Working with International Students in Blended and Online Settings
SEED Working Group: Pedagogies with International Students

This document contains considerations and practical suggestions for working in blended and online contexts with international students.

Disclaimer: Many of these considerations and suggestions will have relevance for enhancing inclusivity of curriculum and pedagogy for all students, and are not necessarily unique to international students. However, linguistic, cultural and experiential barriers will exacerbate many of these considerations for international students, making these considerations more important to bear in mind.

Supporting General Logistics

Consideration: Variations in time zones for students located abroad
Practical Suggestions:
- Explicitly state in all communications that times are listed as UK times
- Include alternative time zones for known student groups located outside the UK
- Hold key synchronous meetings during waking hours for students located in other time zones, where possible
- Record key sessions or offer repeat sessions (as workload allows) for events that cannot be held during waking hours in other time zones
- Consider summer time (daylight savings, clocks changing) as timings for this can vary around the world.

Consideration: Familiarity in other countries with tools or programmes commonly used in the UK (such as Blackboard, Zoom, or Turnitin)
Practical Suggestions:
- Include technology-specific training in programme inductions for the tools that lecturers intend to use
- Include links on Blackboard to guides for the online tools being used
- Include an explicit introduction to tools at the start of each course unit

Consideration: Websites blocked by firewalls in other countries (particularly in China)
Practical Suggestions:
- Review the list on Wikipedia for up-to-date status of websites blocked in China
- Use an online firewall checker to confirm if resources are accessible in China
- Provide guidance for using the university's VPN service both in students' programme induction and in individual courses
- Conduct an online survey about students' access to intended tools or sites
- Provide online resources in an alternative format on Blackboard

Consideration: Developing explicit norms between students and lecturers from different backgrounds for engaging in online spaces (known as *didactical contract*)
Practical Suggestions:
- Co-develop with students a set of 'class rules' at the start of the semester, negotiating together about expectations of online behaviour in the shared classroom space
- Reinforce agreed norms at the beginning of synchronous sessions and list them in the course Blackboard site

Supporting Transitions

Consideration: Online support for students who are non-native speakers of English
Practical Suggestions:
- Continue to follow guidelines for working with students who are non-native speakers of English, such as those produced by AdvanceHE, even though the medium has shifted online. This includes limiting complex language, speaking slowly and clearly, and reflecting on how humour might translate.
- Provide automated transcripts or closed captioning for online videos or session recordings. Automatic transcripts can be made through software like Zoom or Otter.ai. Instructions for closed captioning are also available for Blackboard, Zoom, or YouTube. Another free closed captioning option is Amara and Dotsub can also be used for free translation of videos.
- Consider using asynchronous methods (such as Blackboard forums or blogs) for students to ask questions or share reflections, as they allow for more 'thinking time' compared to synchronous methods (such as online chats).
- Allow for anonymous participation, such as through tools like Mentimeter or allowing anonymous posts for questions on Blackboard.
- Use whiteboard features in Zoom or Blackboard Collaborate to make notes during discussions, as this supports the oral language processing of students during the discussion and, if saved and shared, gives a written record afterwards for students to refer back to.
- Differentiate tasks by including less demanding or non-academic readings, particularly in the initial transition period to learning using academic English.

Consideration: Support for transitions to independent learning assumptions in the UK
Practical Suggestions:
- Begin the semester with a discussion about and justification for the pedagogies adopted, including explicit expectations for students during the course.
- Provide explicit guidelines about what is expected from students for each individual activity or assignment, including which aspects are understood to be independent or interdependent.
- Scaffold readings with reflection questions and provide classroom discussion questions in advance.
- Link to MyLearningEssentials resources that relate to tasks at hand.

Consideration: Building relationships between students from different backgrounds
Practical Suggestions:
- Work with the eLearning team to develop online socialisation activities using the Salmon model (see a good overview from a recent SALC session).
- Provide scaffolding for group interactions and explicitly teach skills for collaborative working. This could include co-developing codes of conduct for group interactions.
- Divide students in larger classes into 'study groups' for supporting one another throughout the course outside of formal learning time. These can be supported by creating groups in Blackboard and enabling Collaborate for group meetings.
- Develop a virtual buddy scheme between UK and international students in the class.
- Include group work projects with culturally mixed groups.

Consideration: Developing familiarity with the university and the UK
Practical Suggestions:
- Provide scaffolding for concepts or processes that may be different in students' own cultural contexts, including (but not limited to) essay or examination formats, marking processes and scales, participation expectations, student-lecturer working relationships, or referencing.
- Explicitly include introductions to campus and British higher education processes during programme inductions
- Share short informal videos to introduce staff members, campus facilities, or processes.
- Include sessions that explicitly teach about UK processes in your field or introduce aspects related to UK culture.

Consideration: Developing referencing skills
Practical Suggestions:
- Embed MyLearningEssentials guides about referencing into course units.
- Discuss the concept of plagiarism and explicitly compare the UK perspective with other contexts
- Explicitly demonstrate how similarity reports are used, such as by linking to guidance documents from Turnitin or providing example assignment mark-ups
- Provide clear examples of paraphrasing text for course assignments

Consideration: Developing employability in international markets
Practical Suggestions:
- Consider advice provided by Universities UK International about developing international student employability.
- Coordinate with Careers Services and include links to their resources on international jobs and online support services.
- Share international alumni networks with current or graduating international students.
- Invite students to openly share skills or opportunities they feel are valued in their home contexts, such as through an online survey.
- Reach out to international graduates from your programme to record their post-degree work experiences and any challenges in their job search.
- Bring together international alumni and current international students to share their academic and employment experiences.

Supporting Inclusivity

Consideration: Developing inclusive pedagogies
- Conduct a survey at the start of the course to understand students' backgrounds, prior educational experiences, and expectations for the course unit (see guidance from Universal Design for Learning).
- Include multiple representations of information in each lesson, including visually, verbally, and textually.
- Provide an outline of the lecture or discussion with main points to guide students' note taking and understanding of activities.
- Normalise multiple methods for participation and engagement, such as by using Mentimeter for polling and asking questions or allowing use of the chat during synchronous sessions.
- Add more structure to activities, such as by assigning roles, providing step-by-step instructions on screen, or providing activity instructions and intended discussion questions in advance.
- Build in time to debrief and summarise main points at the end of the session.
- Establish a presence of people experienced in teaching international students on the SEED micro-mentoring scheme as mentors.

Consideration: Developing inclusive assessment practices
Practical Suggestions:
- Allow for student-led topic selections for assessments.
- Use variation in assessment methods (written, verbal presentations, visual presentations, group work, etc.) and consider untimed examinations.
- Provide opportunities for pre-assessment feedback on draft work.
- Share an explicit rubric to promote transparency in assessment requirements.
- Provide examples of previous assignments across the range of marks and explicitly discuss or annotate differences between them.
- Provide opportunities for low-stakes assessment throughout the semester, allowing students to receive feedback at more regular intervals and reducing the pressure for single assignments.
- Review marking criteria to remove penalties for non-standard English, with reflection on World Englishes (i.e. not imposing 'standard' English as 'correct' and marking down).

Consideration: Developing inclusive curricula with international students
Practical Suggestions:
- Reflect on ILOs to consider where they explicitly consider international or intercultural contexts
- Review and decolonise reading lists to include and centre contributions of BIPOC scholars and scholars from the Global South
- Include case studies or examples of teaching concepts from other countries
- Allow for student-led topic selections for classroom discussions.
- Develop opportunities for students to develop and contribute their own readings or resources, such as through classroom blogs or discussion activities where students bring their own examples.

Consideration: Developing opportunities for students to share their knowledge creation through their research

Practical Suggestions:

- SYRI (Share Your Research Ideas) seminars: develop a series of activities to support independent dissertation research projects, including group reflective practices, student-led discussions on research processes, sharing researching findings, and reflecting on own strategies of planning and conducting research.
- Host an online dissertation research conference for students and staff to learn from research conducted in different contexts.
- Encourage students to develop impact or policy statements with recommendations for practice.
- Share dissertation research on a programme blog or website (with students' permission).

Further Resources

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