

Guidelines for Blended and Online Learning

Guidelines Title	Guidelines for Blended and Online Learning
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Guidelines Owner	Office of the Deputy Dean Education
Category	Academic Quality and Standards
Version Number	1
Content Enquiries	Learning and Teaching Quality, Quality and Academic Governance Unit. Med-Quality-Fmhs@monash.edu
Scope	The Guidelines for Blended and Online Learning apply to all staff responsible for coursework units across the Faculty of Medicine, Nursing and Health Sciences.
Purpose	The Guidelines for Blended and Online Learning have been developed to provide clarity for staff on how to effectively facilitate learning in the online space and support the student's learning journey in this environment.
GUIDELINES STATEMENT	

UNIT INFORMATION

Provide students with a welcome, orientation, overview and efficient access to essential information, and provide a space for ongoing communication.

1. Welcome and Teacher Information: *Essential*

1.1. Create a welcoming environment with an introduction to the teaching staff including:

- A brief welcoming message.
- Names, photos and preferred contact information of all teaching staff.
- An introductory video (recommended as it is more welcoming and personable).
- A clear indication of preferred contact method.
- Consultation times (online or face to face).

Why? This builds a sense of community, enhances the teaching presence, and sets clear communication expectations for the beginning of the unit.

2. Unit Learning Outcomes: *Essential*

2.1. The unit learning outcomes should be present in the Unit Information section.

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Why? Learning outcomes are essential for helping teaching staff to clearly articulate the learning that should occur in the unit. They also give students an indication of cognitive and knowledge level required during the course of the learning experience.

3. Key Dates: *Essential*

3.1. A table including the key dates / unit schedule should be present in the Unit Information section.

Why? This allow for quick access to an overview of important information to enable students to stay on task and thus create a positive student experience.

4. Teaching Approach: *Essential*

4.1. The teaching approach is clearly indicated and explained to students. This includes:

- Whether a unit is blended, flipped, online, or if there are multiple modes of students in the one unit.
- An explanation of how the teacher approaches this mode of learning.

Why? Establishing the teaching approach is essential to create clear expectations of learning throughout the experience and helps students understand their role in the process and how they can best engage with the unit.

5. Expectations: *Essential*

5.1. A clear indication of expectations for both students and teachers is present.

- **Students:** What do the teaching staff expect from students in terms of engagement, contributions and participation, both face to face and online?
- **Teachers:** What can the student expect from the teaching staff with regards to feedback and online teaching, both face to face and online?
- Explicitly state turnaround times and workload requirements.

Why? Setting up appropriate expectations at the beginning of the course allows for easier workload management and holds both the students and teachers accountable. Students are also more likely to study effectively in the unit if they know what is expected of them.

6. Announcement Forum: *Essential*

6.1. The news/announcement forum should be used to send out regular announcements to students, keeping the students informed about weekly topics and tasks, upcoming assessment and any resources you have added to the Moodle site.

Why? This increases the teacher's presence, shows investment in the learning experience, builds community, and helps students stay on task.

7. Introductions: *Recommended for blended units. Essential for online units.*

7.1. A forum should be included for students to get to know their fellow peers.

Why? For blended units, it can be a good way of breaking the ice between students before entering the classroom. For online students, it is essential that they form connections with their peers as isolation can have a negative impact on student experience and results.

8. General Discussion: *Recommended*

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- 8.1. A forum should be provided for general questions.

Why? A general discussion forum gives students a space to ask questions that are not relevant in the weekly discussions or assessment forums. This also reduces workloads as it can decrease the number of individual emails sent to teachers.

9. Netiquette: *Essential*

- 9.1. Online communication guidelines need to be clearly articulated. Teaching staff may develop their own netiquette guidelines for students, develop them in collaboration with students, or link to the Guidelines for Professional Online Communication.

Why? Just as learning expectations are important for the unit to be successful, so are expectations of what is appropriate and professional in online communication.

ASSESSMENT

Provide students with everything they need to know in order to complete their assessment tasks, which should be constructively aligned to LOs and activities, and aligned to the [Monash Assessment Vision](#).

10. Assessment Summary: *Recommended*

- 10.1. A summary table with assessment tasks and due dates is recommended.

Why? The assessment summary is particularly beneficial for units with many assessments, as an overview can assist in focusing students throughout the semester.

11. Referencing style guide: *Recommended*

- 11.1. A link to the library referencing style guide for the required style by the unit, and any relevant tutorials on referencing is recommended.

Why? A large number of student questions in forums are related to referencing requirements. The library is the best place to send student for these enquiries.

12. Assessment Discussion Forum: *Recommended*

- 12.1. Assessment discussion forums are recommended. When students email teachers about assessment directly, but the question is relevant to everyone, it is wise to give this information in the forum so that everyone has equal access to all the information you provide. For clarity, it is recommended to have one forum for each assessment.

Why? Directing questions, about assessment, into one space can help with reducing workload as it ultimately will reduce the number of individual emails sent to teachers. This forum can also give the students an opportunity to discuss assessments with peers in an open and transparent way; enabling any issues or uncertainties to be addressed quickly and clearly by the teacher.

13. Instructions: *Essential*

- 13.1. Clear and detailed instructions are essential for each assessment task.

Why? Presenting the instructions in this section gives the students everything they need to know about the assessment in one convenient location. Although the assessment may be available in the Unit Guide, this may be more of a summary than clear and detailed instructions.

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14. Rubric/Marking Criteria: *Essential*

- 14.1. If rubrics or marking criteria are used for assessment, they must be available to students.

Why? Knowing all the requirements of an assessment task can increase student motivation and engagement with the learning experience. When preparing for assessment students need access to the rubrics throughout the whole semester so that they may adequately prepare themselves for the requirements of the assessment.

15. Submission: *Essential*

- 15.1. According to the [Online Submission of Assessment Business Process](#), an assessment dropbox must be used for students to submit their assessment. Turnitin dropboxes, or integrated Turnitin assignment dropboxes, are required for assignments greater than 1000 words (see [MNHS Business Process](#)).

Why? Online submissions decrease large amounts of administration time while allowing the students flexibility in submission methods - no longer do they need to submit in person or use a cover sheet. This method also reduces workload as online marking (with a rubric) can offer consistency and speed of feedback.

RESOURCES

Provide general support for students through additional support resources and further readings. Topic based resources, such as readings, should be contextualised within the week that they appear.

16. Reading List: *Recommended*

- 16.1. It is recommended to include a reading list managed by the library. The library scans and uploads journal articles and book chapters for online access via [Readings and Reserve](#). The library also completes a copyright check.

Why? Allowing the library to manage the reading lists ensures all students have access to the readings and that the readings adhere to copyright restrictions.

17. Learning Capture: *Recommended*

- 17.1. Lectures, lectorials and seminars are recorded automatically through Learning Capture software program. It is recommended that a link to Learning Capture be provided in your unit.

Why? Recording of lecture materials allows for improvement in student engagement and flexibility for the students learning journey. These recordings can then be used for lesson review/revision and exam preparation.

18. Student Support: *Recommended*

- 18.1. Additional support resources for students can be included, such as: Placement resources, additional (non-required) readings, support resources (e.g. Course Homepages, SASU, Disability Support Services, Research and Learning Online, English Connect, LibGuides).

Why? Students engage better with units when they are supported for their whole experience, not just the unit. Students may find access to these links in other ways, but this is a useful space for teachers to direct students towards support specific to their cohort, and support anywhere, anytime learning.

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CONTENT

Provide content that is appropriately scaffolded and organised logically and consistently into manageable 'learning modules' and appropriately sequenced 'sections' and/or 'subsections'. This should contain everything the students need to successfully engage with the topic.

19. Learning Pathway: *Essential*

19.1. There must be an interplay of pre/in/post class activity. This can be displayed online in a number of suggested learning pathways:

- Pre-class / in class / post class
- Prepare / explore / apply
- Prepare / explore & apply / check & reflect
- Something to read / watch / do / reflect on

Why? Traditional teaching can misuse the online space as a repository of decontextualised PDFs and lecture slides. The learning pathway is well scaffolded and guides students through the unit, is designed and facilitated by the teacher, and includes resources that build on each other and are designed for easy navigation. Conceptual links between modules are made explicit and students are presented with all the information they need to successfully achieve the learning objectives.

20. Module/Topic/Week Structure: *Essential*

20.1. The module should contain the following:

- Introduction to the individual section.
- Learning objectives for the section.
- Scaffolded content within the section (one screen per content page, does not exceed 8-10 pages).
- A summary statement making connection to next section.

Why? This provides a scaffolded structure for students to engage with. Students are introduced to the topic through the expert's voice and the learning objectives indicate the learning requirements to the students. Content that is contextualised by the expert assists the students in understanding the relevance to the topic, the rationale behind the selection of the resources and helps to actively engage students with the resources. Information presented in small and well defined sections (chunked) increases engagement, and a summary wraps up the topic and provides the link to the next content area.

21. Media: *Essential*

21.1. A variety of chunked media should be used, including:

- Scaffolding text
- Readings
- Images
- Videos
- Audio
- Websites
- Reading

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Why? A variety of media gives students different ways of connecting with the content, increases engagement and accommodates different learning modes and cultures. Breaking up text with visuals, addresses different learning styles and increases student engagement with the concept being presented.

22. Copyright: *Essential*

22.1. All media must be copyright compliant:

- PDFs of readings should not be uploaded directly into the Moodle site.
- Resources available freely on the web should be linked to, not uploaded into the Moodle site.
- All readings must be cited according to discipline requirements (APA, Harvard etc.).
- Images must be public domain, creative commons (with attribution) or permission must be sought.

Why? As per the [Monash Copyright Compliance Policy](#): “All staff, students and other authorised users must take reasonable steps to ensure that their activities comply with copyright law and any other binding obligations governing use of copyright material and must take all reasonable efforts to uphold the University's own intellectual property rights including copyright.”

ENGAGEMENT

Provide opportunities for communication between teaching staff and students, as well as peer engagement.

23. Communication, Engagement and Feedback: *Essential*

23.1. Teachers must actively and consistently communicate and engage with students via the Moodle site. According to the [MNHS Feedback Business Process](#), constructive, prompt and personalised feedback must be provided to students. There must be opportunities available for two way communication between the students and teaching staff. Student participation should be monitored.

Why? The teaching staff are the expert guides, and need to have an authoritative voice that moderates, guides and redirects students when necessary. Students need to be supported in the online space as well as face to face.

24. Grouping: *Recommended*

24.1. Cohorts should be divided into smaller groups of twenty five students (groups and groupings in Moodle) for activities and discussions.

Why? Separating the forums and activities into groups makes the learning more manageable for the students while increasing engagement opportunities with their peers.

ACTIVITIES

Provide learning activities that are aligned with the unit learning outcomes. These give the students an opportunity to demonstrate their understanding, gauge their progress, apply knowledge, engage with peers and show they can successfully achieve the outcomes when formally assessed. *For blended learning, one of the following is required per week/topic. Due to the lack of face to face sessions for online units, 3-4 of the following are required per week/topic.*

25. Check your Understanding: *Essential*

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- 25.1. Formative self-assessment should be available for students to check their understanding of the weekly materials. Quizzes should have immediate formative feedback or model answers that guide the students on their responses. [Faculty MCQ Guidelines](#) are available for reference.
- Why?** For units with exams this exposes students to the types of questions that will be in their formal assessment, and with formative feedback it give students a guide into areas that require further study.
26. **Active Learning: *Essential***
- 26.1. Content, such as readings and videos, should be scaffolded by the teacher and moved from a passive task to an active task. This can be achieved by giving focus questions, content driven tasks or reflective activities that require student engagement with the content.
- Why?** This enables the student to engage with critical thinking and the tasks stimulate higher order thinking. It changes the task from passive learning (reading, watching videos) into an active task.
27. **Discussion and Reflection: *Essential***
- 27.1. Well prepared and planned discussion forums which are aligned to the unit learning outcomes and weekly learning objectives should contain detailed instructions and should be present throughout the semester. They should be constructed in a way that enhances peer collaboration and communication, and engages students in higher order thinking.
- Why?** Discussion forums give students an opportunity to communicate, collaborate, support peers, reflect and co-construct knowledge. They give teachers an opportunity to stimulate higher order thinking and give valuable feedback.
28. **Virtual classroom: *Recommended for online units***
- 28.1. Online synchronous opportunities for engagement should be present, particularly for online units. Live classes differ from webinars in that they are designed for active online learning, and peer-peer communication is present.
- Why?** Isolation can be problematic in online units as students do not always have the opportunity to engage face to face with their peers. The online class also gives students a verbal and visual means of communicating about the content, which can be beneficial in a learning environment that is primarily driven by images, media and text.

Responsibility for implementation	Associate Dean (Learning and Teaching)
Status	New
Approval Body	Name: LTC Date: 9/10/17
Definitions	<p>Blended</p> <p>In blended learning, teaching integrates both online learning with traditional face to face teaching, and technology is used to transform and improve the learning experience.</p> <p>Flipped</p> <p>In flipped learning, students are introduced to the core concepts and much of the learning resources online prior to the in-class time, maximising</p>

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	<p>opportunities for active learning and exploration during the face to face class time.</p> <p>Online</p> <p>In online learning, the traditional face to face component of learning is partly or wholly removed, and teaching occurs flexibly through the online platform.</p>
Related Policies	Nil
Related Documents	Guidelines for Professional Online Communication.