

## Remote Teaching Working Party – Recommendations Brief

### Background

The RTWP was formed to develop easy to implement recommendations to improve the remote learning experience for students within existing resources. This brief presents the key challenges identified for remote teaching and learning and recommends practical measures to address these. The key problem to be addressed relates to the substantial reduction in student attendance and engagement in lectures, tutorials and consultations as a result of the move to remote learning.

### Sources

The following qualitative data were considered in identifying challenges and potential solutions:

- Direct feedback from lecturers and tutors, and anonymous survey input from tutors.
- Student survey feedback collected by CBE, ANUSA and PARSA.
- ANU Student Sentiment Report based on trends observed on “ANU Schmidtposting” and “ANU Confessions” Facebook groups.

### Key challenges

Challenges for students include:

1. The loss of student routine / structure.
2. Loss of face-to-face staff interaction and lack of live interaction with staff in some courses.
3. Poor quality recorded content including recordings that appear dated, recycled or not relevant to assessment.
4. Perceived pointlessness of attending classes, temptation to skip regular study and cram at exam time, lack of commitment devices.
5. Poor computer literacy among students (especially undergraduate familiarity with business software such as Zoom, Teams, PDF conversion, etc.) and inconsistent use of software platforms between courses.
6. Difficulty accessing content due to poor internet connections, including large recorded files and live activities with high attendance (high attendance increases bandwidth requirements)
7. Scheduling conflicts, time zone differences and preference for after-hours live activities among postgraduate cohort.
8. Irregular/inconsistent timing of communication and uploading of materials by lecturers.

Challenges for staff included:

1. Managing a much higher volume of student emails around the clock.
2. Students asking the same questions many times by email despite answers being provided in Wattle course forums and students being referred there.
3. Increased workload in preparing duplicate assessments under a hybrid teaching model.
4. The high volume of online teaching support information is overwhelming, especially if you don't know what you are looking for.
5. No “one size fits all” solutions for teaching methods and enabling software.
6. Gauging student understanding and performance in the absence of regular face to face contact and feedback.

## Recommendations

Recommendation	Reason
<b>Lectures</b>	
<p>1. Content recycling from 2019 or previous years should be limited to emergency use or subjected to edit and review.</p>	<p>Strong student dissatisfaction with the reuse of ECHO360 recordings, or old YouTube clips. Practice was intended for Emergency Remote Teaching during the initial COVID-19 lockdown and was not designed as a sustainable practice.</p> <p>Where possible, past recordings should not be recycled for semester 2, unless they are high quality and appropriate. Recycling of content may be permitted if it is generic and contains nothing that could date it, e.g. references to the date or week of semester, assessments, announcements, etc. Lecturers should carefully review and edit past recordings before considering using them for semester 2.</p>
<p>2. Recorded lectures should be made available at a regular time each week.</p>	<p>Students have struggled with uncertainty around when recorded lectures will be made available during semester 1. Regular scheduling will assist to restore some routine and structure around student study schedules.</p> <p>In the absence of timetabled classes, individual courses will need to establish and clearly communicate their own structure and routine to support student certainty.</p>
<p>3. Video delivery for pre-recorded content should take the opportunity to repackage and deliver lecture material in shorter formats, in alignment with best practice.</p>	<p>Shorter recordings (i.e. 20-30 minutes) are more digestible for students and are easier to download and navigate. A greater number of shorter recordings are more appropriate than traditional hour-long lecture blocks.</p>
<p>4. Traditional lecture content delivery should be pre-recorded, to take advantage of asynchronous learning designs.</p>	<p>There is low added value in delivering this content live and doing so presents accessibility issues for students with poor internet connections, in different time zones, or who must access content after work (postgraduate cohort).</p> <p>If lectures are designed to include an interactive component, then live delivery is acceptable provided that the lectures are recorded.</p>



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5. Synchronous, real time live events should supplement recorded content.	<p>Strong student dissatisfaction is evident in courses where students feel they have been abandoned and left to study the recorded content without staff support.</p> <p>Student cohort engagement, and a sense of belonging is best developed through live events within the course. Several shorter live events spread across time zones (morning, afternoon) depending on the cohort (undergrad/postgrad) can supplement pre-recorded activities. Live tutorial, seminar and discussion formats are recommended.</p>
<b>Tutorials</b>	
6. A pre-recorded tutorial should be available for all students. There must also be at least one live tutorial/tutor consultation/discussion session each week. Availability of recorded tutorials should be consistent week to week.	<p>Rather than multiple live tutorials working through the same material, a single pre-recorded tutorial covering the week's tutorial content such as demonstrating the working for a set of problems should be made available for all students. This must be supplemented with weekly live tutorial consultation sessions to ensure students have opportunity to interact and ask questions.</p> <p>Live activities should be recorded and made available for students with poor internet connection who cannot participate live.</p>
7. Weekly live tutorial/tutor consultation/discussion sessions should be scheduled with timetabling and available on Wattle for student enrolment.	Routine scheduling of live tutorial/tutor consultation/discussion sessions at the start of the semester is recommended to provide structure, consistency with the on-campus routine, and a sense of belonging among the student cohort. This will also spread the working load for tutors. The size of tutorials may need to differ from regular face-to-face tutorials.
8. At the start of live sessions, the way students can interact/ask questions should be explained – e.g. noting if you must unmute yourself to speak, or can use text chat instead of audio, etc.	Students have varying degrees of comfort using webcam/audio, and varying degrees of confidence with spoken English, therefore multiple options should be provided to increase student willingness to interact.
9. A facility to ask questions privately should be provided, and students told how to make use of it.	Some students indicate they are uncomfortable asking questions in front of the group. Students should be encouraged to ask questions and discuss publicly but a facility should be provided for students to ask the tutor questions privately. For example, this could be through tutor 'office hours' or private meetings by appointment.

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<b>Consultations</b>	
<p>10. Structured consultation &amp; email response hours should remain the same every week.</p>	<p>Clearly communicated contact hours will help manage student expectations (and help staff compartmentalise). Staff should set and manage their contact hours. For example, a staff member may choose to reply to emails weekly on Tuesday and Thursday afternoons, in which case this should be clearly communicated. Expected times until questions are answered on Wattle forums should also be clearly communicated to students.</p> <p>A minimum number of course convenor contact hours should be decided (e.g., 2 hrs per week), ideally consistent across CBE courses.</p>
<p>11. Live consultation sessions should be offered weekly on at least two separate days, and two different times.</p>	<p>Spreading the days/times of weekly consultation windows will make consultations more accessible across time zones and reduce chance of scheduling conflicts.</p> <p>Lecturers should activate their webcam during consultation sessions to provide an experience more consistent with on-campus consultation, and to provide students with an opportunity for face to face contact.</p> <p>Links for consultation sessions should be posted on the Wattle page along with times to allow students ready access.</p>
<b>Wattle and Communication</b>	
<p>12. Lecturers should post a weekly, informal 5 minute “what’s on this week” video at the start of each week.</p>	<p>Tested and very effective in bringing back some face-to-face experience, providing structure and improving student focus. Can be recorded on a smartphone or webcam and requires minimal time to do. Video should include topics to be covered in the upcoming week, announcements/reminders, and where students should be up to at this point in the course.</p> <p>This could be accompanied by a Wattle post at the start of the week summarising the week ahead.</p>
<p>13. A template should be developed for course convenors to edit and use to produce an overview document for students. This</p>	<p>It is recommended students be presented with clear instructions on the software/tools/resources being used (ECHO360, Zoom, etc), what they replace (lectures, tutorials, group activities), how students can benefit, and how</p>



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<p>document should include key information regarding what software/tools/resources will be used to deliver the course, where students can find help (i.e. using resource developed under recommendation 18), and how students are expected to use these to learn.</p> <p>Lecturers should also record a lecture for week 1 of semester 2 as an introduction that sets out the content of the document, and provides a walk through/screencast of key software/tools/resources, and how students should use these to get the most out of the course.</p>	<p>students should interact (e.g. contribute to Zoom tutorial discussion through voice or text chat, etc). This should give a clear purpose linked to learning outcomes/assessment for each activity to reduce perception that attendance has no benefit.</p> <p>To set expectations and help students plan their week, this document should also include a weekly schedule for lecture uploads, consultation hours, email and discussion board response windows, etc.</p>
<p>14. All Wattle courses should feature a discussion forum. Students should be encouraged to ask questions here rather than email to reduce duplication.</p>	<p>Students are reluctant to ask questions on Wattle. By providing a structured approach to all communications the preference for email may be reduced (e.g. if discussion forums and email are answered twice weekly during defined windows). If more students use the Wattle forum, fewer will ask by email.</p> <p>Staff could also post frequently asked email questions to Wattle noting some students may be embarrassed to ask questions publicly in the Wattle forum.</p>
<b>Assessment</b>	
<p>15. Courses should be designed with a continuous assessment framework.</p>	<p>Continuous assessment (for example, bi-weekly quizzes), encourages students to keep up to date and improve student engagement.</p>
<p>16. Engagement can be fostered if participation is included as an assessment item in a course. (e.g., a small percentage (e.g. 5% to 10%) of overall assessment for engagement within virtual tutorial spaces and Wattle forums.)</p>	<p>Introduction of a participation mark has been observed to dramatically increase online attendance and engagement. Criteria would need to be flexible as not to disadvantage students with poor internet connections and could include a mixture of participation (as opposed to attendance) in live tutorials and/or contribution to Wattle forum discussions.</p>



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	<p>For large courses the forum could include threads for each tutor group to keep sizes manageable, e.g. students would be assigned a group (as with on-campus tutorials) and would post to a thread set up for that group. Participation within the thread would be assessed weekly by the tutor assigned to the related tutorial group.</p> <p>If academic staff include participation as an assessment item, they should be aware that skills and activities assessed in that participation are required to be reflected in the course learning outcomes. Note that marks cannot be given merely for attendance.</p>
<b>Remote Teaching &amp; Learning Support</b>	
<p>17. An online teaching guide should be developed for staff, structured around teaching methods and learning outcomes – e.g. “For white-board based learning you need XYZ – here are the tools and support materials that you could use”.</p>	<p>Staff overwhelmed by the information available need a simple guide structured around pointing them in the right direction for what they are trying to achieve. It is anticipated this guide can be built mostly from existing resources.</p> <p>The guide would provide various options to suit differing preferences and hardware (Windows/Mac/Android/paper based/etc).</p>
<p>18. An online learning guide should be developed for students, that summarises how to use the key platforms/software they are likely to need for their courses. Lecturers will refer to these resources on Wattle.</p>	<p>As with staff, students would benefit from clear instructions on how to use the technology available to learn online – for example how to participate in discussions effectively, how to work in a group online, how to scan and upload multiple pages to Wattle, etc. It is anticipated this guide can be built mostly from existing resources.</p>
<b>Zoom/Teams</b>	
<p>19. Staff should assume low bandwidth options are required by default.</p>	<p>Students should be presumed to be on low bandwidth connections, and not required to maintain video or audio connections unless in breakout groups, one on one consultations, or small group discussions.</p>