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Learning program for engaging online teaching in higher education - Supporting universities and professors in making online teaching and learning experience engaging, effective and enjoyable

At LearnSpace, we have used our experience and knowledge in innovative learning and pedagogy to develop a modular learning program to provide tailored support to universities and professors in transitioning to engaging and effective online education. In this brief, you can find out about our perspective on why it's critical now to support professors, how to support them, our approach and details about our learning program. **If you have already read our linkedin article, you can jump directly to** *'our learning program'* **on** .

Our perspective

Online education in some shape or form is here to stay – universities need to plan and act for the next phase now

Students, university professors and higher education institutions across the world recently had to make overnight the switch to online education. This sudden adjustment is highly challenging from many angles for universities and professors – lack of time to prepare, issues of equity, adjustment to new technology and tools, privacy, how to teach in an engaging way online, how to do assessments. During this shock wave almost all education institutions have been focusing, rightfully, mainly on getting professors up to speed on the technological aspects of online education to ensure continuity of education. While this transition is taking place, at the same time, universities need to be planning for what's going to happen past this semester and prepare university faculty accordingly. We don't know when students will be able to return to the campuses but we know that online education, in some shape or form (ex: online courses, in-person campus classes enhanced with digital elements), is here to stay and universities will need to adapt to a world where digital learning and student centered learning is more prominent. The faculty will need significant support during this adoption.

Professors need support to make the transition

The distance learning experience that all students and teachers are going through is laying bare the aspects of in-person learning that are hard to replicate online, aspects that can be enhanced through integration of appropriate digital technology and pedagogical approaches and the areas that are ineffective and can actually be totally replaced with distance education. What's important is to create engaging, active learning experiences for the student that activate deep learning yet many professors are struggling with student engagement.

All of this doesn't mean that the role of the teacher will be less important in a world where online education is more prominent. On the contrary, the teacher's role will become more important and at the same time more complex, it will need to evolve – from transmitter of

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knowledge to facilitator of learning, leveraging the best of neuroscience, learning technologies and pedagogy. Technology can be a powerful tool but it is only an enabler, it doesn't solve the problems of education. The power of technology and digital tools is expressed only when it empowers a competent and passionate professor to provide clear learning outcomes through a learner-centered pedagogy. **Providing appropriate support to professors in this time of change is critical for continuing to deliver high quality education.**

What kind of support to provide to the faculty?

The current priority is to help professors make the initial transition to a new medium that most are not familiar with, hence the first step is to provide them with the technological tools and the accompanying training, along with basics of effective online teaching.

After that, it is important to address one of the main challenges in online teaching – how to keep students engaged, a critical factor for effective learning, in and outside the (virtual) classroom. Effective approaches to creating engaging learning experiences draws from a wide range of sources - developments in neuroscience, technologies and digital tools, tips and tricks from tested online teaching experiences, and even improv theater. Providing teachers with such relevant approaches and tools will foster more engaging and effective online learning experiences.

Last but not least, leveraging the best of online requires designing and delivering online and blended courses with a comprehensive perspective – from designing learning activities to assessment and evaluation strategies. To achieve that, teachers need to be provided with a comprehensive framework, key questions that need to be answered in designing an online or blended course and concrete examples and approaches that can be adapted to their situation and learning outcomes.

Our learning program

At LearnSpace, as a learning innovation hub, we have been working on bringing innovations in learning and effective learner centered pedagogy to education institutions and other organizations for the last 5 years. We've leveraged our knowledge in active pedagogy, digital learning and our network of topic experts, educators and education technology startups to develop a modular learning program to **support your university management and professors in transitioning to online and blended education.**

Our learning programs for professors are shaped around the different modules we offer. The first group of modules focus on tools and and approaches focused on creating **higher student engagement** and hence improving quality of learning. Second group of modules takes a broader perspective to focus on all the key elements of designing and delivering online and blended courses. The modules can be delivered standalone, or in combination to prepare an effective learning journey. Before delivering any learning program, we would discuss with you to **customize the program to your institution's and professors' needs.**

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We deliver our learning programs using a range of approaches (ex: live online sessions with international experts, 'online office hours', Q&As, peer learning sessions, discussions, access to relevant resources, follow-ups) to offer a continuous, engaging learning experience.

Modules

A) Keeping students engaged - in synchronous and asynchronous learning environments

Module 1 – Basics of effective online teaching: This module is for professors who are new to online teaching, where we will cover the basics such as how to get started, basics of teaching online, online classroom management and tools for a digital classroom.

Module 2 - Understanding the learning brain through cognitive neuroscience: In this module, we explore the incredible learning potential of our brain but also its limits of functioning. We will understand that under certain conditions, we are not aware of our automatisms and drifts (biases) of our brain which can alter the quality of our collaborations, our performance and that of our students. We will bring out specific implications for making online teaching more effective and engaging.

Module 3 – Active learning approaches for online sessions: In this module, we present tools, functionalities and tips & tricks to promote participation and increase concentration and commitment of students during online sessions. We will see how principles of active learning can also apply online.

Module 4 – Engagement through play - Being Playful in Online learning: Online teaching and learning often prevents spontaneity, impulsivity and emotions. A good bit of pleasure in personal interaction is lost. Does that have to be the case? Play is an everyday part of our lives and so it can be in virtual contexts too. We will demonstrate approaches and learnings from virtual improvisational theater that can be used to improve the quality of learning experience.

Module 5 - Keeping the learning going outside the online sessions: In this module, we explore the approaches, tools and tips to promote participation and engagement for the students in an asynchronous learning environment and how to effectively keep the learning continuing outside the online sessions.

B) Designing and teaching an online course

Module 6 – Designing and planning an online course: The basic principles of curriculum preparation and development used in face to face classes are still applicable to online classes. However, it is very important to understand the key contextual differences between online and offline learning and design the class for an online setting and not just translate

the offline content into an online medium. We will look into how to approach an online course design, cover the key questions that need to be asked for planning an online course and offer concrete tools and approaches.

Module 7 – Applying learner centered pedagogies in online learning: Online teaching lends itself to learner centered pedagogy. We will look into different learning centered pedagogies approaches (ex: flipped classroom, project-based learning) and see how these can be used effectively in an online setup.

Module 8 - Online assessment and evaluation strategies: In this module, we explore the different approaches to online assessment (both formative and summative) and evaluation, technologies and tips.

Module 9 - **Blended learning - integrating online elements into your class:** We don't know yet when the students will be able to return to the classrooms, but when they do, teaching and learning will not be the same as before. It will be critical for professors to integrate elements of online learning into their class to leverage the benefits of both offline and online. In this module, we will explore the benefits of blended learning, when use of technology is beneficial and when it's not, how to approach a blended course design and concrete tools and approaches to make the most of a blended class.

Selected online resources
. Best practices in online pedagogy - Harvard University

. An online engagement framework - Assc. for learning technology

. Collated links to a range of practical resources – SEPA

. Courses on teaching online and collated resources – Linkedin
About LearnSpace

LearnSpace is an international Learning Innovation Hub dedicated to making learning experiences engaging, effective and relevant. We use our unique, global expertise in education & learning innovations to inspire, advise and train organizations for their learning transformation. To learn more about our learning program, how it can be deployed at your institution or other ways we can support you in your learning transformation, please reach out to us.

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