NUS Quick Guide to Online Teaching

“Online learning is primarily a mode of delivery, a way of delivering education to learners, NOT a particular method of teaching. Online learning can support a wide range of teaching methods.”

(Bates, 2015)

Preamble

Online Education Now

In light of current circumstances and the suspension of many face-to-face classes due to the COVID-19 outbreak, many colleagues are considering making their teaching available online or are being asked to do so by the university. In particular, two main questions arise for many of us: How do I take my large lecture class online? and How do I lead a small seminar online?

This brief guide provides support to NUS faculty members and others who teach here. For reasons of simplicity and convenience, the guide is organised as a temporal sequence and focused on what you need to do before teaching online, during such teaching, and afterwards. It thus focuses on reflecting and making a plan, then deciding on an approach and selecting tools, and finally revising class assignments.

There are many different teaching methods that can be used for online learning. But for effective online education, under ideal circumstances it would be best to redesign an existing course comprehensively and mount it on LumiNUS. This is because of the vast differences between teaching face-to-face in a classroom and teaching online, in particular the literal absence or at least remoteness of the teacher, and the lack of interaction among the students as well as between the teacher and the students during class time. However, comprehensive redesign certainly is not always possible and because of the urgency of current circumstances, there understandably is not sufficient time for it. Instead, most of us will be in the less than ideal situation of taking our current module and transferring it directly online, without a great deal of redesign.

What is key now, under these circumstances, is to:

1. keep things as simple as possible, and simplify course expectations and assignments;
2. communicate, communicate, communicate: be available to answer students’ queries and address their concerns;
3. have a look at trustworthy online resources such as Going Online in a Hurry: What to Do and Where to Start, from The Chronicle of Higher Education; in view of COVID19 the Chronicle has put together a whole collection of brief guides for “Moving Online Now” and in addition many useful resources have been put online globally, such as Remote Teaching Resources for Business Continuity MLAs Bringing Your Course Online.

Inclusivity

It is important that any changes to teaching be grounded in principles of inclusivity and equity, ensuring that everyone benefits from the participation of all students.

Support

What support does NUS provide to colleagues who are going online with their teaching during this time?

- The Centre for Development of Teaching and Learning (CDTL) has a Toolkit for E-Learning, which provides details of relevant workshops and online webinars. The Toolkit also contains a list of useful resources. CDTL further offers consultations: cdtsec@nus.edu.sg
- The Centre for Instructional Technology (CIT) has a Teaching and Learning Continuity plan and an extensive collection of self-help pages on available tools and how they work. CIT further has a page on Promoting Academic Integrity for Remote Assessments.