St George's
University of London

Teaching and learning at St George's with a blended learning approach:
Taking an asynchronous approach to lectures on Canvas

Overview and Aims

Adopting a blended model of education will require you to reconsider the best approaches to teaching so that students get the most out of both face-to-face and online opportunities for learning. For example, it won't always be possible or advantageous to rely on the traditional lecture delivered 'live' over a period of, say, 50 minutes . But if you do move your lecture content online you need to be aware that the capacity of students to listen and absorb for a lengthy period of time is reduced in an online situation; so delivery needs to be broken up into "chunks" and ideally interspersed with other learning activities.

> *Studies of working memory suggest that there are limits to how much information your students can manage at the same time; sustained attention is also difficult to maintain and lapses in attention can occur within 10-18 minutes.*

The aim of this guide is to support you in adapting your lecturing to an asynchronous mode, providing, and structuring your lecture content into shorter chunks that your students can engage with in their own time. We do not recommend chunking previously recorded 'live' lectures as per the live teaching recording policy: unless the coherence and recording is very high quality, your time will not be well-spent and the outcome will be poor. Fresh planning and recording will be quicker and more rewarding.

The Basics

Planning your lecture

1. **Establish the intended learning outcomes:** broadly this is the articulation of what you intend the students will know and (possibly) be able to do at the end of your lecture (3-6 things, typically).
2. **Think about the structure** of what you want students to learn. For example, is it *hierarchical* starting with an overarching concept and introducing sub-topics point-by-point, *sequential* where steps in a process are introduced in order, *problem-solving* where you model how to solve a problem, or *comparative* where you present different sides of an argument?
3. **Chunk the lecture up** by identifying the sub-sections in the structure. You can use the breaks in the structure to provide a short student activity that encourages your learners to reflect on what they have listened to or to formatively self-assess what they have learned. The Canvas quiz tool can be useful for this kind of formative activity or you can also use the Panopto quiz tool to incorporate quizzes directly into your lecture recording on Panopto (A guide on this can be found in the Learning Technologies quick guides module here).
4. **Create an overview or map** of the structure that you share with your students to help them navigate the content and take notes. At its most simple, this could be the list of headings and sub-headings. But to show how different chunks of content relate to each other, graphical representations are often effective. Examples are

concept maps (Lucidchart has a free-to-use basic option), Venn diagrams or Microsoft SmartArt graphics such as the Process, Cycle or Hierarchy types in Word and PowerPoint.

5. **Introduce yourself** at the start of the lecture. Show that you are clear where the lecture fits into the module or course, be clear about your expectations of how your students should engage and what they can expect from you.

Embedding your lecture in Canvas

This Canvas template provides you with a useful standard format along with some examples for putting your lecture online and making it accessible to students.

> Hall and Ivaldi (2017) argue that students experience a recorded lecture or a lecture mediated through technology as a different type of learning event to the face-to-face lecture and adopt different learning strategies.

Here are some recommendations:

1. **Subtitle** should be checked on your recorded chunks to ensure they are accessible. All Panopto recordings are automatically machine captioned in Panopto. If a student in your session requires human captioning you should get in touch with LTS@sgul.ac.uk.
2. **'Bookend' your lecture** with a preparatory task before the start, and a summary and some signposting at the end. *Preparation* could be a short reading or a quiz to test prior-knowledge. If you indicate how long you expect students to spend on the pre-task (e.g. 5 or 10 minutes), they are more likely to do it. *Signposting* might be to a live Q&A session or subsequent class if there is one; or to some optional extension resources, such as a publication or video.
3. **Support your students with how to engage**. What should they be doing as they listen to the content? Should they be taking notes or formulating questions, and in what form? Setting out and agreeing expectations at a module level is important for consistency so if you are not the module leader, find out what the expectations are.
4. **Direct students to the Canvas Study+ resources** for Learning from Lectures and Tips for Distance Learning.
5. **Provide the full deck of lecture slides** as a later revision tool that students can skim through easily ensuring they are accessible for all learners (avoiding PDF as this prevents students from adapting the slides to their preferred contrast when viewing the slides).
6. **Be friendly and conversational** as you populate the template: "So far you've covered X; now let's look at Y", "If you are still unsure, revisit Z"

NB If it's decided that your lecture is to be delivered live (synchronously), it is still a good idea to prepare it in the way described here, with pauses and short activities for students.

This way you can increase your students' engagement and more easily turn your lecture into an asynchronous resource for revision purposes and for students who are unable to attend the live session.

References and Further Resources

French, S., & Kennedy, G. (2017). Reassessing the value of university lectures, *Teaching in Higher Education*, 22(6), 639-54.

Hall, Gareth & Ivaldi, Antonia (2017). A qualitative approach to understanding the role of lecture capture in student learning experience, *Technology, Pedagogy and Education*, 26(4), 383–94.

Transforming your teaching for online learning: supporting students to develop as effective lifelong and independent learners, CIDE & CTiE Guide

Canvas template guide and examples

Adding Captions to a Panopto video guide

Study+ resources for students

Learning from Lectures guide for students

Tips for distance learning for students

This guide has been produced by CIDE and CTiE.
Last reviewed January 2024