

Designing a Remote Learning Weekly Plan

Each weekly plan is a comprehensive syllabus that includes both asynchronous and synchronous content for the week. When designing a weekly plan, start first with the learning objectives for that week of the course, and consider what tasks, activities, resources, and supports students will need to achieve those objectives. Determine how you will assess students' progress, and how and when you will provide feedback to ensure learning. Feedback may be provided via asynchronous or synchronous content.

Consider the guidelines below for writing an effective remote learning weekly plan.

The week is planned in advance, with a series of asynchronous tasks and activities for the student to do and an agenda for each synchronous live class meeting. The asynchronous content typically involves the student doing something more than just reading or taking notes on instructional videos. The sequence of what the student will do, estimated time to complete each task, and resources and supports that students will need and when they will need these, are mapped out in advance. Resources and supports include instructions, any content-specific notes the students will need, online tools, links, media files, etc.

All the components of the weekly plan are ready (but not necessarily available) before the student starts the week. Online tools (discussions, assessments, assignments) are set up on the Portal, videos have been recorded and uploaded, links have been checked, resources have been gathered on Topics pages if appropriate, and presentations that will be screen-shared during live class have been prepared. You may choose to set certain components on the Portal to "publish" on a specific date or time, so that they become available at the appropriate time. For example, if you will have the students complete a four-question survey during live class, you may create an Assessment on the Portal and set it to publish at the time of the designated live class meeting.

The tasks in the weekly plan lead students towards achieving the learning objectives and/or completing an assessment for the unit. An effective asynchronous assignment creates opportunities for active practice and feedback, not just passive consumption. The assignment may culminate with a summative assessment (e.g. recording a presentation, writing a paper, leading a discussion, or completing an test) or may include a series of formative assessments toward a future summative assessment (e.g. outlining a presentation, providing feedback on a peer's paper, or taking practice quizzes which allow multiple attempts). Try to ensure that all asynchronous tasks come with some opportunity for feedback, sharing, reflection, or synthesis.

The tasks in the weekly plan take into account students' incoming level of readiness for online/independent learning. Younger students, and all students who have not experienced

online learning before, may find it challenging to complete a series of remote learning tasks independently and monitor their own progress. Activities should build students' confidence in themselves as online and independent learners. Carefully design activities that are challenging but achievable, leaning toward "achievable" at the start.

Students are provided with clear guidelines/expectations about what they are to do, where, and within what time frame. Clarity is key in a remote learning environment. At the start of the week, students are provided with an overview of what they will do and can see the entire week's tasks in one place. Students are provided with information about the components of each activity, where they will do these, in what sequence, with what support, and within what timeframe. The weekly plan that sequences all activities is provided on the Portal bulletin board so that students can refer to it, at will. It may be a good idea to screen share the upcoming week's assignments during the live class the starts the week, and discuss an overview of the tasks and expectations. When preparing a weekly plan, ask a colleague to trial it, aiming to identify any gaps or information that could be misinterpreted by students.

A rationale for each activity is provided for students. When reviewing the expectations of the assignment, explain how the activities will help students achieve the learning objectives for the unit or the course. You might also explain how certain activities will help them develop professional and cross-curricular skills, like independent learning, written communication, presentation skills, collaboration, investigation, etc.

Students get feedback on their performance as part of doing an activity or following completion of an activity. An advantage of online learning is that it can enable students to receive immediate feedback on their performance (e.g. write a comment and reply to another students' comment; short multiple-choice assessments with correct answers immediately given). Immediate feedback can also build confidence with independent learning. Online learning activities can also enable students to receive more feedback (e.g. feedback from multiple students and the teacher). Feedback provided online is also "persistent" in the sense that the student can return to the feedback and re-read it, thus increasing the likelihood of learning.

A remote learning plan needs to be manageable for the instructor. Keep in mind what is feasible for you to do given the time frame that you have to prepare and execute these plans. You may want to find a rhythm and routine that works for you and your students first, as you transition from on-campus to remote learning, and then begin infusing more creativity into your plans in order to unlock more of the potential of online learning.