
Tip sheet - Teaching offshore students online

Due to the current COVID19 pandemic, many international students remain offshore. Some are continuing students who are familiar with the Flinders environment, but others are new to our University. To complicate things further, some onshore students remain in self isolation for various reasons and we all still need to abide by social distancing recommendations. This situation presents challenges as we continue to provide emergency remote teaching options.

This tip sheet particularly focuses on students who are offshore, meaning they are located in another country and will access their topics fully online. Like students who live in Australia but don't come on campus, they are 'remote', but they may also experience unique circumstances specific to their location. This tip sheet aims to address potential added factors that may make studying online more difficult for this specific cohort. However, addressing the considerations below will contribute to a better online learning experience for **all** students.

Key considerations

To ensure teaching is delivered in an effective and efficient manner to all students, regardless of their location, it helps to be aware of some key considerations when preparing your FLO site:

1. the students' [time zone](#)
2. the technology they are able to use
3. resources they are able to access
4. internet bandwidth.

These can all be addressed with some forethought around how you plan and deliver the content/activities within your topic, as outlined in this tip sheet.

During the COVID-19 pandemic, some universities have made a VPN service available to students participating in their programs. Flinders University is not doing this; our students are not required to acquire their own private VPN because our online learning technologies are available in China and other locations around the world. VPNs do not resolve local internet performance issues. If you receive questions from your students about this, link them to [Studying online from outside Australia](#) (FLO Student Support).

Overall topic design, site structure and setup

Preparing your teaching materials to meet the needs of all online students (regardless of how they participate) is a big-picture task. [Converting your teaching from on campus to online](#) provides an excellent starting point, outlining overall considerations and key elements (eg timing and pace, assessment and communication), all requiring attention if you are to convert your topic effectively.

Consider your topic's whole-of-site design. For [accessibility](#) and usability we recommend you use a standard structure for [modules](#), with particular emphasis on [consistent styling](#) and [labels](#) for meaning and instruction. You may wish to use the [FLO starter site](#). Using this structure across your topic/s will facilitate the student's experience, reducing navigation fatigue and what/where questions. Make sure [accessible and inclusive learning principles](#) overlay your design. Also create opportunities for students to provide [feedback](#) so you can make the site more intuitive for all users over time.

A [list of recommended optimisations](#) (technical checklist) is available to help you enhance the student experience. If you have videos embedded within your topic, think about the bandwidth required to load them. A good rule is to always embed videos on separate FLO pages so they only load when accessed rather than every time the FLO site loads. An exception to this rule is your [welcome video](#). Other optimisation issues include images and files.

Topic overview, welcome and orientation

When students open your FLO site, provide an **orientation** to the topic as a standard practice to welcome them. Many teaching staff now use a [welcome video](#) to introduce themselves and the topic structure.

Orientation should also include [communication expectations for both you and your students](#) (eg

which channels should be used for which purpose; expected response times for enquiries). The [FLO starter site](#) provides placeholders for these elements.

It's also helpful to remind all students of the different **support services** available to them (as per the [digital learning guidelines](#)), such as [FLO Student Support](#), [Student Learning Support Service](#), [Online hub](#), [Learning Online](#). You can also add [Studiosity](#), a 24/7 study and writing skills service, to your site (as an [external tool](#)). These services and other resources are linked from the [Student portal](#).

When communicating with your students, you may want to make use of **groups**. This function will allow you to tailor information for specific groups of students to ensure everything they receive is relevant to them, reducing potential confusion and creating a visually 'cleaner' topic site (student view). If you have multiple offshore students, you may want to add them to a group so they're able to connect with each other and form a study group (providing they're in similar time zones).

You may want to consider a **separate module** dedicated to supporting your offshore students. This module could include:

- a welcome video that speaks directly to this group and orientates them to how the topic will work for them
- links to additional support services available specifically for them, such as [International Student Services](#)
- information about dates and times used within the topic so they are aware of time differences. The [clock block](#) can be useful to show local Adelaide time. It's also useful for offshore students to change the time zone within their FLO profile to automatically [translate all dates and times](#) to their chosen time zone.

It is good practice to include [explicitly written guidance](#) for students (your expectations/how to succeed in the topic) so it's clear what they should be working on and for how long (workload). It's also important that you are [socially present](#) so students feel connected and a sense of community is fostered.

Assessment and feedback

The implications that studying from remote locations have on assessments begins well before teaching commences. For example, the topic's Statement of Assessment Methods (SAM) needs to ensure that all components of all assessments will have an exclusively online delivery, or alternatively that special provisions are made for remotely based students.

In instances where a redesign of assessment is necessary, a number of resources may be useful, including the good practice guide [Designing assessment](#), the tip sheets [Authentic assessment](#) and [Scaffolding assessment in FLO](#) and the workshop [Rethinking assessment](#). You will also need to adopt online approaches for delivering feedback (see [Providing constructive feedback in FLO](#), [Marking in FLO using the assignment tool and Rubrics and marking guides in FLO](#)).

If an assessment uses an online quiz, you will need to think about minimising collusion as well as achieving an appropriate level of complexity (see [Aligning quiz questions with Bloom's taxonomy](#)). Be aware that the location of offshore students may impact the reliability and speed of their internet connection (a 'key consideration' above) and submission times. Issues may occasionally arise but generally they can be resolved quickly. In most cases, these issues can be avoided with careful planning. Run a practice quiz first so students can become familiar with the tool and test how the tool performs in their location. If possible, run quizzes during Adelaide business hours to ensure support services and topic coordinators are available to offer students support and guidance.

Learning resources

All readings and other learning resources must be available online – 'available' meaning both hosted electronically and accessible to all students, including those studying in countries who may be affected by internet firewalls or censorship. Consider options for [sourcing and creating digital content](#). Third party resources must be communicated via the topic [Reading List](#).

Tips for selecting and delivering remote offshore teaching materials include:

- **Source online materials.** The Library can help you source teaching material that is equitable and accessible for all students. [Enrol in a Readings workshop](#) or contact the Library through [Service One](#) (Education Services > Online content for topics).
- **Organise, create and display your videos in-house.** We recommend using the Flinders video system Kaltura, where they are safely hosted, backed up and accessible to all students. [Enrol in a Kaltura workshop](#), learn about Kaltura through [a self-paced Kaltura workshop](#), or view [Kaltura how-to resources](#) (FLO Staff Support). See also [Considerations associated with planning the creation of videos for teaching](#).
- **Provide captions and transcripts wherever possible.** This accessibility consideration is especially helpful to students for whom English is not their first language.
- **Avoid YouTube-hosted videos**, as these may be blocked in some countries. It may be possible to source alternatives or go to the original source; eg TED talks are available on the TED.com website. Library databases **Cochrane Library and EduTV** are not available to access from outside of Australia. **The Library can help you source alternative content.** Please submit a [Service One request](#) (Education Services > Online content for topics).

Learning activities, engagement and learner interaction

Building your site using core or recommended tools within the [FLO ecosystem](#) will help address the second consideration above – what technology offshore students are able to use – as these tools have been tested and are supported by the University, and are accessible to students no matter what their location.

Consider the tasks/activities your students need to complete and how they can best engage in these activities to maintain equity across all students. A flipped classroom approach enables you to provide a mixture of synchronous and asynchronous online activities. Providing a flipped classroom will allow students the flexibility to study at a time that's convenient to them but also have some interaction with other students and the teaching team so they feel part of a community. [Design principles for creating engaging digital content](#) addresses some considerations for creating an engaging online topic. [Using online teaching tools to optimise face-to-face time](#) has further ideas for engaging asynchronous activities to help you deliver core knowledge and content in a flipped classroom style.

Look at your topic's content and determine the activities which best lend themselves to asynchronous, independent or small group study. Activities using a range of FLO tools will provide variety and be inclusive of different learning preferences, as well as developing digital literacy skills.

- Watching pre-recorded content is an ideal independent activity, especially when linked with readings, questions or discussions via a forum. This linked context can help build knowledge or provide the opportunity to practise/apply new skills.
- A wiki, glossary or database all enable student co-creation of content. When using a wiki or another groupwork activity, consider putting students in the same country/time zone together.
- If you need to run activities at different times to accommodate your offshore students, you can use overrides in the [assignment](#) or [quiz](#) tools to provide alternative individual or group-based settings.

Many tools in FLO can be used for different purposes, giving you the flexibility to create a wide range of activities to meet different learning needs across the semester. There is a range of [communication, interaction and collaboration tools in FLO](#) to bring your topic to life and enable you to check students' understanding at different points throughout your topic.

[Engaging students in synchronous sessions](#) is also important. [Collaborate](#) virtual classroom is the obvious tool if your students are online, or you may be running [hybrid classes](#) (where some students are physically present during the class and others are joining online). If you do use Collaborate, you will need to consider the time zone your offshore students are in and ensure they are able to join your scheduled sessions or offer alternatives.

Contact

Please contact your [local eLearning support team](#) (which includes learning designers) if you need advice.