

Guidance for Online Learning – UWL

Pedagogy

ExPERT ACADEMY - 2020

Executive summary

This document introduces online learning guidance to enable you to apply the active, scaffolded learning of the UWL pedagogy in Blackboard.

The document is directly linked to the [interconnected curriculum](#) and [UWL pedagogy](#) principles, (which encourage you to produce more inclusive and engaging learning materials online), and with the [assessment and feedback policy](#).

We want to provide better materials and a more consistent approach in the VLE as well as ensuring that students can use the online presence of their module as way to scaffold their learning and encourage independent learning.

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Background

Online and blended learning as methods of delivery are increasing in the HE market and a 2015 United Nations declaration regarding new global Sustainable Development Goals set challenges to education that can be addressed only through online delivery (greater and wider access to education). Online learning however is not straightforward, and evidence suggests that only with sustainable approaches will this method of delivery be implemented successfully in HE (Casanova, Price and Avery, 2018).

Learning is achieved through practice and through 'conversations' that learners have with themselves, with each other and their teachers (Laurillard, 2002). Learners build their own concepts and revise them based on these 'conversations' and 'practices'. This dialogical process is easier to replicate in traditional learning environments than online.

Guidance, instructions, feedback, and assessment of understanding, are core parts of the dynamics of the traditional classroom. The UWL pedagogy tries to replicate a more 'conversational approach'. Learning occurs when students have the opportunity to discuss and explain the core concepts they have been taught. This moves the process from one of memorisation to understanding and learning, where students can use what they have learned to build a knowledge base. This gives them confidence in their knowledge and ability to think for themselves and problem solve. In an online setting, these actions need to be, to some extent, replicated through explicit narratives and learning activities. Learning design provides a framework for developing narratives that combine activities, tools and learning materials, actions and notional learning time. Furthermore, it helps to maximise features of online learning that are unique to this method of learning such as independence, learning pace and reflection time. It also helps to centralise learning in the learner and their learning path. A learning path is the conceptual navigator through which the student is led towards meeting the learning outcomes.

A fundamental step to ensuring better learning design is to set expectations and be transparent in what students need to do in their learning activities and assessments. This implies that learning is designed based on four fundamental elements:

- (i) the learning outcome (what needs to be achieved at the end of the learning path)
- (ii) notional time (the amount of time required for a student to successfully finish each

activity),

(iii) learning activity (with guidance of what the student needs to do for each activity)

(iv) learning materials (which can be part of the learning activity or made available as additional resources).

Materials are therefore uploaded as an element of an activity and to respond to a particular learning outcome. For example, a short YouTube video should be contextualized with a series of instructions for the student, including why this is important and what students should be looking for in the video, which, ideally, should be given in the form of a question or a problem to be solved.

To ensure transparency, each learning activity should introduce students to 'what' is intended, 'who' will be involved in doing it, 'when' they are supposed to finish it, 'how' they will be assessed, 'which' tools should be used and 'why' (what is the relevance for their degree or module).

The degree of structure relates to the learning level of the student – more support being provided for those at L3 and 4 with progressively less as students reach their final year. This is to encourage students to explore more for themselves, encouraging the skill of lifelong learning.

Learning types and the UWL Pedagogy

A full-time student should study for the equivalent of 40 hours per week over a 30-week period (1200 hours of study, with each individual credit being awarded for 10 hours of study). At UWL modules are 20 credits or multiples thereof. Students who face barriers to study (as many widening participation students do) may need time to catch-up and develop, and online activities are an important strategy to enable this as they provide further support and materials to all students. This is already happening to some extent with current modules in Blackboard. However, uploaded materials are frequently not contextualized and signposted to learning outcomes or the week(s) in which they should be used.

In a recent study we conducted at UWL, students referred to the lack of consistency, the difficulty of finding materials from the lectures and a lack of clear guidance of what to do with assessments. They find this inconsistency from module to module, but they also often refer to inconsistency within individual modules. Research has indicated that the best way to encourage learning, whether blended, face to face or online, is to follow a clear and consistent learning design approach.

The UWL pedagogic model is based in [Laurillard's conversational framework](#) (2002, 2013) which encourages learning to be developed through of a series of weekly activities - some of these activities should be scaffolded outside of the classroom supported by Blackboard.

Laurillard describes a learning activity as a potential combination of different learning types that upon combination provides a rich learning experience designed to achieve a learning outcome (not memorisation). In a similar fashion to Bloom's taxonomy, learning types generate different levels of learning complexity, from broadly passive learning (Learning through acquisition) to more active and creative learning (Learning through production). Even within the six learning types introduced by Laurillard, it is possible to design simple or complex tasks adapted to level 3 or to level 7. The complexity of what is asked in each activity and how it is produced may also result in a better alignment with the level the activity was designed for, helping ensure that the student can demonstrate national standards at the required level (see [Framework for Higher Education Qualifications](#))

It is important to highlight that the conversational framework is to be used for all student

engagements including face to face and online. It is based on a student learning journey and how we, as teachers, create a narrative to support this. This will mean that it will make learning more inclusive and accessible to those students who make the most out of the face to face sessions as well as providing them with extra resources to learn outside the session. However, it will also help those who may struggle to attend because of personal or professional commitments.

In the following section we introduce the six different learning types from the conversational framework and suggest different activities outside the classroom that you can design for each level; we also provide a notional time that each activity would take for the student to complete. Time is being used here to support teachers designing a week where students have the opportunity to learn for 40 hours, but time is notional and may vary from discipline to discipline and from learning material to learning material so it will be up to the teacher to decide upon the activities and the notional time they believe to be appropriate.

Learning through acquisition

Activities of this type are typically 'listen to the teacher', 'watch a demo', 'read a book' or a 'watch a video' (in the conversational framework Laurillard presents it as 'Read, Watch and Listening' tasks, which traditionally are seen as part of passive learning). This type of task creates the opportunity for learners to be introduced to concepts, but it doesn't require them to engage actively in learning. Tasks could include reading online books and papers, listening to a Panopto presentation or to recorded lectures, watching a demonstration, listening to podcasts or webcasts, watching animations, reading multimedia or looking at an infographic. Examples of time allocation per activity in this learning type are:

- Reading a given academic chapter or book paper written in an accessible style, with mostly familiar content or situated in a relevant context - reading at a high reading speed 70 words per minute;
- Reading a given academic chapter or paper written in a dense academic style presenting new knowledge - reading at a low reading speed 30 words per minute;
- Watching a 15 minutes video - watching intensely with 3 replays

(15min*3=45min) or watching quickly - light touch (15min*1.5=23mins);

- Reading a web resource - reading at a high reading speed 70 words per minute or reading at a low reading speed 30 words per minute;
- Listening to a podcast - Listening at a high speed (15min*50%=23min) or listening at a slow speed (15min*100%=30min).

With these activities students would not be actively engaging and so learning would be more superficial. To encourage assimilation and synthesis of knowledge (i.e. deep learning) students should be required to use this newly acquired knowledge in a way that enhances their understanding and allows them to demonstrate it.

Learning through inquiry

If the learner engages with and questions the teacher, tries to find an answer in the library or in the internet then they are inquiring. This type of learning is more in the control of the learner as they need to come up with a question or with the answer, evaluate what they find and search again. It enables the concept to keep developing. It is a learning type that teachers typically associate with independent learning although inquiry tasks can also be designed by the teachers.

A teacher may ask the students to analyze ideas and information in multiple resources, collect and analyze data, compare sources, or search for, and evaluate, information in different resources. The teacher could also ask students to use digital tools to search, select and evaluate information, finding answers to questions or problems or create their own questions signposting relevant sections of a document. Examples of time allocation per activity in this learning type are:

- Investigate an open question or a problem aiming to provide evidence to support a valid response and summarize findings - 120 minutes or more according to the specific context and complexity of the question or problem;
- Search for one paper online that relates to a specific topic. The timing allocated in this scenario allows for the fact that searching online is a fairly new skill needing practice; the time allocation may decrease if students are more experienced with this skill or if the source/journal is given as part of the

guidance - 60 minutes per paper (This timing does not include reading the paper, just locating it after searching and filtering);

- Search for web resources related to a specific topic (fairly competent in searching online) - 20 minutes per resource.

Learning through discussion

With learning through discussion the task directs learners to ask questions of other learners, and to respond to their questions, challenging them or coming up with new solutions to a problem. Responding, articulating an answer and arguing are all opportunities for concepts to be developed/redeveloped and embedded, so that students own the knowledge rather than just try to 'absorb' it. In the latter they may not understand it but through discussion they develop their understanding. In an online environment the teacher can develop tutorials, discussions groups and forums. The use of web conferencing and chat rooms can simulate classroom discussions. Examples of time allocation per activity in this learning type are:

- Respond to a question in the discussion board - 30 minutes, but time depends on the level of complexity of what is asked, number of words expected, group level (there needs to be time to carefully read the question, read some answers already given if this is the case and articulate and write the response);
- Respond to others contribution in the discussion board - 15 minutes per contribution (there needs to be time to carefully read the initial question and then the contribution which the student needs to respond to);
- Engage in discussion in the webinar (Time allocated to the webinar);
- Engage in discussion in the webinar with pre-given questions (Time allocated to the webinar plus 30 minutes for preparation for each question).

Learning through practice

This happens when the teacher sets a very specific task which the learner should interpret and act upon in order to generate an outcome. The learner also has to interpret the feedback and apply it to the original concept and try again to achieve the learning

outcomes. The learner is encouraged to experiment and to learn by doing.

Practice-based activities may vary significantly in terms of notional time and level of engagement. They can be used for simply assimilating knowledge (when filling in a quiz) or for more complex processes when they are part of a discipline-specific, practice-based activity, or a simulation, field work activity or other type of practice. Examples of time allocation per activity in this learning type are:

- Prepare and deliver a 30 minutes presentation of a given topic (240 minutes for preparation depending of the novelty of the topic being presented for the student and 30 minutes delivery);
- Produce a lesson plan for one week of teaching (this would depend of the on expertise of the student, and how many hours of teaching but by default we would suggest 60 minutes for planning plus the preparation of the presentation – see above);
- Fill in a quiz to assess knowledge with 10 questions (five minutes per question but it would depend of the type of question i.e. checklist, problems or open-ended questions).

Learning through collaboration

This learning type happens when the teacher designs a project where students need to work together, and they have to produce a shared output, such as a diagram, a definition, a design or a report. Having to produce a shared output means they have to negotiate their ideas and practices and agree to a common understanding - which means putting aside their own individual understanding and integrating their various concepts into one, and this, in turn, enables further opportunities of exchanging new concepts and practices.

Examples of online activities can be small group teaching, discussing others' outputs (peer feedback); building joint outputs such as presentations or reports. Examples of time allocation per activity in this learning type are:

- In a group prepare a 30 min session on a topic to deliver as a video-lecture or in the classroom - 180 minutes for preparation and 30 minutes delivery

- In a group write an article about a topic - 300 minutes per student which encompasses search and analyses of topic, planning and production
- In a group produce a multimedia file about a topic - 360 minutes per student which encompasses searching and analysis of the topic, planning, storyboarding and production
- in a group produce a shared understanding of the findings of a specific academic paper
 - reading at a low reading speed 30 words per minute plus writing group summary: 120 minutes

Learning through production

This learning type happens when students are asked to produce an individual output that summarises their understanding by articulating the concept learnt and how they would be using it in practice. This could be planning an action, a concept map, a website, a performance, an analysis of a problem, an essay, a reflective account, an artefact, an animation, a blog or an e-portfolio.

This activity will often provide the opportunity for formative assessment and feedback, and allows the learner to understand their current progress. Examples of time allocation per activity in this learning type are:

- Produce a poster about an innovative approach to your practice or to a researched problem - 300 minutes writing and 200 minutes for designing;
- Write an e-Portfolio reflective account (300 words) about what you learnt and how it relates to your future profession - 15 minutes per 100 words (assumes student is confident/competent at reflective writing);
- Record a 5 min video about your values as a practitioner - 300 minutes (120 minutes developing the narrative + 60 minutes recording (allowing for re-recording etc) + 120 minutes editing and upload). This implies that the student has the necessary skills for recording and editing a video;
- Write a research project proposal - 20 minutes per 100 words, plus reading at a low reading speed - 30 words per minute and preparing the research questions

and objectives – 180 minutes.

- Develop a conceptual map about a particular topic - 180 minutes. This implies that the student is familiar with how to develop concept maps. If this is not the case, then a further 120 minutes and further instructions may need to be given.

Summary

The guidance aims to support online learning delivery aiming of ensuring student learning and outcomes. This means it is **really important to manage student expectations** from the start of their course. Learning is **their responsibility**; we can't learn for them, but we can do everything possible to help them learn. The expectation is 40 hours of learning activity per student per week and this means active engagement with the resources provided online each week. Making resources accessible online means that students can learn on the go. Instead of sitting at the computer they could be listening to podcasts on their way to work.

The more varied a week is in terms of the learning types used, the more likely it will be to encourage students to develop those skills associated with deep learning and critical thinking - such as analysis, evaluation, interpretation, and inference.

This guidance does not propose a week where all the different learning types are used, nor do we recommend a specific number of activities each week. However, we do recommend, especially for level 3 and level 4 courses, that there is a consistent approach to how activities are designed so that students understand the logic and how they should engage with learning.

Implications for assessment and feedback

It is important to mention that notional time includes guided learning in classroom and outside the classroom but not autonomous learning. Therefore, time for preparation for exams, producing the summative assignment or preparing a presentation should be taken into consideration when designing students' weeks of learning. However, assessments can also be useful opportunities to measure student engagement and the acquisition of learning outcomes as part of a formative and iterative process. Formative assessments are extremely useful as they provide both you and the student with a tool to measure progress. They don't need to be high-stakes nor should they provide an extra layer of anxiety to students; you can camouflage them as pop quizzes or self-assessment tests. They also provide you with the opportunity to give feedback, which can be used to create opportunities for feedforward and improvement in future summative assessments. Students need to understand where they are in relation to what is expected of them and so embedding assessment as part of the learning activities makes it authentic and meaningful.

We strongly recommend, especially at level 3 and level 4, that assessment is part of learning activities and that feedback and feedforward (when possible) are given to enhance the learning experience. Feedback can be given automatically through quizzes provided they are well designed by the lecturer. Formative assessment signpost to students who might be less confident to what they need to do to improve, and this provides more guidance and support which is very important particularly at these levels.

Feedback should be simple to understand and should avoid jargon and more technical/academic words. Research has suggested that students sometimes find it difficult to understand academic writing (Winstone, et al. 2017). Feedback should also be aligned with the criteria (i.e. making reference to the criteria and how students could improve on it) and when possible supported with examples in the text. By referencing the submitted work within the feedback given, students will perceive it as relevant and personalized. Feedback should both identify areas of improvement but also areas that are well developed and the latter is often forgotten by staff when marking.

Finally, and when possible, feedback should be seen as a dialogical process where both the lecturer and the student have an active role to play. A good way to ensure that students read

and engage with the feedback is asking them to respond to how they would change their assignment based on the feedback received. Or to discuss their understanding of the feedback in an asynchronous chat thread. This might comprise a required activity and helps you to see if students have understood the feedback you have given. Read more about assessment and feedback in the UWL [Assessment and Feedback Policy](#).

Design and assessment guidance

It is important that you read the above sections of this document as they will provide an explanation and further guidance to our learning design approach.

Learning materials

Earlier, we referred to the need of providing context and guidance when you include learning materials in the virtual learning environment (VLE) and we explored the notion of face to face activities being scaffolded through online learning activities outside of the classroom. Please review this topic in the section 'Learning types and the UWL Pedagogy' above.

Learning materials are a core feature of the VLE and a structural part of every module. We estimate that in a semester between 45 and 60 different materials are uploaded in each module. Materials will be included as part of an activity on the Module homepage in the learning materials folder. An **activity** can be introduced as a document, a link, a discussion forum, a quiz or an assignment. When adding an activity, you will need to provide a title and a description which should include, when possible: ***the 'what' is intended, 'who' will be involved in doing it, 'when' they are supposed to finish it, 'how' they will be assessed, 'which' tools should they used and 'why' (what is the relevance for their degree or module).***

To organize learning materials, we are following the 'Units' structure used in the existing baseline template. Units are chronological or thematic structures that comprise a list of activities, a set of learning outcomes and a context. Units may be linear, or not, but should clearly introduce a theme/topic to students, so they are easy to identify in a larger scope. Because of the nature of the mainstream of modules in UWL we expect a weekly unit structure to be the most used across all modules. However, there is space for choosing other less linear structures provided that they are consistent at a course level.

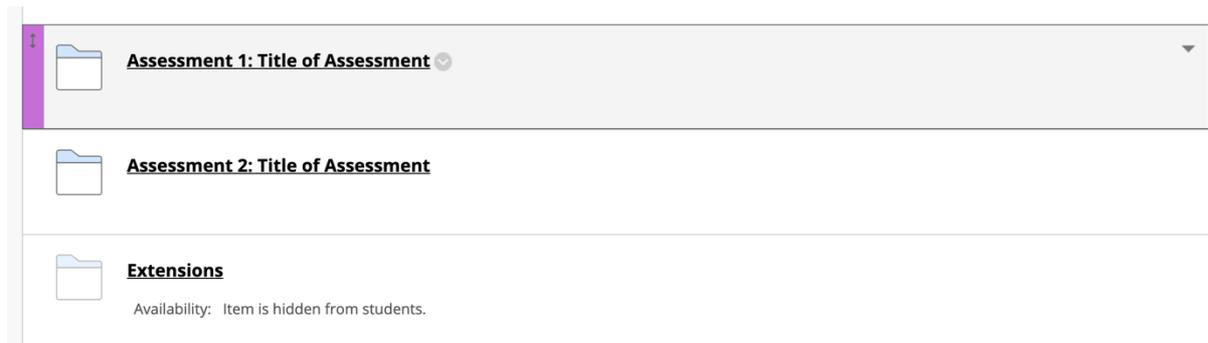
	Learning Materials Learning materials and learning activities are subject to change as the module progresses.
	<u>Week 1: Add topic</u> Enabled: Statistics Tracking
	<u>Week 2: Add topic</u> Availability: Item is hidden from students. Enabled: Statistics Tracking
	<u>Week 3: Add topic</u> Availability: Item is hidden from students. Enabled: Statistics Tracking

Each learning activity should be created inside the weekly folder as a new item. By labelling the week you are able to signpost clearly to students in the lecture/workshop what folder they should be looking for and what materials they are supposed to engage with. This is crucial in the situation we are in now as it signposts to students what they are supposed to be doing.

Assessment guidance

Assessment is a core part of the VLE and it is being widely used by staff and students. We estimate more than 100,000 submissions are made online every academic year. 'Assessment and Feedback' has been one of the most challenging areas in the sector, particularly as shown in the NSS. Evidence suggests that students struggle to find how they are going to be assessed, the full extent of the assessment brief, the criteria and even sometimes the feedback. Furthermore, research has pointed out that students do not engage with feedback.

All assessments (formative and summative) should be included, although being explicitly signposted. It is important to label assessments in order to signpost to students the summative assessments that they need to take. When you create each assessment, you should label the assessment with a title and with the type of assessment so that students know what they need to do. If they are summative, they should be added in the assessment folder.



The better and more explicit the label for each assessment is, the clearer it will become to the student when accessing the calendar.

Similarly, assessments should be well detailed and with a clear assessment brief. When designing your modules assessments, they should all include

- the learning outcome(s) addressed;
- a detailed assessment brief;
- the availability date and submission/due date;
- the grades/feedback release dates (when possible);
- the criteria for marking; and
- an opportunity to discuss the assessment with the teacher (being in class, personal tutoring or in a discussion forum)

Assessment information must be made available to students from the beginning in Blackboard. This will ensure that the 'rules of the game' are made available and are transparent to the students and the module team. In some modules you may have a larger team working with you in the teaching and marking and it is important to set the expectations so that practices are consistent.

Online learning recommends that you provide as much guidance and clarity to students. However, because you are online you will not be able to clarify questions from students at the moment of when you explain an assessment. We therefore recommend that discussions forums are created to support students and to clarify what is intended from assessments.

In line with this you are required to use the '[Fit to Submit: Coursework Checklist](#)' for online submissions. This will provide further help to your students.

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