

Online lecturing

Tips for: Structuring - setting up - communicating - presenting

This brief note is not about possible apps, platforms and which buttons to press. Instead, it deals with a number of didactic and practical aspects of giving online lectures.

Online lecturing has several limitations, but also a number of interesting possibilities. The most important limitation is that, as an instructor, you have less visual contact with your students (and they have less contact with you) and that non-verbal communication is often limited.

It is therefore advisable to design an online lecture in a slightly different way than a normal lecture. Although you have to prepare every lecture well, this is even more important for online lectures. Here are a few tips for preparing and giving online lectures.

Structuring

Rules and agreements

You are advised to carefully consider a short set of simple rules and agreements in advance.

Think about rules of conduct (no mixing up, no discussions, etc.) but also about making process agreements; for example, everyone participates with images and sound. This is possible for smaller groups of up to about 8 students. For larger groups it is better to turn off the sound and video of the students ('mute'). Agree, for example, that students can ask their questions in the (text) chat and that you deal with them at certain times during the lecture.

Various working methods during the lecture

Online lectures can have certain limitations but also offer typical opportunities. Both Microsoft Teams and Blackboard Collaborate have the option of sharing your screen with your students. This means that anything you can have on your computer screen can be used in class. For example:

- Videos
- Documents
 - Word
 - Excel
 - PDF
 - Etc.
- Infographic, images, etc.
- PowerPoint presentations - Prezi's
- All kinds of internet pages/applications
- Specific program software on your computer

In addition, both Teams and Blackboard C. have their own built-in tools to be used during a lecture. For instance, PowerPoint presentations (either from a computer or from OneDrive) or a White Board which allows notes or figures to be made and displayed.

Setting up

Once you have decided what you want to do, which working methods you want to use and which files/tools you want to use, you can start setting up your lesson.

Even more than in regular "physical" lessons, it is important to define your components very **tightly and clearly**, otherwise your students will quickly lose track.

At the beginning of your lecture, indicate (preferably supported by a PP slide) what you are going to cover and what you are going to show (document/presentation/whiteboard/movies/etc.).

While preparing for the lesson, make sure that you have the (internet) links, files, programs etc. on your screen and that the screens **are open (or minimized)**. You can then quickly and easily switch to these screens during the presentation.

When working with bigger groups you can also work in studio-like or workshop settings.

In this case you can **start up so-called sub-sessions** in which groups of students can work separately.

This can be done in BlackBoard C. as well as in Teams. For Teams we have a short instruction available on how to do this.

With bigger groups, it is also useful to include a few **fixed question rounds** in your lecture.

Please tell students that they can put these questions in the (text) chat during the explanation and that you will deal with these questions at fixed times. You can also choose to turn the audio back on (or have it turned on) during the question rounds.

If possible, make a **little script** for your lecture and print it out so that you always have it at hand.

Communicate

In addition to a number of interesting more "technical" possibilities, online teaching also has a number of limitations, especially in interpersonal communication. Usually you cannot see your students or you can only see them to a limited extent. As a teacher, you will be more in the picture, but that's usually just your face. Students can only see or speak to each other to a limited extent (this can sometimes be an advantage). You notice (perhaps not consciously) that non-verbal communication in particular is rather limited. Interpersonal exchange is therefore more limited in an online lesson than in a physical classroom. It is important to always be aware of this and to respond to it.

Image

See in advance how you are in the picture. You may not immediately notice that your face is only half visible or that you are even completely out of the picture. Also pay attention to your background. It is good to choose a spot with a neutral background; it should not distract too much.

State clearly and unequivocally what you (then) show: "I will now show you a fragment from ...". or "I'm taking you now in a document..."

Sound

Because the non-verbal components of your lesson are limited, you need to pay extra attention to your tone of voice and speed of speaking.

In a physical situation you usually automatically tune in to the situation: If you are having coffee with someone at the table, for example, you use less volume, speak more easily and faster than in a classroom in front of a large audience. Speaking to a (larger) "audience" at a distance from your own office or living room is for most of us a lot less natural.

In principle, the distance between you and your students in an online classroom is much smaller than in a physical classroom. The distance to your computer is around 60 cm and the same goes for most students, so the total distance is about one and a half meters. In terms of distance, an online lesson can be compared to a "coffee table conversation".

However, try to imagine sitting at that coffee table with a curtain between you and your conversation partner.

Speaking tips

- Speak slower and more clearly than in a physical room
- Articulate something stronger than you are used to (especially if you are not visible)
- Do not use too many words and phrases
- Make use of breaks
- If possible, try some "theatre" in your lecture:
 - Curious: "How could you calculate this?"
 - Surprised: "This is quite an outcome."
 - Driven: "I'll explain it to you in detail..."

Presenting

Presentations (PowerPoint, Prezi, etc.) offer extra possibilities and a single limitation for online lessons. To start with the latter; you are usually not visible during the presentation itself. It is important to take this into account because it is a bit more difficult to point out or point out something, for example. PowerPoint contains a lot of visual "tricks" with which you can point out, interpret or focus on certain topics. Prepare your presentation for online use and see in which slides you want to add that extra PowerPoint indication or hint. Think of circling, enlarging words or lighting them up, animated arrows, etc.

Make sure your presentations are well organized and that the different phases and transitions are clear.

Put in your presentation next to content slides also "process / structure slides".)

You can think of these:

- Layout slide: "So far the explanation, now some examples ...".
- Question slide: "We are now handling the questions from the (text) chat".
- Assignment/instruction slide: "Calculate for yourself now..." or "start Socrative, room xxxx, now"
- Pausedia (including time)
- Organization slide: "Sub-meeting A covers..., sub-meeting B covers..." (see instruction online workshops)

Finally

For many of us, this is a new way of teaching. We have to grow into it and find our own effective form.

Especially in the beginning, ask students for feedback.

Yes, also whether they found it fun, interesting and instructive, but also ask the following:

- Understandability/visibility
- Clarity
- Structure/overview
- Tips/tops