THE UNIVERSITY OF SYDNEY

Principles guiding education at Sydney

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Educational Innovation

A shared educational philosophy

At Sydney, students learn in a diverse, inclusive and intellectually exciting environment where knowledge and skills are constructed through collaborative and interactive inquiry. This is facilitated by skilled and culturally responsive educators through both personalised and collaborative learning cycles of inquiry, feedback and assessment centred on authentic problem solving and tasks.

Implications for teaching delivery

Within this philosophy, core concepts are primarily taught through chunked content, for example:

- Asynchronously through digital resources such as short videos or podcasts, readings and guided tutorials interspersed with meaningful activities
- Synchronously through short periods of engaging delivery in face-to-face, online or HyFlex modes interspersed with meaningful activities

These meaningful activities serve to develop conceptual understanding through student-centred, active and collaborative learning tasks, such as:

- Collaborative inquiry where knowledge is constructed through facilitated and guided peer activities
- Critical discussion of media, case studies, lived experiences, seminal works
- Demonstrations of scientific phenomena where students are actively involved in predicting or explaining their observations
- Live musical, performance, media, and art practice involving student contributions and/or reflections
- Problem-based learning activities
- Use of anonymous feedback and polling systems to gauge class and individual understanding and views to inform class direction
- Use of activities or tasks that reflect real world problems and approaches
- Use of 'authentic' and relevant scenarios/cases
- Use of object-based learning
- Use of multiple modalities rather than sole reliance on traditional written text

Of the many lessons learnt during 2020, and given the change in expectations of students and staff and a new 'normal' teaching climate the following will continue to be valuable as we transition from our present mixed on-campus and remote teaching models to the future purposely designed model. Based on the philosophy outlined above, we will:

- Provide an equitable and high-quality educational offering for all students (e.g. by adapting educational practices demonstrated to strengthen student engagement and educational outcomes);
- Build a cohesive learning community inclusive of all students;
- Offer equivalent and equitable assessment for all students;
- Be able to transition quickly to a remote mode if necessary; and
- Take advantage of the distinctive capabilities of available in-person, synchronous online, and asynchronous online formats for effective interactive and collaborative learning activities, recognising the particular value of in-person formats for undergraduate and professional entry graduate programs, and flexible online and intensive formats for post-experience postgraduate programs.

Core pedagogical principles

Seven core pedagogical principles should infuse our purposively designed learning, teaching, and assessment activities. Keeping these in mind when designing activities will help to ensure students' experiences are supportive, constructive and culturally competent. These principles and some examples* of how they intersect with the above in typical class types are:

1. **Build teacher-student relationships**
    a. Encourage the teaching team to use their own and students' preferred names and to be friendly and approachable
    b. Use SRES to send personalised messages
    c. Provide a welcome announcement and then regular low-fidelity but personal video or audio recordings
    d. If the unit uses lots of asynchronous content, such as readings or videos:
        i. Encourage active use of a discussion board
        ii. Hold regular, informal Q&A Zoom sessions
    e. Run regular synchronous sessions where students are provided opportunities to interact with you
        i. Right before a large class, invite students to respond or chat using open-ended questions using a tool like Padlet or, for fully online classes, Zoom chat.
        ii. Provide a backchannel as a safe environment for student questions
        iii. Hang around after the class to answer questions from both face-to-face students and those online
2. **Foster a sense of belonging and community**
    a. Run in-class activities to create a genuine sense of belonging among all students which reflects our **shared values** and our commitment to a research-enriched knowledge environment
    b. Design and support peer learning opportunities
    c. For first year units, deliberately include meaningful opportunities for dialogue, for example using **transition activities**
    d. For fully face-to-face small classes:
        i. Have the students move around the classroom for group work
        ii. Work with tangible artefacts (e.g. post-its, physical models, paper and pen) and minimise use of teacher-led presentations
    e. For fully online classes, use breakout rooms for substantive activities
    f. For Hyflex classes:
        i. Use a second screen or part of the main screen to show the faces of the online students
        ii. Reserve some work for the remote students and dedicate time to them by including their questions in Q&A and by asking them to select discussion topics
    g. Run safe activities which invite, elevate, and share student voice and personal experiences
    h. Encourage use of discussion forums by directing and regularly answering questions there and by seeding questions and prompts if necessary
3. **Have clear communications and expectations**
    a. Provide regular, proactive, and tailored reminders that emphasise care and compassion

* See also **https://bit.ly/covid19-support3**

b. Organise learning, teaching, assessment and feedback activities in a consistent and coherent way and provide required sources ahead of class
c. When organising activities for synchronous classes, be explicit about their length and provide updates to students, including those in breakout rooms
d. Provide resources and short activities to help students prepare for class and consider low or zero value assessments with personalised feedback to encourage completion
e. Ask students to prepare for class by considering a problem that you hope they'll be able to solve/address by the end of the class
f. Set expectations, protocols and expected etiquette around communications including those in class

4. **Measure and support engagement**
   a. Make time in synchronous sessions to run activities that gauge student understanding and use this to steer class time
   b. Consider assigning summative marks to completion of online activities such as discussion forum posts or short mastery quizzes
   c. Monitor student participation and performance to support and encourage those who need it, using a tool like SRES if appropriate
5. **Use engaging approaches to content delivery**
   a. Intersperse traditional 'delivery' with activities where students can test, apply, and challenge their understanding and skills
   b. Recognise that student difference is the rule rather than the exception using the **Universal Design for Learning** approach to cater for student diversity
   c. Use case studies, artefacts, practices, research outcomes, and problems drawn from lived experiences and/or authentic disciplinary/professional contexts, highlighting the changing nature of knowledge and the teachers' and students' role in this
   d. Consider introducing activities where students collaboratively build their own knowledge, through facilitated discussion with their peers, problem-based approaches and online research
   e. Include the occasional plenary or guest lecture which serve to add diversity, disciplinary or professional authenticity
6. **Offer meaningful assessment, feedback and academic integrity**
   a. Provide regular (formative) opportunities for students to master topics, apply conceptual understanding and practice skills
   b. Consider remodelling high stakes summative assessments by use of staged assignments where students work on a substantial project through a number of stages of peer and teacher feedback on designs, prototypes or drafts
   c. Design assessment and feedback to model authentic professional/disciplinary practices and tasks
   d. Provide opportunities for meaningful small group discussions on the purpose and requirements of each assessment and of our combined responsibility for their integrity
7. **Be human**
   a. Intentionally build culturally responsive practices, teaching designs, and teacher-student and student-student interactions
   b. Be aware and inclusive of the full range of students in each class and intentionally support the needs of each student in engaging in class and succeeding in assessments
   c. Demonstrate care and compassion for students' and your own circumstances
   d. Invite students to contribute and assist in optimising the learning environment
   e. Show your passion for learning and your discipline
   f. Be open about your own educational and professional journey