



INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL OF CREATIVE RESEARCH THOUGHTS (IJCRT)

An International Open Access, Peer-reviewed, Refereed Journal

A ROUGH GUIDE TO RAPID TRANSITION TO ONLINE LEARNING

Dr Ambuj Pandey

Assistant Professor, Chemistry Department
Govt Bililasa PG Girls College
Bilaspur, Chattisgarh

Online Learning – A Much Ado about Nothing?

The most immediate challenge is determining how to tackle 2020's COVID-19 pandemic, which has forced most higher education institutions around the world to suspend face-to-face teaching and shift to online classes. While this will remain feasible for most courses over the coming weeks, it will be challenging to maintain this approach in the longer term.

Even after the coronavirus pandemic subsides, the ripple effects will have a permanent impact on the higher education landscape. Students' exposure to online learning will have increased as a result of the outbreak, requiring higher education providers to re-think their delivery methods. Amid what is likely to be a deep economic recession, students and parents will question what type of higher education provides the best value (if any).

The present nationwide, free-for-all euphoria of teaching online - right from the delivery of lectures to conducting webinars using a variety of digital platforms is largely quantitative! The resulting impressive statistical pile up of collective data on webinars & class conductions hardly has any meaningful QA backup to assess its quality, genuine need, impact etc. in other words the proverbial outcome! This confusion is further exacerbated by tall claims of the unassessed outcomes of *taking the education to the next level of accomplishment* needs to be taken with a pinch of salt!

On the other hand, if we were to believe the outcomes of various international webinars on post Covid education scenario, then one startling & thought-provoking fact that clearly emerges is that online delivery of education as learning experience is far from satisfying at least to the learners – so to say! In addition to this, the outcomes of various international webinars also indicate that no amount of electronic gadgetry, related paraphernalia and identical clutter of Internet, AI, AR, VR etc. can replicate the depth & impact of the magical moments of the real time classroom.

This intriguing situation is exacerbated by the combination of reasons such as first time exposure to creating digital contents and its online delivery on the part of the teachers, low competency in proficiency in English language especially with the diction, use of low end smartphones and places with background noises for recording of substandard quality videos, unavailability of access to the internets, tabs, smartphones etc. to the learners leading to a clear digital divide and lack of protocols & codes of conduct for online teaching & assessments

Below are some teaching considerations to make when rapidly moving to online instruction. Please keep in mind that perfection is not expected. Instead, aim to provide students with the support they need to meet your essential course learning outcomes during this disruptive time.

Module 1 - Before You Begin

- **Check with your department** to make sure you are aware of expectations and guidelines for all classes.
- **Consider realistic goals** for yourself and for your students. Can you realistically maintain your original syllabus and schedule, or do you need to make adjustments?
- **Review your course learning goals** to determine your priorities for student learning and assessment.
- **Identify your new expectations for students** and prepare to communicate those early to your students.

Things to Do

- Log into Canvas and upload your syllabus and other course content.
- Decide how to communicate with your students. Make alternate arrangements for students (e.g., Smartphone) for students without internet access.
- Establish a method for collecting submissions and assignments from students. Ensure all students have access to this and are aware of this method.
- If you plan to provide lecture content for students to watch remotely, decide how you will generate and upload recordings.
- Update students on whether and how you will hold office hours virtually.
- Establish a procedure for evaluating student learning.
- Establish a procedure for providing students with grades and feedback on their work.

Module 2 - General Considerations When Teaching Online

- Re-evaluate attendance policies in the context of the disruption of your classes. Remember that all students may not have equal access to technology or other resources for the revised format of your class.
- Consider developing learning activities that could be completed independently or in small groups. Instead of relying on in-class activities, you may want to develop a larger set of activities that students can complete remotely.
- Consider alternatives for course experiential activities, including laboratory, field-study, clinical, and research components. For example, consider whether a video demonstration of an experiment may serve some part of a laboratory course? Could an experiment be redesigned in a way that could be done in an unsupervised setting?

Module 3 - Communication with Students

- Provide an initial communication to students as quickly as possible, even if all the details are not in place, yet. Let them know when they can expect more information and where they can find it.
- Ask students to reach out if/when they need additional support/accommodation to engage in the revised format (e.g., technology access, learning accommodations, illness, etc.).
- Be consistent with your chosen method of communication such as Canvas LMS and make sure that students will know where they will find the most up-to-date version of information about the course, including any newly posted materials.
- Set expectations for how students should engage in communication with you and/or each other, including how they should contact you. Let students know how frequently you expect to respond to online communication from students.
- Consider using virtual office hours with a dedicated Zoom link.

Module 4 - Delivering Content

There are multiple ways to deliver content online, with no single format or approach that will work best for everyone. Consider your own preferences, the nature of your content, and your specific learning goals—and be sure to share your choices, goals, and expectations with students. Consider also the following:

- You may decide to deliver course content in a “live” fashion (a.k.a. synchronously), or by giving students choice about when to engage (a.k.a. asynchronously)
 - Synchronous delivery provides opportunities for direct exchanges between students and with you as the instructor (though less so in large classes). On the other hand, students facing technology- or internet-related challenges will have more trouble accessing synchronous video content, and limited bandwidth may make synchronous delivery impossible in a significant disruption. If you decide to offer any synchronous content, it is a good practice to record your synchronous sessions for posting later to Canvas LMS
- Asynchronous delivery (via video, audio, PowerPoint, readings, web resources, etc.) is preferable in a significant disruption because it is more accessible and flexible. However, asynchronous delivery may allow students to harbour misconceptions about course material that may go unchecked. Read on for tips to regularly engage students with each other, the content, and you.
- If you choose to create videos of you lecturing (or otherwise sharing information with students), consider the following:
 - Create shorter videos (maximum 10 minutes) that focus on a specific topic, concept, or skill. This will help students maintain attention.
 - Add captions to your video by adding a captions file or create a transcript.
 - Give students an action-item at the conclusion of each video (akin to an interaction that might happen in class). For example, they might solve a practice problem or post to a discussion board.
- If you create videos of your own or post things from around the internet, be sure to provide context with information about what you expect students to take away from these materials, and/or links to supplementary materials or documents.
- Create space for thinking and reflection with a private discussion forum group for each student (or for a group of students) or create an assignment where students can submit their answers to prompts about course content before they engage in a live or class-wide asynchronous discussion.

Module 5 - Discussions

- Facilitating discussions in the online space can be done through use of a discussion board in Canvas LMS, or via Zoom or Blackboard Collaborate. Discussion boards can be made available to the entire class or assigned to small groups of students
- Here are some additional tips for facilitating discussions using an online discussion board:
 - Communicate clear guidelines in your prompt, establishing expectations for your students' contributions to the discussion (e.g., writing style, length, number of interactions, frequency, tone, and content).
 - Create questions and prompts that require complex thinking and application of ideas, to avoid repetitive student responses.
 - Be present by providing feedback and coaching to student responses
 - Encourage students to participate in a variety of ways that work for the individual student, including text, audio, or video. Consider that certain necessary student accommodations could limit the possible response methods available.

Module 6 - Assignments

In the case of upcoming assignments, consider the resources students will need to complete them, the manner in which they are typically completed, and how you will assess them. Will these resources be available in the virtual classroom? Will students be able to submit their work, in a format conducive to your assessment, in the virtual classroom?

If you need to change an assignment to work in the virtual classroom, focus on the key goals of that assignment. What can students do that will meet these goals, even if the result is different from the original plan?

Here are some additional tips about specific types of assignments:

- For **writing assignments**, provide opportunities for peer feedback. This can be done by putting students into groups in Canvas LMS and directing them to upload or share documents within Canvas LMS or OneDrive. For successful peer feedback, provide students with clear structure and prompts, asking students to respond to specific criteria related to your grading of the work, and/or responding to questions like "What is the main thing you think should be revised in this draft?"
- For **presentations**, you might ask students to create a recording using simple technology (e.g., smart phone or computer), and send it to the instructor or full class. For a lower tech option, students might be asked to submit a written script of their presentation, along with support materials (e.g., slide deck, images, etc.).
- For **homework assignments that are best turned in via hard copy** (e.g., math problem set), you could give students a worksheet to complete or ask them to upload photographs of their work to the assignment submission folder.
- For **field trips**, create an internet scavenger hunt or provide other online materials or videos to expose students to what they're missing out on with the face to face visit.

Module 7 - Tests

If you have a planned face-to-face test, it may or may not translate well to the virtual classroom. Consider options such as a take-home exam, an assignment where students submit revised written work from earlier in the semester, and/or creation of a series of smaller assignments that can be completed remotely in lieu of a larger test.

If you choose to administer a test online using the quiz tool in Canvas LMS, consider the following tips:

- Allow students more than one submission attempt, in order to accommodate possible problems with internet connectivity.
- The Respond Us Lockdown Browser is available in Canvas LMS and functions as a moderate deterrent to cheating on tests. However, Lockdown Browser can cause technical glitches that require IIT support intervention. Online proctoring services should be used as a last resort only.
- Create a second version of the test, to be used by students requiring an accommodation of extra time for timed tests.

Module 8 - Labs and Studios

- There is no perfect way to conduct traditional lab or studio work virtually, but there are options. For example:
 - If the key objective for your class is data or item analysis, provide students with artefacts or raw data sets and ask them to complete their analysis.
 - If students can understand some key aspects of a lab by watching it, rather than doing it, look for some online examples. For example, [MERLOT](#) serves as a repository housing 90+ virtual labs, while other discipline-specific repositories provide additional resources ([Stanford Virtual Labs](#), [HHMI BioInteractive](#), [ACS Simulations](#), [Colorado PhET](#), [National Center for Case Study Teaching in Science](#), etc.)
 - Find additional ways to increase student interaction with content and with each other. For example, you might pose questions about potential lab results to students and ask them to discuss their thoughts on how to interpret these results.
 - Consider reserving a distilled portion of face-to-face activities for later in the semester if in-person classes can be resumed. During the disruption, focus on any techniques or practices that can be completed or performed at home.

Students might then engage in a structured reflection about their process, the rationale behind choices, and any revisions they made.

Module 9 - Winding Up

Remember that the goal is to adapt your current plans and teaching strategies to make the best of things in a difficult or unexpected situation. Perfection is not expected, and it may be useful to remind yourself of that occasionally. In addition, as unanticipated issues arise in your class, remember that you have a support network to rely upon for help, including the [Canvas LMS](#) or reach out for help with technology tools and instructional support equitably.

Important Links

Canvas LMS

References:

- 1: International webinar on "[New schools of thought: Innovative models for delivering higher education](#)" By The Economist Education Unit, London, UK May 2020
- 2: International Webinar on '[Internationalization of higher education in the post COVID19 era: Challenges and Opportunities for India](#)' By International Education Institute, New York, USA, Qatar Foundation & Jio Institute, May 2020

