

ONLINE LEARNING – COLLEGE APPROACH & STAFF GUIDELINES (COVID-19) 2021/22

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| Job role: | Deputy Principal |
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1. Introduction

Following the easing of COVID-19 restrictions curriculum delivery has now reverted to face-to-face for study programme provision. A small proportion of delivery remains online for other provision types to best meet learner/employer needs. Some learners will need to access their learning online if they are unable to attend on-site for COVID-19 related reasons, such as the requirement to self-isolate. This document is designed to summarise the College's approach to online (remote) learning for either of the drivers above and provides guidelines for staff to ensure high quality online (remote) education is provided which minimises any potential disruption to learning.

2. Priorities

- To ensure high expectations for learner behaviour for any learners required to engage in online learning
- To achieve excellent engagement of learners who are required to learn online through the appropriate and high-quality delivery and assessment methods
- (As with face-to-face delivery) To ensure learners make progress on their course and develop their knowledge, skills, and behaviours, despite any periods of self-isolation/learning online
- (As with face-to-face delivery) To help learning to become more secure and stable through spending time on developing the basics using teaching, learning, and assessment methods which support knowledge gaps to be filled and learning to be accelerated.
- To ensure readiness as a college in the instance of a new "spike" or local/national lockdown, so all our learners are ready and prepared to move to full online learning.

3. Introducing learners to online learning

The College uses Microsoft Teams (MS Teams) as its main virtual learning environment supported by other relevant online packages. As part of induction week and initial weeks at college all learners are introduced to how to learn online including learners whose courses are delivered fully face-to-face. This ensures all learners are confident accessing and engaging in online learning should they need to do so in the instance of having to self-isolate.

4. Expectations for learner behaviour and participation

Learners are introduced to the College's behaviour expectations in induction. The College expects the same high expectations for learner behaviour in online learning sessions as it does for face-to-face sessions. Learners should be aware of the rules they need to abide by to enable a safe and productive learning environment for all learners and staff. They should understand the consequences of inappropriate behaviour and know it will not be tolerated. Learners are expected to arrive at sessions promptly and ready to learn. They are expected to have a positive approach to their learning and take pride in their work. Behaviours that would not be tolerated in face-to-face delivery will not be acceptable in online sessions and disciplinary actions must be taken for learners who persist in behaving inappropriately.

For learners who display highly inappropriate behaviour, their place on their course will be in jeopardy. Teachers and managers should ensure learners are made aware of the requirements and detail of the IT Code of Conduct and the Learner Disciplinary Policy, during their induction.

Some learners will not feel comfortable with having their cameras turned on in online sessions as they may not want to display their living space to their peers or could just feel anxious about being seen by others. Teachers are encouraged to work with learners to use virtual or blurred backgrounds.

5. Attendance and attendance monitoring

Attendance will be monitored in the same way for online learning as for face-to-face learning. Electronic registers generate daily and weekly attendance reports which managers use to monitor attendance and put in place intervention and/or support for patterns of non-attendance. The College's learner tracking system, VITAL, is the main tool for progress monitoring and this will be used by personal tutors to support lack of engagement and/or slow progress be it online or face-to-face. Learners who receive learning support will continue to do so through any periods of self-isolation with their Learning Support Assistant also joining sessions online. Learners who are vulnerable and/or disadvantaged will have additional weekly welfare checks, conducted by Learner Services, throughout any period of online learning.

6. Resource development

The quality of online learning is important to ensure learners are well supported and make good progress. However, the College expectation is not for teachers to create new resources for every session delivered online, or every time a learner is required to isolate. It is expected that teachers will be able to make minor adaptations to ensure suitability for online delivery. For example, screen sharing PowerPoint slides with a live or recorded teacher voice-over. Whilst the College encourages innovation and creativity, it also recognises the demands this can put on teachers. Managers are encouraged to work with their teams to ensure teachers balance new resource development with the adaptation of previous resources, so workload does not become excessive. The College enables the sharing of online resources across departments and provides staff with access to the Blended Learning Consortium resources.

7. Live teaching, streaming, and recording

Wherever possible live online teaching should be facilitated as this supports better learner engagement and understanding. However, this is not necessarily required throughout all parts of a learning session. Live delivery at certain points in a session can support learning well and reinforce explanations of key learning points. Live streaming of practicals is also highly beneficial for any learners isolating, shielding, or absent due to injury. Teachers do not have to have cameras on to effectively live stream. Avatars can be used or simply a voice-over to support the learning content. Pre-recorded voice-over is a useful option. Pre-recording can be time consuming so should be used sparingly and reserved for key topics which require a filmed demonstration or pre-recorded input to aid learner understanding. It is important to gain consent from learners if sessions are being recorded to support future learning and assessment. Learners should be asked to "opt in" at the session start of any recorded session.

8. Assessment

Assessment can present challenges during online learning especially for learners who are less confident to answer questions or contribute to discussions online. Teachers are encouraged to explore different digital assessment tools, presented in staff development, for checking learning, developing understanding, and supporting progress. What will work best may well vary for individuals, different groups, and for different age groups.

An over-reliance on functions such as “Chat” on MS Teams should be avoided as this often only elicits short, superficial feedback and responses. MS Forms is a useful tool in assessing to a greater level of depth. Quiz tools such as Socrative and Kahoot can be embedded into session delivery. A flipped learning approach can be effectively deployed whereby learners submit work completed prior to their next session to inform the next stage of learning. Support for teachers is available from the Teaching & Learning Coaches and the Digital team, both based in the Teaching & Learning Hub.

9. Safeguarding

Online learning presents greater risk to all parties and particular care should be taken to ensure a suitable learning environment is achieved and maintained. This should be established in induction week and form part of learner ground rules. The guidelines for learner behaviour (see section 4) should also be adhered to. 1:1 reviews or individual pastoral support should be facilitated face-to-face while on college premises and should only be conducted online if the learner is isolating or shielding. In these instances, staff are encouraged to conduct the 1:1 by telephone or on Teams with cameras switched off. The safeguarding policy and COVID annex should also be carefully read and fully complied with.

10. Location

In the main, online learning is best delivered from college where there is reliable Wi-Fi connectivity as well as technical support should it be required. Delivery from classrooms on site also provides assurances about the suitability of the learning environment for the learners and reduces the risk of disturbances that may be experienced if delivering from home. Teachers delivering onsite can also more readily access support with their delivery from the T&L Hub. However, teachers may, at certain times of year, deliver online learning from home with the prior approval and agreement of their manager.