



# Tips for Tutors

Online sessions with students

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# Preparation for online synchronous tutorials

- Designing Session
  - Content
    - Prepare lively and engaging slides , handouts
      - relevant images, diagrams, examples, case studies, interaction
    - Leave space in the margins and in between bullet points for students to annotate
    - Provide a good balance of text and images
    - Build an agenda into your slides as a visual guide to the current, previous and future topics.
  - Activities (or tasks)
    - Design cooperative /collaborative tasks
      - Consider activity complexity, group size, and actual content of the task while designing
    - Break the “task down into self-contained learning points with appropriate breakpoints
    - Set an "estimated time" for the tasks
- Online session link
  - Set-up, and check the online session link.
- Equipment
  - Audio and Video matters: loan\*\* or invest in a good headset, microphone, and a webcam.
  - Consider having two monitors.
    - e.g. online session to be visible on one and a browser, or other tools, to be accessible on the other.



\*\* check with Module coordinator for loan options for tutors

# Before the First Synchronous Tutorial

- Set online session protocol
  - Send out clear expectations
    - For example, specify how students should ask questions, whether you want them to Raise Hand, etc.

*“ Our tutorial group will meet through the Zoom online conference system. Online learning is still new to all of us. It is important that we all contribute well to the session to meet its learning objectives. To make the most of our time, we will adopt norms as in a physical tutorial class.*

- *Read Tutorial questions and Prepare ahead of the class*
- *Take notes during the session*
- *Ask and answer questions.*
- *Raise hand when you need to offer an opinion or ask a question.*

*Specific to online session:*

- *Find a quiet place to join in the class.*
- *Use your name displayed as in class list .*
- *Turn on your video. Wear classroom-friendly clothing 😊*
- *Mute your microphone unless you are speaking.*
- *Avoid multi-tasking. Close browser tabs not required for participating in class.*

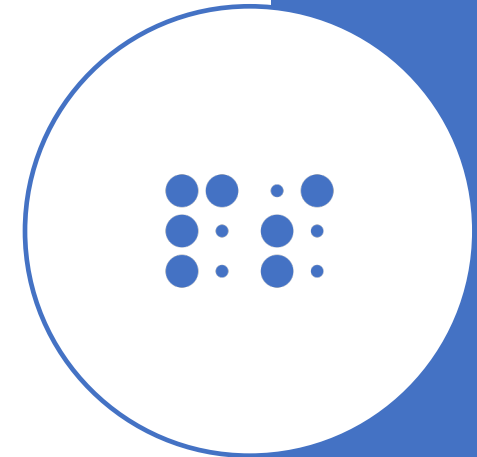
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# Students' Accessibility issues

- Be sensitive and aware of students' accessibility issues.
- Students have a range of disabilities - visible and invisible ; short-term and chronic
  - Not everyone will disclose their learning or sensory disabilities.
  - They are not required to tell you, and they may not feel comfortable telling *anyone*.
  - Do not ask students to identify themselves to you.
- Consider using following practices that reach a wide variety of learners:
  - If you send images to your students, include descriptions.
  - For video-chats, try to create a summary /transcript /closed-captioning /chat-log.
  - Don't expect everyone to understand after being told once. Don't be annoyed if someone asks you to repeat. Some students need additional processing time.
  - Be encouraging to those in-attentive instead of pointing it out. You could be helping a student in need.
  - \*\* Provide allowable/reasonable extensions for the work submissions to such students, without student asking you every time.
- If a student approaches you for needing assistance, do not doubt! Help them find necessary resources.
  - Inform and seek advice on academic matters from Module Coordinator
  - Inform and seek advice on emotional support and other necessary resources SoC Student support manager Adele Chiew [achiew@comp.nus.edu.sg](mailto:achiew@comp.nus.edu.sg)

\*\* consult module coordinator



# During the online synchronous tutorial

## Session Protocol

- First session : include an introduction to online session and the protocol to be followed.
  - Inform them what would be the course of action in case you or any student faces a technical difficulty during the session.
- Every session: a quick reminder at the start pointing to the link that keeps the information

## Content Delivery

- Give students a focal point when talking over your slides by using the pointer.
  - it may be harder than usual for students to know when you have shifted between discussion points, so be sure to explicitly state transitions.
- Maintain topic relevance.
  - It is very important. Defer unrelated student questions to the end of the session.
- Keep your normal pace.
  - You do not need to speed up or slow down just because it is online.
  - Your students will still absorb and process information at the same rate.
  - Check more often with your students if they are following the material than you do in physical lesson.
  - Take pauses to sense if all are engaged before moving to next topic.

## Session conduct

- Enthusiasm and energy in voice as well as in whole approach are important throughout the session.
- Dress smart casual for the lesson as you would for a face-2-face lesson.
- Be visible to students: it's good practice that your face is visible on a side screen while the materials are being displayed - otherwise, engagement can decrease.
- Encourage students to switch on their video – at the very least when one speaks
- Being mentally present, paying attention, and being fully engaged with the students are important teaching practices.
  - Being remote, reserved or unavailable causes an unsatisfactory student experience.
- Remember to close all the windows/tabs you won't be using (personal email, etc.) prior to the session.
- Practice e.g. rehearse using the share screen and switching between tabs or windows you intend to display.
- Technical problems can appear anytime, so, have a backup plan!
  - Prepare to send them an email immediately
  - If possible, get another tutor to pair-up with you. This helps with technical issues. It also helps monitoring chat and attendance. Make him a co-host
- Students will invariably enter late or exit early
  - Don't let this distract you. Stay on the agenda. Don't be hesitant though of improvising to keep the session flowing.
  - Alternatively, you can take the approach of locking the meeting room. This has its cons and could be interruptive in case a student is facing a technical issue in connecting.
- Not all students use their microphone.
  - allow them to use whiteboard, chat, q&a feature etc.

# 3 pillars of instruction : Encouragement, Interaction, Feedback

## Encouragement

- Use encouraging tone in your communication with students
  - Encouragement is not same as praise. Notice students' effort and process and not just the outcome.
- Articulate clearly.
- Demonstrate a welcoming manner
- Ask probing and follow-up questions. "Why do you think that?" "What is your reasoning?" "Is there an alternative possible?"
- Ask clarifying questions that encourage students to think about what they know and don't know.
- Open session with an icebreaker or a personal story or something light-hearted to encourage student participation.
- Try to achieve social interaction and community building so that students get to know each other personally and intellectually.
- Encourage students to reflect . 'I would like you to think about\_\_\_\_\_ ' .

## Interaction

- Interact with the students as they arrive.
- Offer direction, ask questions and seek responses in a variety of ways - verbal, written, use of icons/emoticons etc.
- Take students from Concept Awareness to Concept Acquisition
  - Make students think visually and visibly
  - Create, talk, write, explain, analyze, conclude, report, and present
    - These activities help them with what they know or don't know, what they are confused about, and about what they are curious about.
  - Use the whiteboard to allow the students to annotate diagrams, images, graphs, code snippets etc.
  - Use quiz or polling or q&a feature where available. You can use it to gauge student understanding before and/or after a topic is delivered.
- Regularly check mailbox to answer e-mail, monitor discussions, post reminders, and hold online office hours.
- Engage students expanding their mental models through L-L(learner-learner) and L-R(learner-resource) interactions
  - Clarify concepts and help them build links and identify relationships between concepts.
  - Discussion forums, blogging, journals, wikis, and similar tools provide excellent communication channels between Learner-Learner and Learner-Resources.

## Feedback

- Provide timely feedback .
  - For example, give a two-part summary of the session or of a student submission (i) say what you liked or agreed with and (ii) Conclude with a follow-up question such as what you are wondering about or curious about.
  - Post responses/additional points after the class to certain chat questions that you didn't have time to address during the session.
  - This will reinforce the benefit for the student of attending the online session.
- Address student by name and provide individual feedback.
  - Providing individual feedback follows the recommended design principle of encouraging personalized and customized learning.
  - Thoughtful personal responses humanize the online learning experience.
- Link the concept being covered with other concepts taught before or upcoming in the module.

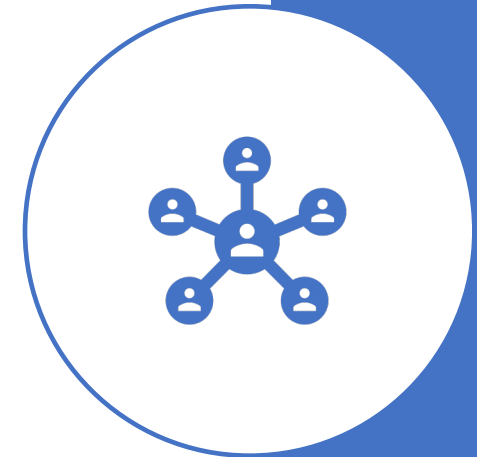
# Student participation

- Record sessions. You can view it later to assess participation.
- Use students' chat comments and reflections as additional inputs to a student's participation marks. This can help engage in students who may be somewhat quiet.
  - If you decide to use Chat in participation marks, let students know about this *before* you start session.
- Chat feature can be useful in deciding which students to call on next. For example, if a particular student writes on Chat that she/he disagrees with a point or with another student who spoke before or has some additional data to provide.
- Raise hand feature
  - Have students use the raise hand feature in e.g. Zoom to answer questions.
  - After opening a question, pause a bit and let students raise their hand . Pick(call student by name) according to the pattern you have set for your class.
- Allow students to work on answers jointly in pairs or in smaller groups, and then ask them share those ideas into the broader discussion.
- Keep your students visible to you. Zoom's grid view allows usually 25 students at a time.
- Student's presence: The sense of presence is enhanced when everyone's camera is on.
  - Ask students to turn on camera as part of participation
    - It is easier to engage with the class if you can see them.
    - Students are more likely to pay attention and contribute if they know they're visible on camera.
- Calling students to participate
  - cold call : similar to that in the traditional classroom.
  - warm call: message student privately in chat before calling on him/her or drop them an email ahead of the session



# Break-out rooms

- Break-out rooms is an excellent tool for group activities.
  - Breakout rooms facilitate a social constructivism approach.
  - Breakout rooms allow learning through peer interaction
  - Peer interactions facilitate gaining fresh understanding, reinforce and enhance knowledge.
- Active learning works best with "breakout rooms", splitting students into small groups for collaborative tasks.
- Tutor can "visit" each breakout room to monitor, facilitate discussion, and provide feedback on the task.





# Closing a session

- Plan a short meaningful closing
  - Use wrap up comments or a closing question or a closing activity
- Last session of the semester
  - Make it special 😊
  - Towards end-semester, students are likely to be stressed and somewhat overwhelmed by the project deadlines and exams. Get them started on making a list of things they still need to do for the course.
  - Summarise what useful knowledge students are taking away from a course, the core concepts and fundamental principles of the course.
  - Assure them that you could still be reached in case they have any query.



# Asynchronous Interaction

- Use Luminus Forum or a Telegram group or similar for asynchronous communication
- Highlight readings, or help students focus on key parts of the tutorial and topic.
- Ask students to reflect.
- Be open to discussion beyond the tutorial topic as well.
  - Encourage students to connect the module with competitions, webinars, or their own projects or internship work.



# Pre-recorded materials

- If you are creating a pre-recorded material, consider following tips:
  - Speak to the student, not to the camera.
  - Make your presence felt– use photo, talking head, personal story, humor
  - Provide an explicit agenda or roadmap at the beginning.
  - Make short recordings – 8 to 10mins
  - Intersperse the content with reflective questions for the students to consider.
    - make the learning experience inductive rather than entirely didactic.
  - Pre-recording and synchronous sessions needn't substitute of each other; they can serve as complements too.



# Ask for Informal Feedback Early in the Term

- A simple e-mail or just a chat asking one or two of these questions works well
  - What has worked well and what hasn't so far?
  - What are the top 2-4 concepts you have learned thus far?
  - What do you need help with?



# Be kind to yourself

- Don't expect to know-it-all on the first day of your online session.
  - You will learn quickly 😊
- Listen to Student voice on what works well for them with the remote-learning.
  - Invite them to be partners in teaching and learning process.
- It can be harder to focus attention on a screen than in a classroom.
  - Take breaks. Remind students as well.
  - Stretch 30 secs for every 20-25 minutes.



Please send any feedback to :  
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