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University of Wales
Trinity Saint David

Digital Teaching & Learning Standards

INTRODUCTION

With online teaching and learning becoming a core delivery method for higher education, the University has revisited the current VLE Baseline Standards and adapted the principles of that strategic document to reflect the paradigm change. These Digital Teaching and Learning Standards have been created to provide staff with a clear, accessible benchmark for producing and delivering highly effective digital learning whether relating to a blend of online and face-to-face delivery or a wholly online model. They have been written with reference to recognised good practice in digital teaching and learning, including guidance from Advance HE, QAA and JISC, and have been presented in a structure intended to provide both quick and convenient guidance and more in-depth advice.

These Standards form part of the wider UWTSD approach to Blended Learning and where possible reflect the institution's **Blended Learning Guiding Principles**:

Curriculum

Pedagogy

Equity

Well-being

Research

Assessment Approaches

Professional Learning

Leadership

The standards are based around the use of **three core technology elements** which are central to digital teaching and learning at UWTSD:

1. Virtual Learning Environment

The virtual learning environment provides the core platform for delivery of module content and assessment. It is the structure around which online modules should be built in accordance with the expectations set out in this document to provide an effective digital learning environment for learners.

2. Communication & Collaboration

Online communication and collaboration is a dynamic complement to module pages on a virtual learning environment. Direct links between the two platforms can be set up to create a synchronised learning experience which takes advantage of the relative affordances of both.
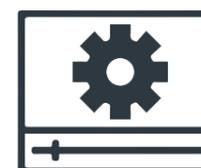
3. Video Creation

Use of video forms a key part of delivering teaching online and allows staff to create engaging resources using tools such as PowerPoint integration, multiple video sources, automatic captioning, in-built quizzing and discussion, intuitive editing and flexible sharing.

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SECTION 1 CHECKLIST
What do I need to include on my module?

Module Information section
The Module Information section should ideally be the first section and should contain all requisite course documentation including:
• Programme of Study Handbook,
• Module specification/overview/scheme of work
• Relevant timetable information
• Assessment schedule

Assessment Section
The Assessment Section should ideally be the second section and should clearly set out assessment specifications, submission links, submission guides, a link to the **UWTSD Academic Misconduct Policy** and prominently displayed assignment deadlines. Hide old submission specifications and links to avoid confusion.

Varied teaching methods
Identify and use a range of methods for delivering content to maintain a balance between avoiding a monotonous experience and ensuring a degree of consistency. Identify which delivery method is best suited for the relevant information, the course type (e.g. wholly online or blended) and your students. Options include PDFs, Moodle Book(s), Embedded Video (recorded from Panopto or Teams) and Presentations (e.g. Sway, Spark).

Online Resource List
This will provide students with an interactive and dynamic list on the University's Online Resources Lists platform, containing Essential and Further learning resources that they will need to access as part of the module. Online Resource Lists should comply with the **University's Reading List Policy**.

Supporting Resources including e-books, journal articles, blogs, video links
Provide additional supporting resources from the Online Library or open access web resources where it is not appropriate to include these on the Online Resource List. This may be to highlight other perspectives, encourage critical thinking and opportunities for further study. Resources should be sourced from the Online Library in the first instance, alongside information for students on how to access InfoSkills support to help them to develop their information seeking and anaylsis skills. As a general rule, content should be linked to and not uploaded into the VLE unless it is content that you own. Further support on how to set this up us **available here** (link to LLR guidance on Teams site)

Accessible resources
Ensure that the page is navigable by learners using assistive technology such as screen readers, and that learners with limited access to technology or fast broadband are not prevented from accessing any of the learning. Please see the **UWTSD Accessibility Checklist** for full details, but for example you must:
• Provide a text description and/or caption for all images used
• Use descriptive links and resource titles – e.g. avoid using "click here" for links. Make sure the link text is indicative of the content instead.
• Provide "low-bandwidth" options for activities – for example, if you hold live Teams meetings to provide opportunities for discussion, encourage learners who cannot attend to send questions or input beforehand, address those in the session and make downloadable recordings of the session available.

Comply with copyright
If you are using images, use those that are Copyright Cleared for educational use. There are many places to source these from and guidance can be found in the **Copyright Hub**. Watch the University's webinar on Copyright for teaching and learning which will provide you with all the information you need to stay compliant (link to webinar on Teams site)

Use a consistent text style in Moodle
• Use font size 12 as a minimum
• Use an in-built font and use it consistently within a module
• Use the in-built font styles (Paragraph, Heading 1, Heading 2 etc.) to create text hierarchy rather than manually adjusting font sizes
• Use bold for emphasis rather than capitals or underlining text

SECTION 1 CHECKLIST
What do I need to include on my module?

INSTRUCTOR PRESENCE

Personalised module introduction
The lead module tutor should introduce the module personally and greet the learners with warmth and encouragement – this should simply be a written introduction at the top of the module page written from the perspective of the lead tutor, but you could also consider creating a short welcome video. The introduction should cover:
- An overview of the module content
- A summary of the module topics
- The expected learning outcomes
- Details of the assessment regime including a timetable and assessment criteria
- What is expected of students – e.g. which elements are compulsory, how much communication is expected, indicative time commitments if appropriate
- A summary of how the module will be delivered – e.g. content delivery, discussion method, types of activities etc.

Picture of lead tutor(s)
This should accompany the module introduction

Lead Tutor contact details and hours
Specify the preferred method of communication, ensuring "low-bandwidth" users can also make contact. Maintain a balance between synchronous (Teams Meetings, Live Chat) and asynchronous (E-mail, Forum posts) contact to ensure learners have the opportunity to engage with you both "live" and otherwise. Indicate when you will be "online" and when learners can expect a response to questions and queries. Keep learners updated of any temporary changes to these arrangements.

Active and regularly used communication platform
It is vital to maintain regular communication with learners in all contexts, but especially when teaching wholly or mostly online. Recommended methods are Teams (you can add a link directly to the Team on your module page) or Moodle Forums. Post regular comments, discussion prompts and feedback on learner contributions.

Activity completion tracking
Enable activity completion tracking in your module and regularly check the activity completion report to identify and support non-engaged students who require intervention. You can track all activities or identify key resources which indicate general engagement with the module.

LEARNING ENVIRONMENT

Clear instructions for learner tasks and contextual description of resources
Ensure that resources are presented with accompanying text explaining how they fit in to the learning experience and providing clear step by step instructions for learner tasks. If there is a recommended or required order for accessing the learning materials and activities make this clear to learners. You can easily add supplementary text to a Moodle module page by using the Label tool from the "Add an activity or resource" menu.

Organised and clear module page
Maintain a balance between resource rich topic areas and overloading leading to excessive cognitive load. Avoid clutter – for example, use folders if you have more than a handful of resources on the same sub-topic. Use heading styles in the text editor to create titles and sub-titles to support navigation and arrange resources clearly and logically.

Structured and logical order
Present resources in the order they are to be accessed to create a flowing learning experience and compartmentalise resources that form sub-topics to support flexible learning in short bursts or chunks.

Access for Student Support staff
Ensure any student support staff who require access to modules for the purpose of providing support to students are enrolled on the module.

ACTIVE LEARNING

Learner tasks
Ensure that learners have opportunities to apply learning and use it in context. Examples include quizzes, blogs, wikis, forums, interactive activities and videos.

Group work and opportunities for collaboration
Use groups and group blogs/wikis in Moodle and/or Teams channels with collaborative documents, wikis, OneNote notebooks to provide an area for learners to co-create and co-author responses to group tasks.

Module Evaluation Questionnaire
Module Evaluation Questionnaires will be added automatically to all new modules.

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CONTENT

UWTSD Blended Learning Guiding Principles:

| Curriculum | Pedagogy | Equity | Well-being | Research | Assessment Approaches | Professional Learning | Leadership |

High quality, flexible and accessible core learning content is at the heart of effective digital learning.

What should I do?	Why should I do it?
Reflect on your course design	Transitioning from face-to-face to online learning is not just a matter of changing delivery method. Consider whether you need to re-design your module to make it more suitable for increased online consumption, whether wholly or as part of a blended delivery model. With Pedagogy as one of the UWTSD Guiding Principles it is vital to recognise digital teaching and learning, whether wholly online or as part of a blended approach, as a distinct pedagogy in its own right and to design your teaching and learning accordingly. For example, one popular model is reverse design – start by defining the intended learning outcome, then consider how best to assess that outcome and finally collate your content to support that assessment. Pay particular consideration to assessment – does the method currently used translate seamlessly to the online environment whilst maintaining academic integrity, or do you need to rethink how learners will be assessed? What assessment method best aligns with what and how they have learned?
Present content in a variety of media	Using a range of methods for delivering learning content will support learner engagement by keeping the delivery method fresh, although you should also ensure a level of consistency by not using an overwhelming amount of different technologies. A balanced model using a select group of delivery methods to provide learning in the most effective way relative to the content is the best approach. Options include: 　- Written content (PDFs, Moodle Book) 　- Multimedia Presentation (Adobe Spark, Microsoft Sway) 　- Asynchronous/Recorded Video (Panopto/Teams) 　- Synchronous/Live Video (Teams) 　- Visual (Images, Infographics, Diagrams)
Keep learning experiences short – break larger sub-topics into "chunks"	Requiring learners to commit long periods at a time to be able to study is likely to discourage and lead to a higher risk of disengagement. Making learning possible to fit around digital learners' lives is key to maintaining interest, engagement and retention. In addition, independent online learning often requires a greater level of concentration and cognitive effort than in-person models. For example, two hour lectures in a live environment will not transfer well to a video recording – revisit the structure of your material and break it into smaller sections, providing opportunities for reflection, practice and micro-assessment (e.g. H5P activity, Clickview interactive video) in between sections to keep the experience dynamic and iterative.
Highlight additional content sources	Further reading, third party video content and websites are all useful for learners wishing to delve deeper into the material and can provide different perspectives on the content to enrich learning.

What should I do?	Why should I do it?
Provide visual engagement	Learners are used to online content such as websites and social media being mostly well-designed mixes of text and images and digital learning content should be no different. Text-heavy resources can have a demotivating effect whereas a "magazine style" combination not only is easier and more comfortable to read, but the use of contextual images can also help reinforce the content of the text. Use images and other visual elements such as embedded video to break up passages of text. Where using grid or tile course formats, use images for tiles which complement the content. Consider embedding Panopto videos but be wary of including too many on one page is it can slow the loading time – three or four would be the recommended maximum at any one time.
Deliver core material asynchronously for flexible access	Think twice about delivering essential course teaching using live video calls – be mindful that learners may have other responsibilities and commitments which mean they cannot commit to being present at a specific time, or do not have access to appropriate devices and internet access to participate - this supports Equity and Well-Being, two of the UWTSD Guiding Principles. For core material, use methods by which students can access this anytime and reserve live calls for supplementary discussion, Q&A etc. Record any live sessions and make them available for download.
Design supplementary activities to complement content	Active follow-up activities or interactive elements can reinforce learning by amplifying the impact of, and engagement with, teaching content. For example, use the quizzing features in Panopto or Clickview to add an interactive layer to your teaching videos to improve attention and foster active engagement with the subject matter.
Collaborate with colleagues and consider Open Education Resources	You don't need to reinvent the wheel – reuse and repurpose material as appropriate and where commonality across modules is possible, collaborate with colleagues to create resources that can be used with several cohorts. Look at Open Educational Resources online that have been made freely available for use – an example is Merlot – an international community-curated repository of free online educational materials.
Check resources regularly	Ensure that your content is up to date and regularly check that weblinks work – it can be extremely frustrating for learners and negatively affect their experience of the module if there are out of date resources and/or links which no longer work.

INSTRUCTOR PRESENCE

SECTION 2 GOOD PRACTICE
How can I ensure quality digital teaching and learning?

One of the most important aspects that are lost when transitioning to digital learning is a lack of human contact with a tutor. Bringing your presence and personality into an online module can help engagement, motivation and momentum by making it more "real". Ensuring that the interaction, support and feedback that takes place organically in an on-site environment is maintained online is a crucial part of digital pedagogy.

UWTSD Blended Learning Guiding Principles:

Curriculum   Pedagogy   Equity   Well-being   Research   Assessment Approaches   Professional Learning   Leadership
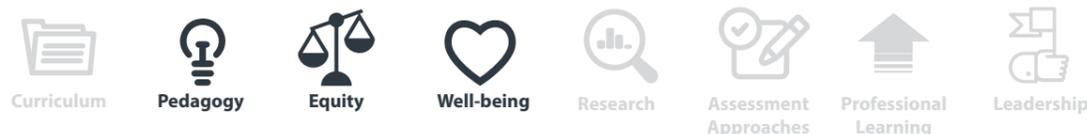
What should I do?	Why should I do it?
Establish and maintain real tutor presence	The requirements set out in the Instructor Presence section of Section 1 all contribute towards creating a sense of realism. For example, tutor photos and personalised communication can often help learners build trust in a tutor even without meeting face to face. Just as you would welcome your students in the first class of a face-to-face course, a warm, friendly module introduction can help settle students and is the first step in building a supportive learning environment and commitment to learning.
Maintain regular two-way communication and interaction, including regular feedback	Learners need to know that the module is active and that their participation is valued. Make regular communication with students and ensure you give prompt feedback to learners' contributions to discussions and other activities. Establish a common communication platform early (e.g. Teams with a link from Moodle directly to the Team, or the Moodle forum) and use it regularly. Dialogue is key to the knowledge building process by allowing learners to clarify misconceptions and modify understanding.
Plan in advance	Prepare and build as much of your module as possible in advance – you can hide sections and release them as appropriate at the right time, or when learners have met certain thresholds. This will give you more time and opportunity to be active and present on the module and engage, encourage and motivate your learners.
Ensure momentum through tracking and intervention	Use the Activity Completion feature in Moodle to track user engagement with the module, along with other analytics such as Panopto statistics. Review the data regularly and make contact with students who are not engaging as expected to maintain motivation and momentum.
Bring warmth and a human element to the module	One of UWTSD's unique strengths is the pastoral care and personal attention that staff provide for learners whilst one of the biggest concerns of learners in an online environment is loss of a sense of community and feelings of isolation. Consolidate those strengths and combat those concerns by creating a supportive, positive and connected learning experience – this forms a key part of Equity and Well-Being, two of the UWTSD Guiding Principles. Prioritise a friendly and empathetic approach over formality – don't be afraid to use conversational tone in written communication as long as the content is professional. It is recommended that tutors enable their webcam in live and recorded video which adds personality and can give context and meaning to the material through gestures and expression.

What should I do?	Why should I do it?
Get to know your learners and design for inclusion	Establish at the outset whether your learners have additional learning needs, access to technology or are otherwise vulnerable. Avoid making assumptions about learners' ability to fully engage with online resources and communications. Provide support and appropriate alternative provision where appropriate. This will enable you to provide fully-accessible, personalised, high-quality learning by planning your module, delivery methods and support measures accordingly. Equity in opportunity and outcome is a UWTSD Guiding Principle.
Gather and use feedback	In addition to the formal feedback mechanism on the module, informally check in regularly with learners and ask them about their experiences on the module, particularly on the first run online. Use their feedback to refine your practice and maintain an ethos of continuous improvement in line with the UWTSD Guiding Principles of Research-Informed Practice and Professional Learning

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LEARNING ENVIRONMENT

Digital learners need to be comfortable in the course environment and confidently navigate resources, communication channels and activities. Because the online space is likely to be the dominant method of contact learners will have with tutors, the environment needs to scaffold and support learning and ensure that learners have clear instructions for how to study the module, and understand what is expected of them both in terms of engagement, conduct and time commitments.

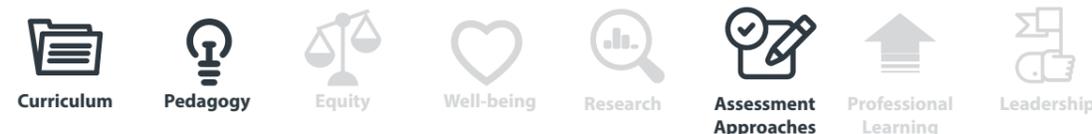**UWTSD Blended Learning Guiding Principles:**

Curriculum | Pedagogy | Equity | Well-being | Research | Assessment Approaches | Professional Learning | Leadership

What should I do?	Why should I do it?
Establish clear expectations, learning objectives and target outcomes	At the outset of the module, clarify what is expected of learners, such as weekly suggested study hours, which activities are compulsory and guidelines for appropriate conduct. Summarise the outcomes learners are expected to achieve by the end of the module. For each learning object, provide an indication of the time it will take learners to complete a task. For example, is an independent research task expected to be a quick fact finding pre-sessional task for discussion, or be a major research project? Do you expect them to spend 2 hours, 2 weeks or 2 months on a task?
Allow flexibility in study methods	Appreciate that all learners are different and will have a wide range of access to technology, including internet access. When setting tasks for learners allow responses in various forms, and avoid being overly rigid about doing things in one prescribed way.
Provide clear, step-by-step instructions	Use the Label tool in Moodle to add explanatory text alongside activities and resources to guide and scaffold learners through the learning experience. Provide clear instructions, expectations and timescales for learner tasks.
Organise your module clearly	Arrange resources and activities in a logical way. You could use text headings to create topic sub-sections in a linear (Reading 1, Task 1 etc.) or non-linear (Reading, Tasks, Additional Resources etc.) way as appropriate.
Ensure a natural flow through topics	Design and order resources and activities so that learners can easily follow a natural progression from one to the other. For example, if you expect learners to access a website immediately after watching a video, order those links one after the other.
Make assessment deadlines clear and prominent	Ensure key dates are part of topic or assignment introductions, not hidden away inside documents. Use bold type to highlight deadlines among text.

ACTIVE LEARNING

As well as human contact with tutors, online learning also takes away the ad-hoc classroom informal tasks where learners can practice and reinforce knowledge and understanding as well as the natural learning community that is created among peers and with it the benefits of constructivist learning approaches. It is vital to plan for activities to get learners active in the module both individually and in groups not only to replace the constructivist opportunities that are lost, but also because collaboration and particularly collaboration through technology are highly valued employability skills.

UWTSD Blended Learning Guiding Principles:

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What should I do?	Why should I do it?

Include formative assessment activities	Providing opportunities for learners to actively engage with the topic is key – Assessment to promote learning is one of the UWTSD Guiding Principles. Otherwise, the course becomes no more than a multimedia textbook. Such activities could include:
	  - A blog post
	  - A quiz
	  - Participating in a discussion
	  - A Clickview interactive video
	  - An H5P interactive (e.g. drag and drop, fill the blanks)
	  - A short video presentation using Moodle Assignment (not Turnitin)

Provide opportunities for collaboration, peer interaction and group work	Creating a sense of community is key to the success of an online course. Use Moodle Groups, private Teams channels and Office 365 collaboration to establish mini-cohorts and set collaborative tasks to reinforce learning.
Consider "Creator/Maker Pedagogy"	Designing tasks for learners to create resources to share with the whole cohort (for example a collaborative blog/wiki/OneNote) can have multiple benefits. Explaining concepts to others is a recognised effective technique for reinforcing learning and understanding, it provides a rich source of material for ongoing formative assessment and once moderated for accuracy it can help enrich the module content and provide other perspectives in courses where third party content is not so readily available such as Welsh medium courses or those covering very specialised areas.
Design activities to enable learners to apply their learning	Where applicable, use scenario and problem-based learning tasks to give context to the learning, allow the learners to self-assess and highlight any common misconceptions. It is also very effective to provide opportunities for learners to consider a topic within their own personal context. Not only does this help reinforce the learning by providing relevance and practical application but can also encourage discussion by providing relatable thoughts and experiences which learners may find easier to understand and share. Learners can also benefit by comparing their own perspectives with peers in similar and different contexts. This reflective self-assessment is another area where the Assessment to promote learning Guiding Principle applies.