self-esteem.

Ask questions

During online education, learners are encouraged to ask questions. Questions are a great technique to increase a learners' concentration and take control of their education through 'self-directed learning'. Questions help learners connect new content to own experiences and help with building mental pathways. Simply turn your mic on and raise your question when the room for questions and answers is given by the instructor.

Participate

Participation enables learners to gain knowledge, ask questions and other viewpoints from their classmates regarding the course content. Participation can also enable learners to challenge each other's views. Learners are encouraged to follow the online 'live' classes where possible. Participation of learners is also encouraged in meetings and live video lessons, games and interactive assignments.

Follow up

Follow-ups are important and learners are advised to follow up constantly. This is because following up can enable a learner to fulfill their expectations and receive a response on an inquiry. Also, it is important to follow up on an instructor's feedback on assignments. Understanding the viewpoint of the teacher and feedback can enhance the learners' knowledge and skills.

Stay motivated

Learners are also encouraged to be motivated and encouraged to complete end-of-course tasks. Learners are encouraged to aim to consolidate the given knowledge/ material (from their goals) and apply it in a non-educational setting.

Friendly learning environment

We strongly encourage learners to be advocates of a friendly learning environment, a space in which students feel safe and supported in their pursuit of knowledge, an equitable classroom and accessible to all students who occupy it.

F. Rewarding system

One of the biggest challenges teachers face in a classroom, be it online or physical, is ensuring your students pay attention to you throughout the lesson. They can be easily distracted by other activities or things around them or find the class boring.

In a physical environment you can handle the situation by grabbing their attention with your posture, voice and gestures. On the other hand, online teachers may find their lessons harder to manage since all they can do is teach and oversee the situation via a webcam.

Having a reward system can help resolve some of the issues above.

Reward is a common way to increase students' motivation in traditional classroom learning. The traditional rewards, such as stamps and stickers, are usually symbolic and valueless to students and may not get students motivated.

But what happens in the digital environment? How do we give motivation to learners while teaching online?

In online learning, the learning management system plays an important role, which helps tutors monitor learner's progress. Virtual rewards still have plenty of uses. Here are some of our favorites.

Award ClassDojo points

ClassDojo is one of the most popular rewarding systems. It is a free program that enhances communication between teachers and parents.

The ability to award points for various behaviors is a very important functionality of this system. Teachers get to decide what points can be redeemed for, whether it's real-life prizes, like a sweet treat or virtual rewards like a homework pass. They can also coordinate with parents to let kids choose to redeem their points at home for items like Skip a Weekly Chore, Choose Dinner, Watch a Movie, or Extra Hour of Screen Time.

Works best with: **young learners**

Teacher Helper or Tech Assistant for Digital Classroom Management

In younger ages, learners love being the assistant or helper. This is a very common rewarding method in the traditional classroom, but it can be combined also in the digital and hybrid environments. Learners can be given the "Tech Assistant" badge, and whenever they are having technology trouble, they can contact the tech assistant before you!

That's a win-win classroom management incentive!

Works best with: **young learners**

Morning Meeting Leader to Combine Digital Classroom Management and Classroom Community

Morning Meeting is a good opportunity to assign responsibility to some students to lead.

These morning meeting slides make having student leaders very convenient, because everything is planned and ready for them! They just need to read the directions and lead the class in the greeting, share, activity, and message of the day!

Works best with: **all ages.**

Collect digital reward tags

Sometimes known as "brag tags," these quick rewards are similar to digital stickers, but each is awarded for a specific purpose. Students can work to earn tags like "Good Listener" or "Ace Writer" etc, and many love to try to collect them all.

Works best with: **young learners**

E-book gift

E-books are a good idea as a reward for extra-special accomplishments. There are plenty of options online. Amazon makes it easy to send e-books as gifts, and recipients can read them on any device.

Works best with: **adults**

Give them a social media shout-out

Students love to feel appreciated for their accomplishments. Make sure these small accomplishments are known far and wide! Share their good work on your school's social media pages or parent communication app. As always, be sure to get parent and student permission before posting pictures or full names publicly. If you like playing music while kids work, then letting them help choose the playlist is a terrific reward! Of course, you'll have to set some ground rules and check out the songs in advance, but students will love getting to contribute or even create their very own playlist for the class to enjoy.

Works best with: **young learners**

Pass out virtual rewards coupons

Give students digital coupons they can cash in for virtual or real-life rewards. There are lots of options available on Teachers Pay Teachers, or you can make your own.

Works best with: **young learners**

Share a favourite video

Offer a student the chance to share a favorite video with the class. This could be something they love on YouTube or TikTok or a video they made themselves. (Be sure to view it in advance to make sure it's classroom-appropriate.)

Works best with: **young learners**

Read-Alouds are Always a Good Choice!

The student who gets this reward can either read a picture book aloud to the class on Zoom or Google Meet, or s/he can pick the next book that you read to the class! The book that you read to the class can be a picture book or a novel, whichever you choose.

Works best with: **young learners**

Motivate them to give their best effort

The student you recently rewarded for correctly pronouncing the word may just be motivated to do better in the next class. When students feel appreciated and seen for their efforts, they are more inclined to do well.

Works best with: **all ages**

Instill positive values

You will be surprised at the values you can teach when providing a reward system. Your students can become more attentive and diligent in class. Their listening skills, respect towards others and confidence level will also improve.

Works best with: **all ages**

Virtual gestures

Teachers can use this reward in both online and in-person classes. Visual representation of you appraising them will boost their confidence level.

Examples of virtual gestures are high-fives, fist bumps, thumbs-up and hoorays. Combining motivating phrases with a positive action can make students feel seen and appreciated for their efforts.

Try saying, "You've improved on your reading today," or "Well done for pronouncing it correctly," in your next class to see some enthusiastic students.

This reward requires little to no preparation, and it's just a matter of how and when you use them.

Works best with: **all ages**

Activity-based reward

This reward allows students to play a game or have a short activity during or after their online class. Perhaps you can try one of these activity-based rewards:

Choosing the game to play at the end of class

Playing "Guess the Word" as a brain break

Drawing a picture competition (student vs teacher)

Having "Show & Tell" where the student shows you something from their home

Works best with: **young learners**

Celebration rewards

A reward you can provide in class is having celebrations or special events. If your students do well in class or achieve a goal score in the recent activity, you can plan a special moment during class or activity. It rewards the student while recognizing that you care about what they have going on in their life.

You could have a reward in class to celebrate a student's birthday, special holiday or accomplishment in school! There are endless possibilities for special events or celebrations rewards.

 Works best with: **adults**

Individual and group prizes

If you teach group classes, you can hold games or contests and have your students compete against each other. For example, you can play guessing games or races to practice the lessons you've just taught. Then, you can have a prize waiting for the winner or runner-up at the end.

 Works best with: **all ages**

Chapter 2

Online education from a learner's perspective

The Covid-19 pandemic has introduced uncertainty into major aspects of national and global society, including schools and universities. There was uncertainty about how this situation impacted student achievement, as well as how the rapid conversion of most instructions to an online platform would continue to affect achievement. As a matter of fact, the virus heavily impacted student learning. The pandemic widened pre-existing opportunity and achievement gaps, hitting historically disadvantaged students hardest. The global spread of the COVID-19 pandemic affected higher education sector most severely.

In order to explore learner's perspective better, we carried out a survey questionnaire among nearly fifty digital learners, mainly higher education students.

Generally speaking, almost half of them think their digital literacy is on a pretty high level and nearly a third of young respondents believe they have a sufficient level of digital competence.

When the pandemic broke out, most students used their mobile devices and a vast majority could use the computer personally. Just every fifth student had to share their equipment with other home dwellers.

Assistive Technology. Source: LD@school

While learning online the respondents mention some useful digital tools, i.a: Canva, Google Drive, PowerPoint, Prezi, Coursera or Genially.Wooclap as an interactive platform that transforms smartphones into exceptional learning tools to make learning awesome and effective, is also worth attention.It is obvious they, to a large extent, use various communication platforms, such as: ZOOM, Google Meet or Microsoft Teams. Only 6% of students communicate via Skype.

Genially. Source: The EdTech Roundup

The interviewees admit that during online sessions teachers and lecturers use interactive boards, PowerPoint presentations, and also shared documents and videos. In fact, tutors use mostly visual and auditory materials. Students participate mainly in virtual group (82%) or one-to-one meetings (58%). In some individual cases they communicate via phone. Chat is used on a regular basis. All instructions are sent to learners via email and they have to perform some tasks individually and collectively through designated communication channels. In order to get familiarised with the lecture content students receive some relevant links from trainers or they can listen to the recording from online sessions. Teachers also use e-books, various text books, articles, guides, movies, podcasts, questionnaires, quizzes, etc. For online collaboration they resort to Miro and Mural platforms.Among the tools frequently applied the respondents mention Kahoot, Mentimeter, Padlet, Jamboard, e-flashcards. Teachers support the content through graphs, infographics, various links or website references. The respondents state that the content of lectures is, in most cases, prepared by trainers/ lecturers themselves. More seldom tutors resort to the imported teaching materials.

The answers concerning any skill limitations in the remote learning process are not so obvious. Slightly over 50% of the interviewees do not spot any digital skill gaps,but insufficient competence in this field does not discourage others from participating in online classes. Students would rather master their digital skills as they are aware of the necessity of using them in our everyday life. In order to improve digital competence, the respondents highlight the need for any (online) courses, training on digital tools or webinars tailored to their needs and technical advancement. Students unanimously claim that all materials should be easy to read. Moreover, more breaks during lectures would help them with effective work and concentration as there are too many distractors hindering the conceptual process and knowledge acquisition.

The respondents spot significant differences between traditional learning process and online sessions. They are aware that in case of remote learning they cannot build close bonds with their peers, they do not do their homework regularly and the quality of work or lectures is much lower than expected. In the respondents' opinion remote participation in classes entails limited involvement of students. That was the first observation made by the interviewees. The differences between online sessions and a conventional mode of learning are obvious. Among others, students highlight limited interaction and communication with tutors. Young people confirm unanimously that communication with trainers is much easier in the course of face2face education. The schedule is followed by learners and tutors more strictly and students are better focused on the assignment.

Besides, teachers are not so digitally literate while presenting different materials and, at the same time, wasting lots of time to resolve technical problems. All of this matters and it impacts students' involvement. The respondents admit that in home environment there are a lot of external stimuli which hinder constant concentration and, consequently, hassle-free assimilation of knowledge.On the other hand,some interviewees emphasize the flexibility of schedules and workload while learning online, which is suitable for some students.

Talking about the advantages of remote learning young interlocutors point out:

- the organisation and implementation of the learning process

- a wide variety of digital tools

- no need to commute

- flexible time management

- comfort and convenience

- feeling of security

- savings

- Among the main disadvantages of online education, the respondents mention:

- insufficient digital competences of lecturers

- lack of direct contact with other people

- technical issues

- failure to adapt tools to students' needs

- poor communication with lecturers

- difficulties in group work

- information chaos

- health problems (e.g. with spine) related to the long-lasting sedentary lifestyle

Bearing in mind the above, 50% of respondents find remote learning most challenging. Around 30% of interviewees think blended learning is the most efficient method,as they crave for some physical components of the learning process and are fond of online resources, they can access to supplement their classwork. Only 19% of interviewed students believe face2face methods are demanding and tough, since students can feel stressed. However, we cannot forget about introverts who are able to focus on a given task better while being at home, not having to get stressed in a large room full of people.

As a matter of fact, it is very hard to reduce or minimize the differences resulting from the lack of direct contact with teachers. How can we replace it? That is a good question. The respondents reckon that any communication platform that gives lots of possibilities is a good alternative, however, when we think about raising qualifications or creative education, using just online tools cannot be sufficient. Students would be more than happy if lecturers were more digitally literate and used collaborative working tools and contrived more engaging activities. Some behaviour monitoring tools which detect disengagement would be a perfect solution as well. From a learner's perspective more tutorials would be very helpful. Even if universities tend to arrange online classes more often, students expect and desire at least short face2face workshops or individual meetings/ video calls with teachers, having an opportunity to ask questions, and thus being provided with more personalized learning. In the respondents' opinion trainers and teachers should do their best to motivate learners in many ways, through diverse formats of online classes, dynamics and communicativeness, to attract students' attention in the long run. Icebreaker techniques and doing more practical tasks would definitely bring more self-confidence in learners. That would reduce tension and anxiety, and also immediately involve the class in the course.

Warm-up and icebreaker games to play with an online whiteboard. Source: Collaboard.

What is surprising, learners would like to contribute to the content of classes, thus becoming co-creators of the given content. That would also motivate them very much. They like playful elements and breakout rooms. The interviewees think that some useful digital toolkits and intuitive platforms would make remote learning more effective. In young people's opinion teachers should be more interactive and approachable, they should use different teaching methods and try to adapt them to various learning styles. The respondents also pay attention to teachers' mailboxes which are not checked regularly by them. Students expect teachers to be more attentive and responsive, and impose some well-defined rules e.g. mandatory cameras for videoconferencing class engagement and social-emotional learning.

Slightly over half of respondents uphold that trainers are not well-prepared to conduct lectures in virtual environment, but reversely, 54% of digital learners consider remote education effective.

In case of remote learning verification of students' knowledge can be held through online exams, performing some tasks at home individually, oral exams via webcams, online questionnaires, on-the-spot exercises or intermediate tests.

According to the interviewees, remote education is our future changing long articles and books into voice-over presentations. However, we should still include some traditional components as this mode of learning is not suitable for everyone. It should be optional, not mandatory. The future mainly lies in asynchronous learning to follow an educational pathway at one's own pace. Learners, at the same time, highlight eco-friendliness of virtual solutions. They would also like remote education to meet the needs of people with special needs, thus becoming more inclusive.

Futuristic trends also entail some threats. From a learner's perspective the greatest threats to online teaching look as follows:

Chapter 3

Best practices in online education

A. Introduction of new learning material

New material, either creating or adapting it, is something fundamental that is always present in the life of an educator, even if the subject or topic has always been and will always be the same. When it is time to introduce a new teaching material, it is traditionally introduced by a teacher at the front of the room who explains it to the students sitting in rows and columns at the tables.

This way of teaching is known as "sage on the stage" (the educator has all the information and passes it on to the students who did not know it before) as opposed to a "guide on the side" (students and teacher working together to learn new information), while others consider this method outdated.

However, the important question is: what do we need to know before introducing new material? Here are some basic questions that consider all the important aspects.

After answering these important questions about a new material and ensuring that it is appropriate for learners, another important step is required. This step is to develop different, engaging strategies for introducing the new material, which is even more important if it is in a blended or online environment.

Engaging strategies for introducing new learning materials

Start with pre-assessment

Before presenting new material on a new topic, try to find out what learners already know about it. Use pre-assessment tools that can be interactive during the lesson, such as Kahoot, Google Forms or other free online tools.

This is also a good idea, because after the learners' pre-assessment, the educator knows what information they already have about the content.

Use some online tools

Online tools can be an educator's best friend when it comes to getting learners excited about new learning material, but "the more the merrier" is not always true. Another reason why presenting new material can be difficult or challenging while learning remotely, is the fact that there are so many new technical tools out there. So remember - do not overload the classroom by using online tools as well.

It is important to focus on one new thing at a time. Presenting new material during online sessions is sometimes difficult enough, so it is better to use a tested tech tool. On the other hand, when it is time for a review, it is a good moment to try a new website, app, or add-on.

Distribute the new learning material

It is not necessary to introduce a completely new material at the same time, at least not always. It is a good idea to share things gradually or to divide them among different lessons whenever possible. Divide and you will conquer. In this way, the success rate in understanding and internalising the new material for the learners also increases.
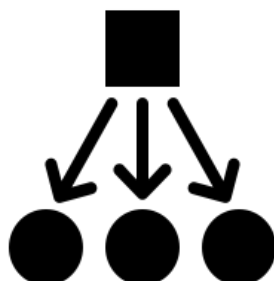
<u>Use videos or audios</u>

Not all lessons need to be live or delivered by the educator all the time. Sharing videos or audios (either created by the educator themselves or found online) to present the new material is a different and interesting way of teaching. At the same time, learners find this technique interesting, engaging and different.

These strategies for introducing new material, which can be used in blended or online learning, will help learners to learn successfully online and/or in person.

B. **Consolidation of material/ self-study or independent work**

Consolidation of learning is the premise to become our knowledge accessible in any moment and any context and transform it into internalized contents.

Consolidation practice begins with 'remembering', followed by the objectives of 'understanding' and 'applying' (Nicola Carr-White, Edith Cowan University. Pag 70)

<u>Several strategies are supporting the process of consolidation:</u>

- Practising the new learnt knowledge

- Applying the knowledge in new situations, with other persons and different modes

- Good sleeping helps to reorganise our memories stored in the cerebral cortex

"When a student first builds new knowledge and understanding, when new thought processes and information first appear in their brain, this new learning is fragile. New processes must be rehearsed and practised to become easily accessible and automatically retrievable. New memories must be "laid down" in long-term memory for them to become more permanent."

(Paul Howard-Jones, Consolidation of learning, 2019)

Some benefits of *consolidated learning* are the following:

- it is an excellent way of enforcing the information learned during a lesson and making sure no students are left uncertain

- it helps to create an open and supportive learning environment where students feel confident to speak up and ask for further explanation on a topic

- consolidated learning also helps with information retention, student confidence and creating well-rounded lesson plans and learning objectives.

There is no "reserved space" to consolidate our new knowledge. The classroom, homework,

but also complete independent and self-directed learning, are possible contexts to deepen and consolidate our knowledge. With the desire to learn and the advancement of technology, it has become normal to learn whatever we want, using YouTube tutorials, apps etc., growing our knowledge and improving the skills while learning remotely.

All of us, attending school, could experience a first approach of independent learning, doing our homework. What are the reasons and role of homework?

- Homework reinforces and helps learners to retain information taught in the classroom as well as increasing their general understanding of the learning contents.

- It helps to develop study habits and independent learning and encourages learners to acquire resources and benefits factual knowledge, self-discipline, attitudes to learning and problem-solving skills.

In order for homework to be effective, certain principles should be observed (Darn, Steve)::

- Students should see the usefulness of homework. Teachers should explain the purpose both, of homework in general and of individual tasks

- Tasks should be relevant, interesting and varied

- Learners should be involved and motivated to contribute ideas and possibly design their own tasks

Self-directed learning "is a strategy, by which the learner acquires the responsibility of the teacher and he/she drives his/her own process of learning, identifying the learning goals, strategies and evaluation." (Bodly, Anna)

There are many different ways to practise the art of self-study. Independently learning something at your own time and pace, involves setting goals and tracking your progress. Most importantly, the benchmarks for progress and success are self-imposed. This means that no one is telling you what to do or what constitutes successfully learning a skill or piece of knowledge. (Banks, Mary)

Self-studying requires several steps:

1. Readiness to learn: attitude, habits, supportive network, personal skills as acceptance of feedback, self-reflection, discipline, autonomy, organisation

2. Identification of learning goals, by involving points as:

- Goals for the unit of study

- Structure and sequence of tasks

- Timeline to complete the activities

- Details about resource materials for each goal

- Feedback and evaluation as each goal is completed

3. Engage in the learning process which might be more or less deep and be organised in a strategic way, aimed to achieve your goals (pass exams, memorise some content…)

4. Evaluation of learning

Some more specific aspects must be considered:

Goals: a clear goal is essential to stay motivated and on track. The goal you set should be realistic, attainable, and measurable.

Learning Resources: you should verify the credibility of the learning resources you find. While the internet is flooded with resources, not all of them are accurate in knowledge and reliable. Therefore, be sceptical, cross-check references, and make a habit of comparing the information you come across different resources.

Apply and test the knowledge: the best way to retain what you have learned and to test your knowledge is to actually apply it in the real world.

Share Your Knowledge and Collaborate: in order to share knowledge with another person, we have to make a conscious effort to comprehend the information better. This helps with better internalising new concepts that you've learned.

You can connect with like-minded individuals and collaborate with them through online communities, social media platforms, discussion forums, etc. It'll help you discover more resources, gain new insight into the subject of your interest, and find answers to things you are unsure about.

Two **best practices** are presented below, the first is more linked to the setting of classical classrooms, the second to remote self-learning.

Twinkl: consolidated learning

https://www.twinkl.it/teaching-wiki/consolidate-learning

Consolidate learning could mean asking students to test out the new skills, language or knowledge they have gained through the course of the lesson or overall topic.

Some forms of consolidation which might take place in the classroom are the following:

- A lesson summary

- A final call for questions on the topic before the lesson ends

- An interactive PowerPoint quiz

- A Simon Says game

- Quick-fire questions for students to answer

Self- learning techniques - Creately

https://creately.com/blog/education/self-learning-techniques-tools/

Books: When talking about self-learning, of course reading and books are one of the main roads making self-learning an effective way to improve your comprehension of concepts. Using the following reliable sources you can find reading material: Encyclopedia, National Geographic and National Geographic for Kids, ReadWorks, Science News for Students, Goodreads

Visual Note-Taking: a method that combines text and visuals. Some popular methods of visual note-taking that you can incorporate into your self-learning process can be: Mind maps, Concept maps, Flowcharts, Venn diagrams

Educational Videos: Videos provide an easy and engaging way to learn. They are currently used across schools and universities as an educational tool for enhancing the learning experience of students – now more than ever as most students are learning remotely: YouTube Learning, TEDEd, BBC Bitesize, Google Videos, National Geographic Education, History

Online courses: There is a range of online platforms where you can find thousands of free and paid courses that you can follow to further improve your skills and expand your knowledge: Google Digital Garage, LinkedIn Learning, Coursera, Khan Academy, edX, Academic Earth

Learning Apps and Software: Software and apps provide an entertaining as well as an effective way to grow your knowledge. The best thing about using an app is that you can use them on your mobile devices and continue your learning process wherever you are: Duolingo, TED Talks, Dictionary.com, Amazon Kindle

C. Student's involvement activities/ interaction in pairs or groups

"Meaningful Student Involvement transforms education by empowering student voice in student/adult partnerships to foster student engagement."

As a student it is your responsibility to be fully engaged and involved in your learning, if you want the best possible outcomes.
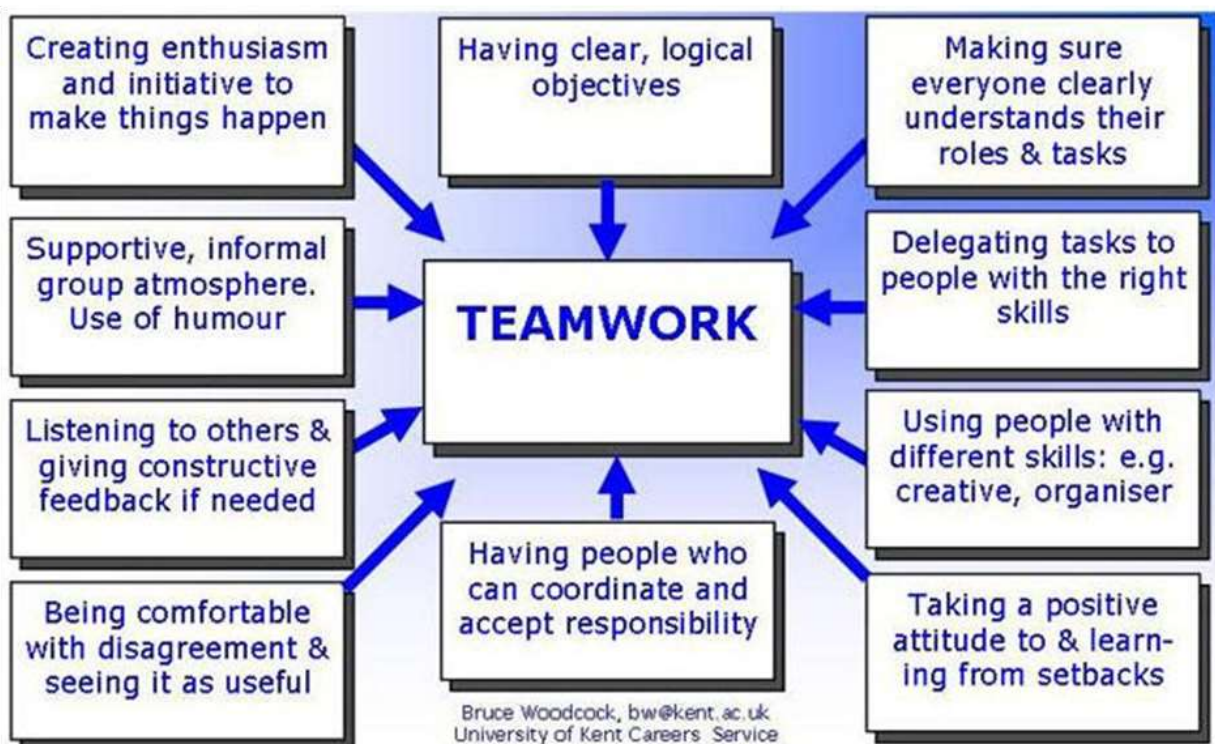
Most occasions this is done individually, if it is virtual learning , however if there is a teacher present it is more likely that you will be required to work in pairs or in groups for certain activities.

Like in a classroom, group work is beneficial as it encourages sharing of knowledge, collaborative working and transferable skills such as listening and team working.

Skills for working in a group

- Communication – including active listening
- Open and honest
- Respectful
- Supportive
- Taking responsibility
- Problem solving and conflict resolution

Group working online can be different, you are only seeing a small screen of someone depending how the screen is set up, there is no chat during a physical tea break or learning about people so building a rapport may take longer.

Creating enthusiasm and initiative to make things happen

Having clear, logical objectives

Making sure everyone clearly understands their roles & tasks

Supportive, informal group atmosphere. Use of humour

TEAMWORK

Delegating tasks to people with the right skills

Listening to others & giving constructive feedback if needed

Using people with different skills: e.g. creative, organiser

Being comfortable with disagreement & seeing it as useful

Having people who can coordinate and accept responsibility

Taking a positive attitude to & learning from setbacks

Bruce Woodcock, bw@kent.ac.uk
University of Kent Careers Service

Group work may include:

- Ice breakers
- Group work
- Mini Projects
- Question/answers
- Presentations
- Debates
- Case studies

Guidelines/rules for group work:

- Everyone in the team will have a role to play depending on their strengths. It could be a note taker, coordinator, or speaker. Allocate roles and remember everyone is as important and needed to make the team work.
- Make clear plans and duties, ensuring everyone understands and agrees
- Have timelines in place

Guidelines/rules for online group work:

- Set rules – mics on mute unless talking, hand up to talk etc
- Don't use text talk – not everyone understands
- Speak slowly to ensure everyone understands you well through E tools
- Smaller groups work better

Best practice for involvement

When starting a class online, it is a different environment from a classroom, people don't get to mix and get to know each other at the beginning, but this should come with an experienced tutor.

If placed in long term groups, it can be best practice to build a relationship at the start to ensure the best working environment possible.

- Have an introduction – get to know who your peers are, what they bring to the group, their knowledge and strengths and weaknesses
- Take time out to have a general chat – how do we start our day normally in a classroom
- Decide on group rules
- Be punctual – nothing can breakdown a relationship like someone always late or absent, it leaves the others to pick up your work
- Don't force people to do something they don't want to do – be democratic

- ensure everyone understands deadlines and duties and they are happy

- if forming smaller groups, plan time to report back to the group in whole so everyone feels involved

- look out for people getting lost and having no place in the group, try involving them

- recognise the good and praise your peers

- don't feel forced to share personal details – some people like to keep in touch outside of learning, this is your decision, or could be discussed as part of group rules

Working online can be challenging for engagement.

If having an online seminar/lecture/meeting here are some ways of showing your involvement.

- Have apps downloaded, set up and tested in advance

- Camera on – this shows you are there, and the tutor may even be able to gauge your understanding through your face

- Answer questions – even if you're not comfortable speaking up – use chat function

- Mute yourself and put hands up to talk

- Do not take calls or have conversations while on mute, try to have a classroom environment

- Dress appropriately – again classroom environment

- Do allow tutor to take any breaks suggested, remember they are talking to a screen and may need to rest eyes/move body, save any questions to the end if opportunity hasn't arisen

- Be mindful of your screen name – everyone can see it and will form an opinion

- Have patience – technology fails, allow you tutor the respect and time to correct what they are doing, however if they are unaware of the issue put your hand up and let them know

- Get consent if wanting to record or screenshot anything

- Learning online can be just as fun as in a classroom when you get fully involved and are open to exploring the challenges this may face.

D. **Knowledge verification/ exams and tests**

Cognitive presence is defined as the "extent to which the professor and the students are able to construct and confirm meaning through sustained discourse (discussion) in a community of inquiry" (Garrison et al., 2000, p. 89).

By getting to know learners, including feedback and comments to help learners, and weekly discussion of core concepts and learning outcomes, faculty can work towards building cognitive presence in online classes.

Further efforts should be made to critically examine students' work and pose challenging questions that require additional analysis as this will allow learners to participate actively in discussions.

A Knowledge verification system for online education should take into consideration:

Training aims – whether students are able to do what the purpose of the course is, and whether these goals have been achieved;

Performance – what part of the basic knowledge (concepts) and skills are learned, whether the learners understand the material studied;

Test conditions - learners access to materials and training equipment;

Forms of examination - questionnaires, essays, case studies or other forms;

Examinations in online environments are organized and conducted under the conditions and by the order of the rules and regulations for the organization of the educational process or by the tutor itself.

Tutors develop the criteria and the specific plan of exams and assessment that should be followed in the assessment of the students. Requirements and evaluation criteria may vary depending on the specifics of the training program. Student evaluation is based on intermediate (current) and final testing.

Remote or hybrid learning environments have posed some challenges for educators, but motivating students to learn and grow, remains a constant goal.

But testing can contribute to math anxiety for many students. Assessments can be difficult to structure properly and time-consuming to grade.

And as a tutor, you know that a learner's progress isn't just a number on a report card.

The common goal of assessment is to evaluate and improve learning, but the objectives can vary slightly, depending on the type of assessment that's used.

The assessment doesn't just happen after a course or module or unit. It can (and should) happen before the learning, during the learning, and after the learning.

It has a triple function—it is diagnostic, formative, and summative—that help us assess where students are *before, during,* and *after* the learning.

Diagnostic assessments help to structure student collaborative work.

Formative assessments occur within an online course or lesson and are used to determine how well a student is learning the material. They're best when they are ongoing, consistent, and provide critical feedback to learners.

Summative assessments are sometimes referred to as a final exam and measure what the student/learner has learned after completing a course. They can validate how well your content supports the course's overall learning goals.

Different types of assessments can help you understand student progress in various ways. This understanding can inform the teaching strategies you use, and may lead to different adaptations.
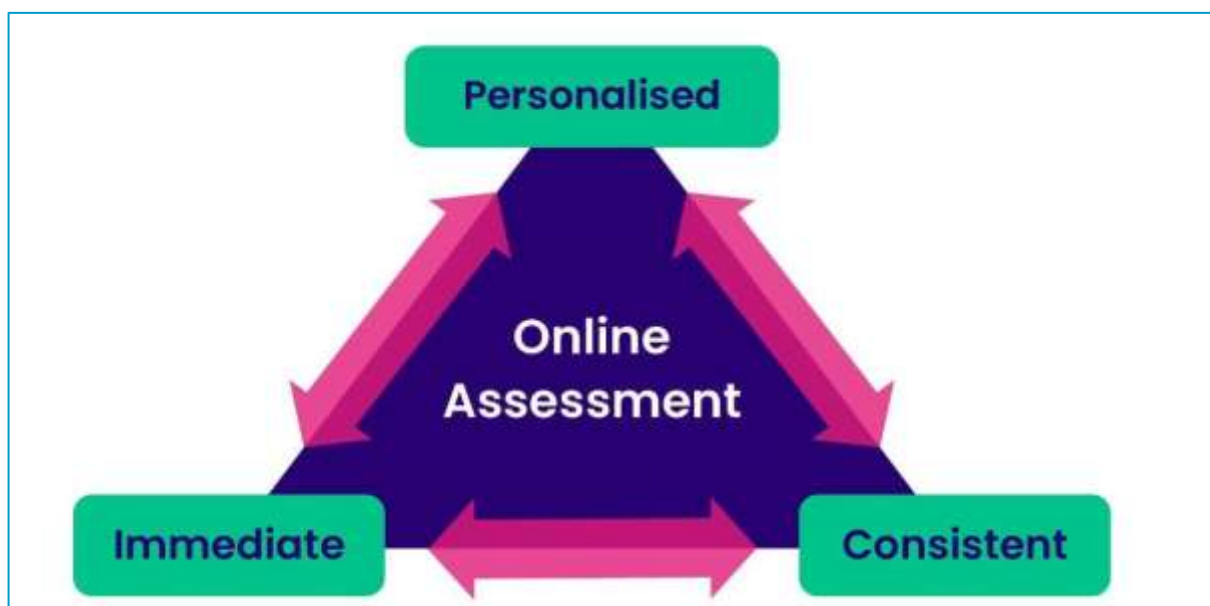
How Do You Test Learners in Online Education?

There are several approaches for evaluating students such as: Online quizzes, Essay questions, Drag-and-drop activities, Online interviews, Dialogue simulations, Online polls, Game-type activities, Peer evaluation and review. Forum posts.

Two best practices are presented below:

Constructing SMART assessment

SMART describes the characteristics of any set of well-defined goals and stands for the following:

S = Specific, Simple, and Sensible

M = Measurable (including percentages, dates, and time frames)

A = Achievable (Attainable)

R = Realistic (realistic and based on course materials and results from activities)

T = Time-based (and sensitive)

Following the smart model, assessment

Gamifying The Answers

When paired with technology, **quizzes** are an excellent way to engage student learning. Quiz questions can take a number of forms, such as multiple-choice, fill-in-the-blanks, and hotspots.

One benefit of quizzes is that they are short and easy to assess. Another is that question order and options can be randomized, so each student's quiz is unique.

Online quizzes are ideal for measuring learning results across a wide audience. Since each learner takes the same test, you can compare and contrast results across different classes, schools, or communities.

In addition, it is a fun method and playful, engaging student's interaction and cooperation in some cases.

A non-graded online quiz can be given prior to the start of a lesson to gain a baseline measurement of a student's existing knowledge. You can also embed a knowledge check test into a module to reinforce concepts taught in the lesson, or make a final graded test at the end of the course to evaluate students' overall performance.

Online quizzes can be easily created using an eLearning authoring toolkit such as iSpring Suite. iSpring Suite includes a quiz maker tool that offers 14 question types. You simply need to choose the appropriate templates to put together a quiz for your students quickly and easily. You can enhance your test by providing detailed answer feedback, adding info slides, and creating individual learning paths, depending on how well each employee is performing on the quiz.

Quizlet and Kahoot are two popular tools that teachers can use to create fast-paced interactive learning games. Quizlet allows you to create a study set of online flashcards for learning terms and definitions, while with Kahoot, you can build engaging quizzes and let your students score points by answering quickly and correctly.

With [Mentimeter](#) you can have interactive presentations with 13 various question types, including word clouds and quiz, and see how the students vote on/respond to questions and engage with the presentation in real time. With this tool, you can export results in a PDF or Excel file, and analyse learners' results.

Another great tool is [Socrative](#). This software is equipped with various features that can be used by educators for many different purposes. It also includes activities like quizzes, quick questions, exit tickets, etc. Socrative has an intuitive, colorful and easy interface and apps for both students and teachers.

E. **Evaluation**

Student feedback is the data collected from students about their experience in their educational institutes. It can be verbal, written, or gestural. And it is used by institutions or teachers to implement future improvements over what is currently being done.

Evaluation provides a systematic method to study a program, practice, intervention or initiative to understand how well it has achieved its goals. Evaluations help determine what works well and what could be improved in a program or initiative. Program evaluations can be used to demonstrate impact to funders, suggest improvements for continued efforts, seek support for continuing the program, gather information on the approach that can be shared with others, and help determine if an approach would be appropriate to replicate in other locations with similar needs.

How to create an online evaluation form?

Nowadays, there are many tools that can be used as online evaluation forms. You can use free tools such as Google Forms or more advanced paid software options. In this guide we would like to give you a simple 3-step process to create a Google Form:

Step 1: Set up a new form or quiz.

Step 2: Edit and format a form or quiz.

Step 3: Send your form to people to fill it out.

A detailed overview of where to click, can be found on this website:
https://support.google.com/docs/answer/6281888?hl=en&co=GENIE.Platform%3DDesktop

What to take into consideration?

Think about yourself as the user. You would like to have a form that is short, simple, consistent and makes the evaluator feel like their experience is smooth. What is important is to know why you are asking feedback and to pay attention to the questions that you ask. Also, what is nice for the evaluator is to know how much time it will take them to complete the form. In addition, it is also important to create a distribution list that includes all evaluators.

While you may want to ask all kinds of questions, there are a number of things that need to be taken into consideration. One key requirement is related to personal data collection, referred to as GDPR.

General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR)

The General Data Protection Regulation is a Regulation in EU law on data protection and privacy in the EU and the European Economic Area. The GDPR is an important component of EU privacy law and of human rights law, in particular Article 8 of the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union.It is very important that evaluators give their consent prior to collecting any personal data.

How do you give feedback on an online class teacher?

Giving feedback to educators is important. What educators are really looking to hear about is the learner's feedback on their learning experience, on the classes and the teaching materials.

Here are a few examples of ways to evaluate:

- Student self-report measures

- This kind of measure involves asking the learner about their feelings, attitudes, beliefs, etc. in relation to the course.

- Student attendance collection

- If an educator is giving a class through Zoom, they can create an excel attendance sheet. Alternatively, they can make use of Excel.

- Surveys

- Surveys are a very efficient way to collect information from a class.

- Interviews / Focus Groups

  Interviews and Focus groups are useful for gathering subjective perspectives from learners. Interviews can help with gathering more in-depth information about perceptions, insights, attitudes, experiences, or beliefs. Interviews with each class member can be very time consuming while focus groups (group interviews) may be able to take some time pressure away.

- Videos from class with reflection

  This evaluation method can be integrated within your course as a component. Instructors may ask you to prepare a reflection video on what you have learned and what can be improved.

- Time spent in online learning spaces

  Educators can request schedules and timetables from learners to understand whether they were given enough time for classes, questions and answers and preparation for tests and assignments.

- Participation in check in's

  Online Check ins are also a tool similar to interviews and focus groups. It must be noted that it is very time consuming to do a check in with each learner.

- Drag and drop activities

  In case there is a desire to conduct a more interactive evaluation a 'Drag & Drop' evaluation activity can be arranged.

- Game-type activities

  Evaluation can also be done through games.

- Peer evaluation and review

  A very popular format of evaluation is peer evaluation. This can be observed a lot in group work. Learners are asked to evaluate each other's participation and work.

- Assignment completion and submission

  Evaluation can also be done through a review of course completion rates.

Best Practices

Online Academy Feedback form

The Online Academy Feedback form is a great example of a course evaluation targeted at learners. This form looks at understanding how they can improve the course. The questions are expecting a response from the learner in the form of a Likert scale. The questions included on the form are the following:

- Your overall rating of the academy

- How would you rate the teacher's knowledge?

- How would you rate the teacher's ability to share the knowledge?

- How would you rate the exercises?

- How would you rate the knowledge you gained in the subject?

- If you answered the previous question less than 4, please explain your answer

- Do you have anything to add that you feel is missing from the course?

- Do you have anything to add to improve the organization or the team?

- Your full name

- Your email

As you can see this is a good practice as it shows a short form that requires the learner to give feedback and respond to overall succession of the online course. However, there is one question that we would like to advise you to include in this form: Would you have any other feedback to offer?

By offering this question to the evaluator, they are given the opportunity to also openly communicate their thoughts, ideas and beliefs and make open suggestions.

<u>Boston University: Start-Stop-Continue</u>

Asking "how's it going?" doesn't usually get much concrete, actionable feedback, however. You're more likely to get some focused answers if you ask focused questions. One approach is the start-stop-continue. Ask students to tell you:

- What you should start doing.

- What you should stop doing.

- What you should continue doing.

Collect the responses and organize them into a table or spreadsheet, then take a few minutes during the next class to discuss the feedback with your students. During the discussion, point out:

- Conflicting messages. Students often believe that everyone in the class thinks the same way about the way a class is going, but the feedback may show that there are conflicting recommendations. For example, some students may want you to slow down, others to speed up. Pointing these out helps students to understand the needs of others in the class—as well as the instructor's need to satisfy different groups.

- Things you are willing to do or change. Some student requests are very reasonable and you may be very willing to accommodate them. For example, students may request that you provide additional practice problems.

- Things you are not willing to do or change. Students may request some changes that you are not willing to accommodate. For example, students may ask you to provide a structured approach to analyzing a case, but you may prefer that they deal with the uncertainty because it helps them to learn to formulate solutions to complex problems rather than following a "recipe," which they would be unlikely to have in a real situation. Explaining why you have chosen a particular approach helps students to better understand that approach—and perhaps to appreciate it more.

The spreadsheet below is an example of a start-stop-continue summary. You may find it useful to post your summary on your course website so students have a chance to review it. It's important to capture the comments honestly so that students feel their voice is being heard— but it's also practical to paraphrase so that students can see how often a comment on a particular issue occurs.

Start		Stop		Continue	
7	More/slower illustration of how to use Excel/making sure people are caught up	7	Spending time going over homework (or all homework)	12	Going over HW in detail.
6	More examples of how to use them in real life.	3	Sending so many e-mails	9	Posting comprehensive homework answers.
3	Giving extra practice problems.	2	Posting so many documents.	9	Posting notes about using Excel and other examples.
2	Giving more direction on semester assignments.	2	Homework online posting.	4	Discussion format.
2	More exercises during class.	2	Calling on the same people.	4	Asking questions to make sure people are on track.
2	Going faster.		So many assignments.	3	Keeping us informed through SMG tools and e-mail.
2	Posting slides before class. (day before)		Scolding about not reading e-mail.	2	Being available, accessible/open door style.
	Shorten PP slides (too much information on each)		Repeating explanations when there is no response to "Should I go over this again?"	2	PowerPoint slides available before class.

Suggestions for further reading

7 Ways to Request Feedback from Students about Your Class

https://engagetheirminds.com/2022/05/11/7-ways-to-request-feedback-from-students-about-your-class/

Two ways I ask students for feedback by Kevin Perks (director of school and district services for the Learning Innovations program at WestEd)

https://www.linkedin.com/pulse/two-ways-i-ask-students-feedback-kevin-perks/

University of Toronto: Formative and Summative feedback

https://tatp.utoronto.ca/teaching-toolkit/supporting-students/cdg/feedback/asking-feedback/

Best Practices and Sample Questions for Course Evaluation Surveys

https://assessment.wisc.edu/best-practices-and-sample-questions-for-course-evaluation-surveys/

https://teaching.pitt.edu/wp-content/uploads/2018/12/OMET-Student-Course-Evaluations.pdf

https://www.questionpro.com/blog/student-survey/

Conclusions

Given the recent and immediate demand for teachers who traditionally teach in a classroom or lecture setting to move to an online environment, many teachers have been thrown into the deep end. The transition has not been gradual but rather a spontaneous demand, given the shutdown of many educational facilities during lockdowns. The questions are: do traditional teachers have the skill set required to deliver online learning, and how can they make the transition more smoothly? What kind of skills will they need to deliver online learning more effectively?

Teaching in a conventional, hitherto known environment, requires not only a different skill set, but also a different mindset from online teaching. Expecting a good traditional teacher to be a good online educator is not so apparent, because that does not mean they can do each other's jobs without requiring more learning and development.

Classroom educators encounter daily challenges in a particular type of environment, in which they use, to a large extent, body language, verbal and written communication. In fact, such teachers, by the means of their seniority, gain lots of experience and build up a good resource/ compendium of various techniques and methods. Teachers learn to observe and interpret students' reactions. They can detect students who need help and respond accordingly and promptly. They can intervene and provide advice when needed. In face2face situations, a single teacher faces the need to communicate directly with many different individuals, with different needs, and a different level of understanding or responsiveness. Students cannot avoid participation if motivation is low. Teachers can detect low motivation and react accordingly.

All these skills and methods or approaches, in most cases, cannot be utterly translated to online education. Remote sessions should be supported by materials, diverse resources that are designed around online learning. Support for teachers should also include timing and motivational techniques, effective for online learning.

It takes time and commitment for a teacher to reach their full potential as an online teacher. They must start by appreciating the massive differences in the two approaches to teaching. If they have an extensive understanding of educational psychology and strong willingness to adapt, they may change faster; but for most classroom teachers, it may take months to make a reasonable and satisfactory transition.

An online course can largely replicate a traditional session, but in different ways, which means inevitable adopting agility in teaching. Hence, teachers themselves should consider a few issues, i.a.: how to learn successfully and effectively online, they should plan some goals and expectations of online sessions, and explore learners' needs to prepare tailor-made courses (if possible) and respond to their needs. Educators ought to contemplate on and choose a variety of digital tools that can be used and that may turn out to be indispensable trying to meet digital education leader's needs – storing the files/ documents, gathering data, verification of students' knowledge, collection of opinions, evaluation, and so on. As a matter of fact, there are a lot of teaching and learning "circumstances" which determine the usage of a given digital tool. Furthermore, new technologies are developing so dynamically that every single need, if well-considered, can be taken into consideration.

In the Guide we also tried to analyze some findings on the basis of the survey questionnaires conducted among digital learners as in response to coronavirus disease 2019, lots of universities and educational centres announced mandatory online course conversions. We wanted to have a deeper insight into the learners' view on this issue. The results which identify students' satisfaction, challenges, and doubts, are highly correlated to content coverage and interaction of online learning technologies. The evolvement of web-based technology, growing competition among various educational institutions (incl. HEIs), and learner acceptance of distance learning has fostered widespread support for the online teaching and learning paradigm. Despite this growth, a vast majority of educational institutions were ill-prepared to shift abruptly from traditional face-to-face to online modalities imposed worldwide in March 2020.

Accordingly, we continue in our search for which aspects related to online course technologies are most important to students. It is absolutely corroborated that there are many technologies available for online content delivery, including learning management systems. However, such technology requirements may create challenges for students including, but not limited to, low Internet bandwidth, unaffordable systems requirements, shortage of laptop/tablet devices and audio/visual interruptions, or even insufficient technical skills to be able to fully participate in remote sessions.

The Guide includes some best practices in online education pertaining to introduction of new material, consolidation of material, students' involvement activities, exam/ tests and knowledge verification, and finally evaluation.

Unlikely to teachers, learners are more flexible to the rapidly changing reality and are more likely to undergo a strong phase of education process redesign where traditional walled-in classrooms and rows of desks are replaced for more flexible, multipurpose, informal and transformative open plans for their educational pathway continuity. Learners sometimes experience anxiety, reservedness, or they struggle with more and more modern teaching and learning strategies since pandemic times, however, they are trying to benefit from what perspectives online education brings treating this shift (to flexible learning) like a cognitive and capacity-building experience. Noticeably, shared vision, open discussion, commitment and enough time for preparation helps in adaptation and fosters a new learning community. Undoubtedly, the needs of learners should be carefully considered, ensuring optimal physical and pedagogical context for effective and collaborative learning.

REFERENCES

Airth, Maria, *How to Create a Good Study Space for Online Learning*. Retrieved from https://study.com/academy/popular/how-to-create-a-good-study-space-for-online-learning.html

Banks, Mary (April 2022). Self-Study: What Is It And How To Do It. https://www.quadeducationgroup.com/blog/self-study-what-is-it-and-how-to-do-it

Beaudoin, M. (2016), "Issues in higher education – a primer for higher education decision makers", in Barefoot, B.O. and Kinzie, J.L. (Eds), New Direction for Higher Education, Jossey-Base, Vol. 173, pp. 9-19, M.S. Andrade (Vol. Ed.), issues in distance education.

Basilaia, G. and Kvavadze, D. (2020), "Transition to online education in schools during a SARS-CoV-2 coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic in Georgia", Pedagogical Research, Vol. 5 No. 4, em0060.

Bryson, E. (n.d.). *What digital skills do learners need for online learning*. https://www.emilybrysonelt.com/what-digital-skills-do-learners-need-for-online-learning/

Carr-White, Nicola (Edith Cowan University 2021). Towards an evidence-informed differentiated learning consolidation process to support classroom instruction.

Collaborative learning: https://ctl.columbia.edu/resources-and-technology/teaching-with-technology/teaching-online/collaborative-learning-online/

Colman, H. (2022, August 21). *9 Ways to Assess Student Learning Online*. Explore the eLearning World With Us. https://www.ispringsolutions.com/blog/8-ways-to-assess-online-student-learning

Creately (January2023). The Easy Guide to Self-Learning for Remote Learning Students. https://creately.com/blog/education/self-learning-techniques-tools/

Darn, Steve. (First published October 2007). The role of Homework. https://www.teachingenglish.org.uk/professional-development/teachers/managing-resources/articles/role-homework

Does Online-Formed Peer Relationship Affect Academic Motivation During Online Learning?: https://www.researchgate.net/publication/359066872_Does_Online-Formed_Peer_Relationship_Affect_Academic_Motivation_During_Online_Learning

Elliott, A. (2021, May 22). *12 Digital Classroom Management Rewards Your Students Want!* The Classroom Community Copilot. https://theclassroomcommunitycopilot.com/2020/08/12-digital-classroom-management-rewards.html

Formative and Summative Assessments | Poorvu Center for Teaching and Learning. (n.d.). https://poorvucenter.yale.edu/Formative-Summative-Assessments

Getting Feedback from Students: https://www.bu.edu/ctl/teaching-resources/start-stop-continue/

Holden, O. L., Norris, M. E., & Kuhlmeier, V. A. (2021). Academic Integrity in Online Assessment: A Research Review. *Frontiers in Education*, 6. https://doi.org/10.3389/feduc.2021.639814

How To Activate Learner Verification. (n.d.). Learnyst Knowledge Base. https://support.learnyst.com/en/articles/1758734-how-to-activate-learner-verification

Howard-Jones, Paul (2019). Consolidation of learning. https://solportal.ibe-unesco.org/articles/consolidation-of-learning/

Importance of classroom interaction: https://www.intellischool.in/post/importance-of-classroom-interaction

Importance of Evaluation: https://www.ruralhealthinfo.org/toolkits/rural-toolkit/4/evaluation-importance

(n.d.). *Instructional technology and distance education services*. TamiuEdu. https://www.tamiu.edu/distance/students/technology-requirements.shtml

Kampen, M. (2021, September 24). *6 Types of Assessment (and How to Use Them)*. Prodigy Education. https://www.prodigygame.com/main-en/blog/types-of-assessment/

Koh, B. (2022, March 29). *8 Fun Reward Systems for Online Teachers*. Online Teacher Dude. https://onlineteacherdude.com/reward-systems-online-teachers/

Maria, C. (2022, October 18). *The Top 10 Teacher Reward Systems [Online Teaching]*. TPR Teaching. https://www.tprteaching.com/reward-systems-online-teaching/

Miller, Kelsey. (2020, April, 28). *7 Time Management Tips for Online Students*. Retrieved from **https://www.northeastern.edu/graduate/blog/time-management-tips-online-students/**

Nuñes, K. L. (2022, June 30). *Best Reward Systems for Teaching English Online or In-Person*. BridgeUniverse - TEFL Blog, News, Tips & Resources. https://bridge.edu/tefl/blog/reward-system-teaching-english/

Peer relationships buffer the negative association of online education with education satisfaction and subsequently with study engagement among under graduate medical students: https://bmcmededuc.biomedcentral.com/articles/10.1186/s12909-022-03337-3

Reasons Why Collaborative Online Learning Activities Are Effective: https://elearningindustry.com/collaborative-online-learning-activities-reasons-effective

Singh, J., Steele, K., & Singh, L. (2021). Combining the Best of Online and Face-to-Face Learning: Hybrid and Blended Learning Approach for COVID-19, Post Vaccine, & Post-Pandemic World. *Journal of Educational Technology Systems*, *50*(2), 140–171. https://doi.org/10.1177/00472395211047865

Smith, K. (2022, July 13). *How to learn digital skills for free*. Charity Digital. https://charitydigital.org.uk/topics/topics/how-to-learn-digital-skills-for-free-10129

Sparx. What is consolidation homework and how is it set? https://support.sparx.co.uk/en/knowledge/what-is-consolidation-homework

Staake, J. (2021, August 23). *Virtual Rewards That Work For In-Person And Online Classrooms*. We Are Teachers. https://www.weareteachers.com/virtual-rewards/

Staff Writer. (2022, March, 24), *10 Best Study Space tips.* Retrieved from https://www.joyce.edu/blog/10-best-study-space-tips/

Student Feedback: What it is & Why it Matters: https://www.questionpro.com/blog/student-feedback/

SurveyLab. (n.d.). *Online tests*. https://www.surveylab.com/en/online-tests/

Twinkl. https://www.twinkl.it/teaching-wiki/consolidate-learning

Types of Digital Assessment - Academic Practice - Trinity College Dublin. (n.d.). https://www.tcd.ie/academicpractice/Gateway_to_Assessment/students/types_digital_assessment/

UTEP Connect. (2017, April). *7 ways to organize your study space for success.* Retrieved from https://www.utep.edu/extendeduniversity/utepconnect/blog/april-2017/7-ways-to-organize-your-study-space-for-success.html

Wilkinson, C. (2021, March 3). *Best Reward Systems for Online Teaching*. Caite Elizabeth. https://www.caiteelizabeth.com/reward-system-online-teaching/

Additional resources:

Video on how to organize your space: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vCk9SILTo1g&t=93s

Your online academy needs a constant feedback loop: https://embedsocial.com/templates/academy-feedback-form/

Tim Urban: Inside the mind of a master procrastinator: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=arj7oStGLkU

Webgraphs:

Azusa pacific university accessed January 23

European Agency for safety and health at work accessed January 23
OSH e-tools | Safety and health at work EU-OSHA (europa.eu)

How to Succeed in an Online Class: 5 Best Practices for New Students - Azusa Pacific University (apu.edu)

MBA SKOOL accessed January 23
Cost Benefit Analysis of E-Learning in Organizations | MBA Skool4

Niband had professional competencies accessed January 23
nibandha professional competences (nibandhapcblog.blogspot.com)

The E Learning Network accessed January 23
Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs for Learners | Blog | ELN

Teach Thought accessed January 23
30 Of The Best Tools For Remote Teaching And Learning - (teachthought.com)