

COVID-19 supporting resources

www.qaa.ac.uk/covid-19

International Examples of Practice in Response to the COVID-19 Pandemic: An Overview

Introduction

As part of our work to support the higher education sector in its response to the COVID-19 pandemic, QAA has created some [webpages to illustrate international examples of practice](#). These examples draw on practice from institutions across the world including those in Australia, China, Hong Kong, Singapore, Canada and the United States. The information is by no means exhaustive, but it reflects the various types of practice and approaches that have been taken to learning and teaching, assessment and feedback, and student support in view of the pandemic. Although the webpages illustrate a wide variety of approaches, our scan of international practice has highlighted some common features of success:

- Students benefit from clear and easily accessible information. Overall, institutions that feature on our website provide detailed information on the institution's response to the current crisis and, where students need to make decisions related to their study, the options available to the students are easy to understand. The uncertainty of the current situation is recognised by many universities and an emphasis on openness in explaining where the institution does not yet have information to provide students, can be found in many examples. There are cases where institutions do not clearly signpost information on student support and guidelines following the pandemic - we believe this could have a detrimental impact on the student experience.
- Many institutions have recognised the specific needs of international students during this pandemic - considering the impact of government regulations about high-speed internet or the impact of different time zones on a student's ability to continue their studies.
- The accessibility of the technology and materials to study online from home is central to the success of remote/online learning and teaching. Many universities have been able to offer financial or technical support to students who need it in order for them to continue their studies.

Samples of practice

In addition to these common features, we are including in this paper a sample of practices you can find on the webpages which illustrate the following topics:

- rapid transition to remote teaching
- assessment and grading
- academic integrity
- student and staff support
- planning for a resumption of on-campus teaching.

Rapid transition to remote teaching

It is common practice for universities to publish or share existing guides and strategies for teaching staff and students to engage with as they transition from in-person to online delivery. At the University of California Los Angeles (UCLA), the Centre for the Advancement of Teaching has published a short guide to active learning strategies for remote teaching.¹ This guide is structured into sections which consider various student engagement goals, such as ways to encourage students to ask questions, to encourage online group activities, and to support students to present to their classmates.

The University of Hong Kong is encouraging its staff to learn from their colleagues' experiences of redesigning courses for online delivery. In a short video on the University website, Professor Nancy Law (Faculty of Education, University of Hong Kong) shares her experience of moving a course designed for blended learning, which included intensive group work and student participation, into a fully online course.² Professor Law explores the importance of clear communication in the transition from in-person teaching to online delivery, particularly about any changing expectations in participation, engagement and ability to use technology. In Canada, support for university teaching staff is being provided by institutions and by relevant membership organisations. The University of Waterloo has developed a website to support staff teaching remotely, which includes strategies for online teaching, guidance on tools and technology to support remote teaching, workshops and events. The webpage emphasises the importance of accessible course design, teaching practices and learning resources in online delivery.³ The Society for Teaching and Learning in Higher Education (STLHE), a membership organisation with a mandate to support and advance learning and teaching in Canada, has developed a curated list of resources on alternative approaches to support online delivery during this period.⁴ The curated list highlights resources developed primarily by Canadian institutions, but also signposts resources developed internationally. The STLHE also offers a weekly webinar on emerging topics via Zoom.

Assessment and grading

Different approaches to assessment and grading have been taken across the world but clear patterns are emerging, particularly in Australia and the United States, around the use of pass/fail assessment outcomes. At Western Sydney University, assessments will continue to be graded using the traditional approach, but students will have the option of choosing to have a final passing grade converted to a non-graded pass.⁵ A non-graded pass would not count towards the students' final grade point average. The University of Sydney has instituted an approach to assessment which introduces three new grade options and a series of mark adjustments.⁶ The University of Melbourne has taken the decision to retain their usual percentage marks for subjects undertaken in the current semester, but has noted that students' grade percentage distributions will be monitored to review whether universal changes to the calculation of grades are warranted.⁷

¹ University of California Los Angeles, 'A Short Guide to Active Learning Strategies for Remote Teaching': https://docs.google.com/document/d/1o1rlf-QzkaGk0MZZmJP0e7qsjqryQ0zMhAdZY3_DL9k/edit

² University of Hong Kong, 'Adapting Learning Design for a Learning Design Course': <https://elearning.edu.hku.hk/2020/02/26/adapting-learning-design-for-a-learning-design-course>

³ University of Waterloo, 'Support for teaching remotely': <https://uwaterloo.ca/keep-learning>

⁴ Society for Teaching and Learning in Higher Education (Canada): <https://keepteaching.ca>

⁵ Western Sydney University, 'Coronavirus Frequently Asked Questions': www.westernsydney.edu.au/coronavirus-information/coronavirus-frequently-asked-questions.html

⁶ University of Sydney, 'Study information': www.sydney.edu.au/study/coronavirus-infection-university-of-sydney-advice/study-information.html#nodisadvantage

⁷ University of Melbourne, 'Information for all students': <https://students.unimelb.edu.au/student-support/coronavirus/information-for-all-students>

Academic integrity

The continued academic integrity of assessments and examinations is important to the global higher education sector during this period of remote teaching. It is recognised that many institutions will be undertaking remote assessment and examinations (at an institutional scale) for the first time. At Deakin University in Australia, the Centre for Research in Assessment and Digital Learning (CRADLE) has published a guide to support programme leaders in redesigning their assessment for online delivery.⁸ The guide includes an outline of the latest research on academic integrity, assessment security and digital assessment. The guide notes the importance of focusing attention and resource on securing the integrity of final-year assessment, and the importance of educating students about the dangers of cheating and the benefits of academic integrity.

In Canada, the University of Calgary has produced a statement on academic integrity and developed a webinar on the academic integrity of online courses as a result of the pandemic.⁹ The statement has four key elements: honesty, trust, responsibility and respect. It encourages open and authentic dialogue between staff and students to ensure that the rules of online assessment and examination are understood and adhered to. The University of Waterloo's Office of Academic Integrity has developed an informative webpage on academic integrity with resources for staff and students to ensure the integrity of remote assessment.¹⁰

Student and staff support

Many institutions have developed innovative approaches to support their student communities at this time. At the Community College of Rhode Island (CCRI) in the United States, the University sent text messages to all of its students to gather information on students' accessibility to appropriate technology or adequate internet connection.¹¹ Nearly 1,000 students replied to the text confirming that they lacked access to appropriate technological tools to complete work online. The College has since given 100 iPads and laptops and 100 grants of between \$100-\$400 to students to purchase or fix devices. CCRI has also worked to connect its students with deals made available by the State of Rhode Island and telecommunication companies for free WiFi to state residents who did not have access to high-speed internet.

In addition to emergency financial grants, institutions have been creating online webpages dedicated to supporting their students' and staff wellbeing. Harvard University developed a website to support student and staff mental health and wellbeing, which offers opportunities to attend virtual events, meditation and spiritual wellness classes, guidance on home exercise, and free television, movies, art and culture.¹²

In another example of dedicated mental health and wellbeing support, the Australian National University developed a webpage to support staff mental health and wellbeing while working from home. The University has created a 'Coping with COVID-19 Anxiety' checklist and compiled information on establishing a work schedule, setting up a dedicated work area,

⁸ Deakin University, 'Ensuring academic integrity and assessment security with redesigned online delivery': <http://dteach.deakin.edu.au/wp-content/uploads/sites/103/2020/03/DigitalExamsAssessmentGuide1.pdf>

⁹ University of Calgary, 'Statement on Academic Integrity': <https://taylorinstitute.ucalgary.ca/learning-continuity/academic-integrity>

¹⁰ University of Waterloo, 'Keep Learning with Integrity': <https://uwaterloo.ca/academic-integrity/keep-learning-integrity>

¹¹ Education Dive, 'How 3 colleges are helping vulnerable students during the coronavirus crisis': www.educationdive.com/news/how-3-colleges-are-helping-vulnerable-students-during-the-coronavirus-crisis/575745

¹² Harvard University, 'Socialize remotely': www.harvard.edu/coronavirus/socialize-remotely

staying productive and looking out for one's wellbeing while working from home.¹³ Massey University's Te Putahi-a-Toi School of Māori Knowledge has developed four podcasts, which explore the Māori perspective on COVID-19 and whānau health. The podcasts cover the topics of 'Tapu and the healthful practices,' 'Maintaining balance in our hauora,' 'Pūrākau and Tāwhirimātea explains respiratory issues,' and 'Time for whānau ora check in?'¹⁴

For international students, who have had to return to their home country, restrictions on internet and access to university resources may create obstacles for their continued study. The University of Sydney in Australia has created a dedicated webpage to assist students living in China for them to access the University's resources online, including access to the University's virtual private network in China.¹⁵ The dedicated webpage includes instructions and guides to downloading learning resources.

Planning for a resumption of in-person teaching

As some countries begin to ease restrictions on their populations' movements, universities have started to develop plans for resuming on-campus (or in-person) teaching and research. From the examples we have identified, common practice appears to be a slow, phased return to some on-campus teaching and research, which is scheduled and managed centrally. At Aalto University in Finland, remote working continues to be encouraged. Students and staff are able to use campus facilities for access to labs, workshops or small-scale, in-person teaching, where necessary, and this is managed through an institutional notification procedure and centrally-held schedule.¹⁶ In New Zealand, the University of Otago has allowed, in exceptional circumstances, for some small groups of students to return to on-campus teaching, where online teaching is not possible. All classes or workshops approved for on-campus delivery are limited to 10 people. The University has set strict guidelines to ensure that these small teaching clusters do not interact with any other student/staff teaching clusters and maintain all physical distancing requirements.¹⁷

Further to this, universities in China have also seen steady progress towards resuming on-campus learning and teaching. On 23 April 2020, the University of Nottingham's Ningbo China campus announced plans for students to return to campus with all students back to face-to-face teaching by 4 May. Requirements for students will include daily updates on their health status, as well as information on their travel plans. Students are not allowed to leave campus during the period of epidemic prevention and control except for essential purposes such as medical treatment.¹⁸ Other universities across China are reopening with similar health measures in place¹⁹.

¹³ Australian National University, 'Looking after your wellbeing when working from home':

www.anu.edu.au/news/all-news/looking-after-your-wellbeing-when-working-from-home

¹⁴ Massey University, 'Toi Hauora': www.massey.ac.nz/massey/maori/covid-19/toi_hauora/toi_hauora_home.cfm

¹⁵ University of Sydney, 'How to access student learning resources off campus in China':

https://sydneyuni.service-now.com/sm?id=kb_article_view&sysparm_article=KB0014450&sys_kb_id=5d98a7eb1b0f0450bf890edbd4bcb97

¹⁶ Aalto University, 'Information on coronavirus': www.aalto.fi/en/aalto-university/information-on-coronavirus

¹⁷ University of Otago, 'COVID-19 information for staff': www.otago.ac.nz/coronavirus/information-for-staff/

¹⁸ University of Nottingham Ningbo China: Campus reopening and epidemic prevention measures:

www.nottingham.edu.cn/en/Press-Release/News-Article.aspx?id=2ba34b5c-0ebf-424d-bb2b-11b67a24d46c&language=en-GB

¹⁹ University World News: Shanghai universities welcome students back:

www.universityworldnews.com/post.php?story=20200502110506277

Published – 24 April 2020; updated 21 May 2020

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