

A guide to planning a blended learning curriculum 2020-21



July 2020

Introduction

**This guide has hyperlinks throughout. Use these links to access further information and detail as required.*

The current global COVID-19 pandemic has caused a sudden sea-change in how our teachers have had to deliver elements of their curriculum. At little notice, we have had to adapt what would have been delivered face-to-face in a classroom or workshop environment into something that is beamed remotely into our students' homes.

Whilst the latest Government guidance tells us that "[It is our plan that all FE learners, whether young people or adults will be able to return to further education settings in September and experience a full education](#)", this will not be a complete 'return to normal'. Either way, we have discovered that remote learning methods have many advantages and will probably continue to now play a pivotal role in the safe and successful delivery of curriculum going forwards.

This guide, aimed at teachers, is designed to help you think about what aspects of planning you may need to consider, alterations you may need to make, and the best ways to go about your planning in view of the latest thinking on blended learning pedagogy. It is divided into sections as follows:

1. **Understanding key terms** - this section helps to identify the meaning of key terminology relating to blended learning
2. **Understanding curriculum and sequencing** - a reminder of how important 'curriculum' is under the new [Ofsted EIF](#) and how teachers should go about planning it
3. **Balancing face-to-face with online** - some key considerations to make in how you will balance campus-based delivery with remote learning
4. **Synchronous / asynchronous online delivery** - how you can seek to make the best use of you and your students' time when using remote learning strategies
5. **Student induction** - advice on what curriculum induction should look like
6. **Suggested reading*** - further information which may be helpful to you in planning a blended curriculum.



Section 1 – Understanding key terms

Blended learning, on-line learning, remote learning etc... are terms you have probably heard used interchangeably. In planning a blended curriculum, a helpful start is knowing what each of these terms mean – particularly if this will impact on whether it is to be classed as ‘guided learning hours.’

Here is the organisation’s glossary of terms:

Forms of learning	Meaning / scope	Notes
Classroom-based learning	Classroom-based learning refers to all learning that takes place on or at sites or learning environments designed or created for teaching students. This includes College campuses, the classrooms and workshops within them, and locations selected away from the College to give students experience in realistic or actual working environments. It might be teacher-led or facilitated, student-centred learning or on occasion flipped learning. It might also be referred to as on-site learning or face-to-face learning.	These sessions will always be timetabled, and attendance recorded in registers.
Remote learning	Remote learning has emerged to describe emergency measures to move instruction from physical schools, colleges and universities to homes in both online and offline modes.	
Digital learning	Digital learning is any type of learning that uses digital technologies. Digital technologies are electronic tools, systems, devices and resources that generate, store or process data. Well known examples include social media, online games, virtual learning environments and mobile phones. The term Digital Learning (DL) is interchangeable with Technology Enhanced Learning (TEL) which is used more commonly in higher education (HE). Digital learning can take place in classrooms but is more commonly associated with online learning.	
Independent learning	Independent learning can take various forms, each of which could be classroom-based (or be carried out in College libraries or resource centres) or be remote/hybrid, whether online or paper-based. Courses might state that students are advised or required to undertake so many hours of independent learning each week in order to learn, practise and master everything the course involves. Independent learning takes two main forms:	
	Directed independent learning is where the teacher has set one or more students specific research or work to complete, usually within a specific time period (although it could be more flexible than that). It might involve, for example, internet research or completion of activities in Moodle. It is always initiated by the teacher, whether it involves a single topic or a whole unit/module. It can be on site or remote, including online. Where a teacher instructs students to set time aside using Moodle to catch up on several lessons missed through illness, we would categorise it as directed independent learning.	Should always be timetabled and some funding streams might require it to be recorded in registers, although there may be flexibility for students to complete the work at a time which suits them better.
	Independent self-study is where a student decides to undertake additional learning on their own initiative. It’s often more motivated students who choose to put additional time into extending or reinforcing their knowledge, understanding and skills. It may be on site or remote, including online. It could take the form of wider reading, internet research, watching documentaries on TV/PC or	Is not normally timetabled or recorded in registers, but it can make a very valuable contribution to a

	completing additional/extension work made available by teachers in Moodle.	student's overall learning experience.
Online learning	Online learning is learning that takes place online using a computer or mobile device to access the internet. It refers to learning that is facilitated wholly using digital tools. It's a term used most to describe students accessing online resources, activities and experiences outside of the traditional classroom environment. In the light of Covid-19, this term is being used more narrowly to refer to the delivery of live online lessons (sometimes referred to as 'emergency remote learning'). Online learning can be teacher-led or be undertaken by students without a teacher being present or involved (i.e. independent learning).	For funding purposes, it's very important to accurately categorise and record the form of online learning taking place.
	a) Teacher-led online learning. This is likely to be in the form of a 'virtual classroom' and may be led by a teacher/tutor to a group of students or one-to-one. This type of learning is also known as 'synchronous' (it occurs live, online, in real-time).	Online lessons or tutorials and/or virtual lessons should always be timetabled and recorded in registers.
	b) Online, directed, independent learning. This type of learning, whilst directed by a teacher or tutor, takes place without the teacher/tutor present. It can be synchronous (see above) e.g. it could be peer-led, or 'asynchronous' (resources accessed at any time and are not presented 'live')	Should always be timetabled and some funding streams require it to be recorded in registers, although there may be flexibility for students to complete the work at a time which suits them better. Participation will be tracked via Moodle or receipt of students' work.
	c) Online independent self-study. This is additional learning that a student has chosen to do, free from any formal direction from a teacher or tutor.	Not normally timetabled or recorded in registers, but it can make a very valuable contribution to a student's overall learning experience and how much progress they make.
Blended learning	Blended learning is when traditional classroom teaching is combined with online learning. It typically involves a 'blend' of face-to-face and digital experiences. Blended learning can encompass teacher-led learning and independent study. It can be designed to allow the student to have more control over the time, pace and style of their learning.	
Hybrid learning	Hybrid learning approaches build on the successes of classroom-based, flipped, blended, remote, distance and online to intentionally create student-centred experiences which are profoundly personalised, relevant and engaging.	
Distance learning	Distance learning occurs when teachers, students and classrooms are separate and uses a range of approaches, including online, usually over significant physical distances.	
Flipped learning	Flipped learning is a pedagogical approach that inverts the traditional method of the teacher leading learning, instead handing	

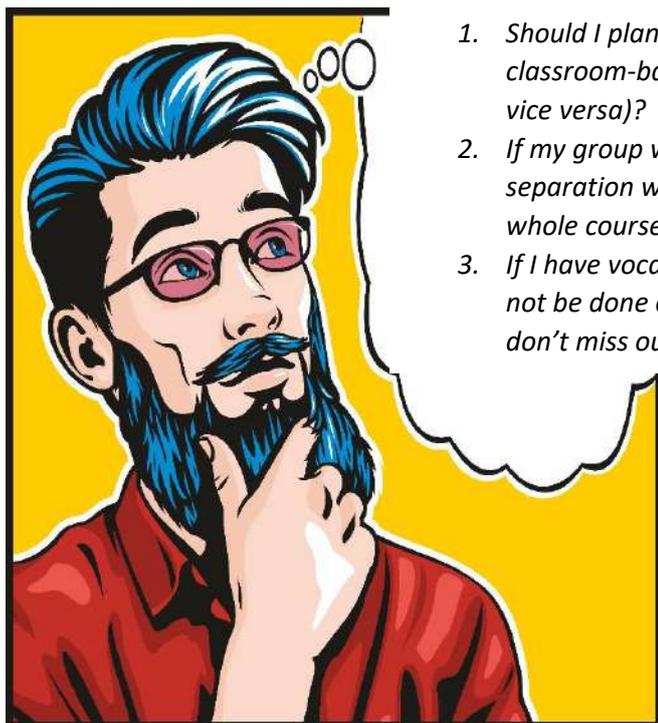
	<p>responsibility over to the student. Flipped learning can be used in the classroom or in online ‘lessons’; or can combine the two e.g. students receive and engage with material prior to the classroom learning through videos/ tutorials delivered online.</p>	
<p>Work Experience</p>	<p>Work Experience encompasses:</p> <p>Work Placement where a student attends employer premises and completes specific work-related tasks, hours are allocated according to programme of study requirements. In some instances, a work-based assessor may also complete subject-specific formative and summative assessments. The student is required to complete a log of their learning and complete all relevant, associated paperwork.</p> <p>Industry Placement where the student attends employer premises and completes meaningful business-related activities. The student must complete a minimum of 315 hours with no more than 2 employers. The student is required to complete a log of their learning and complete all relevant paperwork associated.</p> <p>Employability Skills/Studies refers to learning that takes place, usually on site and face-to-face, designed to develop students’ employability-related knowledge, skills and attitudes. It can be teacher-led or facilitated, student-centred learning.</p>	<p>Work experience is always planned into a student’s timetable and the hours recorded on ProMonitor and the individualised Employability tracker.</p> <p>Work Placement (WP) should always be timetabled attendance and recorded in registers.</p> <p>Industry Placement (IP) should always be timetabled attendance and recorded in registers.</p> <p>Employability Skills (ES) should always be timetabled attendance and recorded in registers.</p>



Section 2 – Understanding curriculum and sequencing

More than ever, now that there is likely to be a blended or hybrid approach to your delivery, you will need to think very carefully about how you plan your schemes of learning and how you will sequence your delivery to make the most of campus-based or online learning.

With social distancing measures likely to still be a part of long-term risk management when delivering to students face-to-face, it may be necessary to separate larger groups into separate bubbles. Although group sizes won't truly be known until after enrolment is completed, here are some questions to influence your pre-planning:



1. *Should I plan lessons that are easily interchangeable / convertible (e.g. a classroom-based lesson that can easily be converted to online delivery and vice versa)?*
2. *If my group was separated into two bubbles, how will I manage this separation whilst ensuring I still deliver my curriculum / course content to my whole course group?*
3. *If I have vocational students that need to complete practical work that could not be done online, how can I plan for this safely and make sure my students don't miss out?*

Here are some suggested answers to those questions:

1. Quite simply, where you can do this, you should. It is not possible to predict how the academic year will pan out. If another COVID-19 'spike' should occur, classroom-based teaching may no longer be possible. Similarly, if social distancing measures were relaxed (or removed), classroom-based teaching may become more readily available (and is the preference, where possible). Designing resources and activities that can 'convert' either way, would be a wise approach.
2. This requires careful thought and may depend on the nature of the course. In the event that only half of a group could be taught face-to-face at any one time (for example), there is the potential for lesson planning workload to double (on the basis that one half of the group are seen by the teacher, whilst the other half of the group are set work to complete remotely).

Here are some suggestions as to how this could be managed:

Example 1 (class contact once every fortnight):

Week	Bubble	Location	Type of activity	Notes
1	A	Classroom	Teacher-led classwork – Topic 1	Teacher uses class-time to set home-study work for following week
	B	Home	Self-study – Topic 1	Teacher pre-sets this before course start
2	A	Home	Self-study – Topic 2	
	B	Classroom	Teacher-led classwork – Topic 2	Teacher uses class-time to set home-study work for following week
Above is repeated throughout course				

In the example above, in week one the teacher ‘doubles up’ workload in week one only (so that work can be set in advance for the home study group), but after this, the teacher is only dealing with one topic at a time (albeit with some activities forming home study).

Example 2 (class contact every week – blended delivery):

Week	Bubble	Location	Type of activity	Notes
Week 1 Day 1	A	Classroom	Teacher-led classwork – Topic 1	Teacher uses some class-time to set home-study work for following day
	B	Home	Self-study – Topic 1	
Week 1 Day 2	A	Home	Self-study – Topic 1	
	B	Classroom	Teacher-led classwork – Topic 1	Teacher uses class-time to set home-study work for following week
Week 1 Day 3	A & B	Home (Online)	Teacher-led online learning	Teacher uses ‘virtual classrooms’ on this day to teach whole group
Above is repeated throughout course				

Example 2 enables face-to-face teacher-contact every week and there may be some types of groups where this is preferred; perhaps groups with particular needs, or even a requirement for regular practical work which requires students to be supervised on-site.

With both examples (and access to the right technology) it is possible for the teacher to broadcast classroom activity for the benefit of any students who are working remotely and this could negate the teacher needing to set or plan additional work for these students.

What both examples do show is how important students’ **independent learning and study skills**’ will be as ‘**flipped learning**’ is a key teaching and learning approach within this model. See Section 4 – Induction for more details.

3. If you have a course that requires the delivery / assessment of practical skills, then you will need to decide how you will balance knowledge development with these skills. For example, if attending college is restricted in the first term, can you focus on knowledge development initially, and focus on practical skills later in the course? If restrictions and safety measures allow access to practical work areas in term one, perhaps it may be pertinent to front-load practical delivery whilst you are able to do so. If the delivery of practical skills is required over a sustained period, then Example 2 above is possibly the most suitable delivery model.



Curriculum and sequencing: FE teachers

FE colleagues should remember that the overall quality of education is judged (by Ofsted) on the basis of our implementation plans matching the over-arching intent, which should subsequently lead to a tangible outcome (impact):

A new quality of education judgement



Quality of education

Intent

- Curriculum design, coverage and appropriateness

Implementation

- Curriculum delivery
- Teaching (pedagogy)
- Assessment (formative and summative)

Impact

- Attainment (qualifications and assessments)
- Progress
- Knowledge and skill development
- Destinations

Here’s a video that has been used in previous CPD sessions about the Ofsted EIF and may serve as a useful reminder of what you need to think about in planning your curriculum:

Click here: [Planning and sequencing a curriculum video \(2.5 mins\) by Ofsted](#)

Paul Joyce HMI, Deputy Director, Further Education and Skills, on why the word 'curriculum' can be applied to any training, education or learning programme.

Section 3 – Balancing face-to-face with online

Where you have the flexibility to plan a balance of classroom-based and online learning, it may be beneficial to consider potential **advantages (+VE)** and **disadvantages (-VE)** of each approach:

Classroom-based learning / online learning

Feature	Classroom-based learning	Online learning
Access to teacher / tutor	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Students at all times have direct access to a teacher; students and teacher can see each other and more readily develop interpersonal relationships (e.g. see body language) +VE Students access their teacher during timetabled lessons which are fixed -VE 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Students can have access to their teacher in a virtual classroom, but visual cues are restricted in the online environment -VE Online learning allows much greater timetabling flexibility. Students can raise queries with their teacher through digital platforms (albeit teacher responses won't be instant) +VE
Resources and technology	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Students have access to onsite resources (e.g. library, student support, canteen) as well as online resources +VE Students will not need to print anything and can use college scanners/printers +VE Students will have more ready access to all the technology that is required for their course +VE 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Students have access to resources via a digital portal only -VE Students may need to use home printers / scanners -VE Students will need access to digital technology at home, including reliable wi-fi. This may have to be 'shared' with other household members -VE
Behaviour and motivation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The teacher can directly supervise, oversee and motivate the students +VE Students can more easily distract each other and engage in low-level disruption (e.g. chat with peers off-topic) -VE 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Reliance on students being self-motivated. Supervision is remote – can't 'see' what students are doing in a virtual classroom -VE Virtual environments are more controlled by the teacher (e.g. can 'mute' mics). A disengaged student in a virtual classroom is less able to disrupt the teacher and the lesson (especially if learning is asynchronous) +VE Students need to be organised and self-motivated to complete any asynchronous activity/work -VE
Practical work and	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A full range of practical activities can be undertaken +VE Teacher can demonstrate more easily and correct +VE 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Practical activity can be undertaken but will be highly restricted, more challenging, and largely unsupervised -VE

skill development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Students have access to all they need using campus facilities +VE 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Timely feedback and technique correction more challenging -VE • Access to resources for practical activity may be more challenging (or not possible) -VE
Working environment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The environment is ‘controlled’ and health & safety is carefully managed +VE • Students have to travel into college. This is costly for students and with COVID-19 potentially more risky -VE 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Some home environments may not be safe or free from distraction -VE • No travel is required +VE
Pedagogical aspects	<p>With regards to pedagogy, the key principles of effective teaching, learning and assessment still apply equally to both approaches, though clearly certain adaptations are required. For example, with online learning the teacher will need to give more careful consideration to the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Ensuring resources are accessible - Developing new approaches to student collaboration using digital tools - Removing technological barriers to ensure that relationships can still develop and grow within a student group - Take an active learning approach to maximise engagement - Take advantage of the flexibility that online learning provides - Understand neurodiversity and its implications: digital tools and online learning will support some students better, but hinder others - Online learning requires students to have more self-competence and a motivation to learn. Skills around metacognition and independent study are significantly important. 	



Teachers should aim to harness the **positives** and counter or reduce the impact of the **negatives** in their planning.

For example, it can be seen from the table that resources are a huge challenge in online learning, so you will need to ensure that anything you plan will not discriminate or

marginalise students from being able to take part. **Accessibility** can be a particular issue if you are running a virtual classroom. This will require your students to be available, at the prescribed time, with the correct technology, with a fully functioning network connection. Even assuming a student has access to these items, they may need to be shared with other family members who are also home working, which is why **asynchronous online learning** has many advantages in terms of accessibility (see next section).

Read this [FE News article](#) to learn more about face-to-face and online pedagogical considerations.

Section 4 – Synchronous / asynchronous online delivery

When learning online, your students will probably be partaking in both synchronous and asynchronous activity.

Synchronous activity is conducted 'live' and usually requires the teacher to be present (not always – it can be student-led) and therefore potentially imposes more on your time. It is always teacher-directed. An example of synchronous activity is a group of students taking part in a virtual classroom event (on Microsoft Teams perhaps).

Asynchronous activity can be teacher-directed or can be part of additional (voluntary) study that a student decides to do. An example might be watching a pre-recorded webinar that a teacher asks a group of students to watch, or an eBook chapter that students are directed to read, or students may be asked to download a worksheet from Moodle etc. It is teacher-directed in the sense that the teacher will set the objectives and purpose of the activity, but the teacher is not present whilst the activity is undertaken. Therefore, asynchronous activity is highly flexible (and therefore more accessible) to students because there is no requirement for students to take part in the learning at a set time.

Making the best use of teacher time (and workload)

Your ability, in terms of time, to deliver synchronous activity is finite. Therefore, you should view any 'live' time you have online with your students as extremely precious. It is most probable that a significant amount of learning will take place asynchronously and you will be using virtual classrooms (e.g. Teams) to supplement this. Therefore, a flipped learning approach has many advantages; where students are set asynchronous activity on a topic and the time with the teacher online 'live' is used as a seminar to question students and check understanding.

Assessment is your main tool for checking that students are doing what they've been asked to do, and feedback is your main tool to ensure that students know what to do to improve. Think about how to use both synchronous and asynchronous activity to maximise this.

If what you need to teach requires an instructional approach (e.g. you need to tell students facts and figures), using synchronous activity time may not be the most efficient use of your time. Here's a working example:

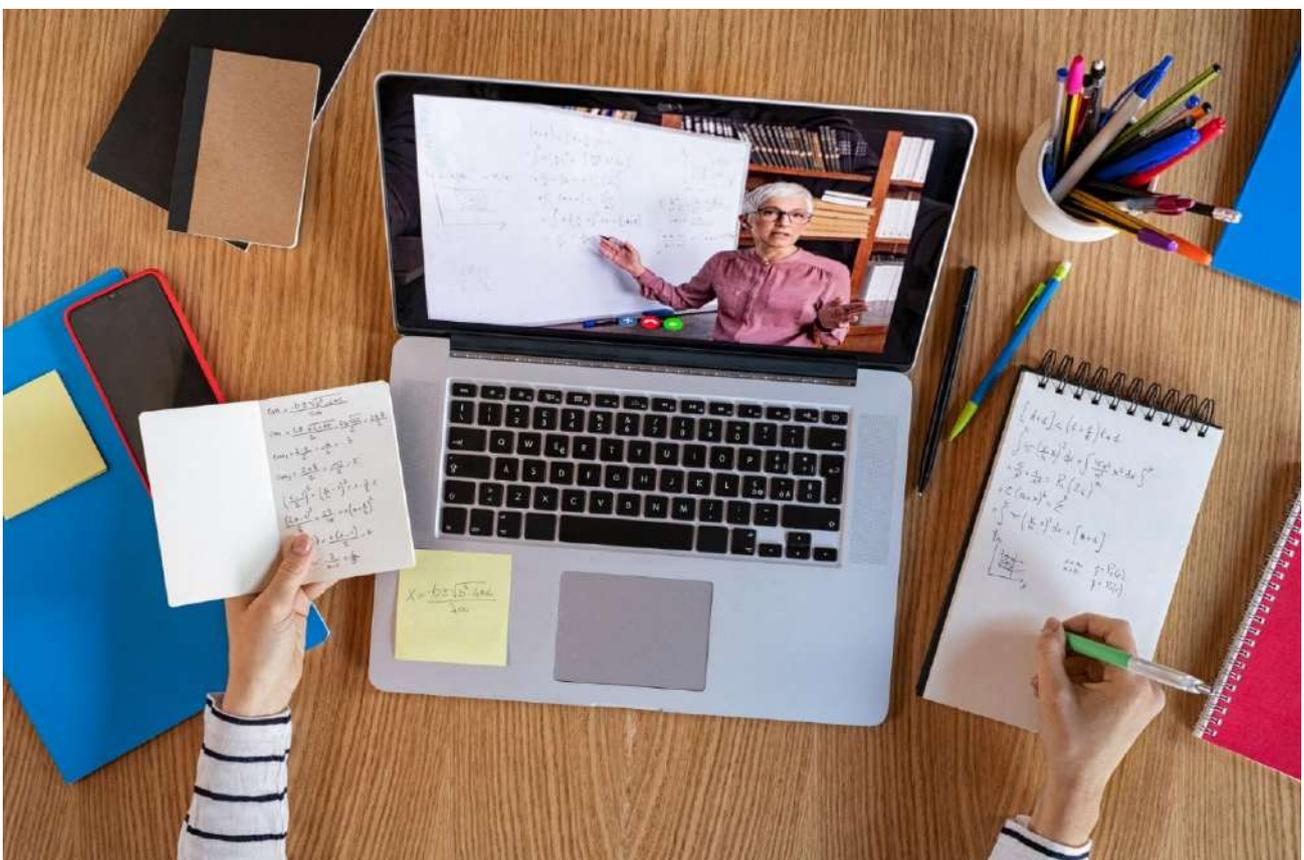
Teacher A is currently teaching a science group the functions of the muscular system. The teacher has a 90-minute lesson in which to do this. In a classroom-based lesson, the teacher may spend 30 minutes during that lesson disseminating the information to students, perhaps as a mini-lecture, and use the remaining time for student-led activity and assessment. Here's how online learning can make that process more efficient:

Activity	Type	Learning time	Notes
1. Students are asked to watch an instructional video on the muscular system	Asynchronous	30 minutes	There are some excellent online resources that can accomplish the same objective as a teacher-led lecture. This can negate a lot of preparation and enable a teacher to focus more on
2. Students download a Q&A test sheet which they complete	Asynchronous	30 minutes	

<p>3. Teacher runs a virtual classroom and uses that time to provide additional information, test student knowledge through seminar-type activity and provide feedback</p>	Synchronous	60 minutes	assessment of the knowledge, rather than the teaching of it.
<p>4. Teacher scopes out next asynchronous activity for students and meets with individual students to provide additional support where required</p>	Synchronous	30 minutes	<p>Total learning time: 120 minutes Total teacher time: 90 minutes</p>

The suggestion is, if a learning activity requires little student interaction, you should favour asynchronous learning. Whereas, synchronous activity should be used mostly to engage your students in activity which gets them to interact with you and each other. Students' time with you will be valuable to them, so there should ideally be plenty of discussion, questioning and two-way talk in these synchronous sessions.

The Educational Endowment Foundation (EEF) found that there was [no benefit in carrying out remote teaching via live lessons over teaching via materials that have been prepared in advance.](#) Instead, they found that **what mattered was the quality of the materials used to teach remotely.**



In this [TES article](#), Mark Enser shares 5 top tips:

1. **Don't be fooled into thinking that live lessons beat prepared materials.** Consider whether all students will be able to access a live session.
2. **Focus on the quality of input.** As remote learning continues for many students, we will need to introduce them to new ideas. Make use of video clips, diagrams and recorded narration from you to give a well-scripted explanation of anything they haven't encountered before.
3. **Give opportunities for dialogue.** One way students develop their understanding is through having their ideas challenged and having to justify them. Make use of forums and shared documents to keep the discussion going.
4. **Give support and feedback.** Consider the problems or potential barriers that students may encounter when completing work. Ask what they might not understand. Aim to remove those barriers and clarify those areas. Look at the work students are completing and give feedback – even as a whole class rather than on each individual piece of work.
5. **Monitor students' work and hold them to account.** Check what work is being completed and what is outstanding and follow up. Ask if students need any help or further support. If nothing else, it is a good opportunity to make sure they are okay in what could be very difficult times.



Section 5 – Student induction

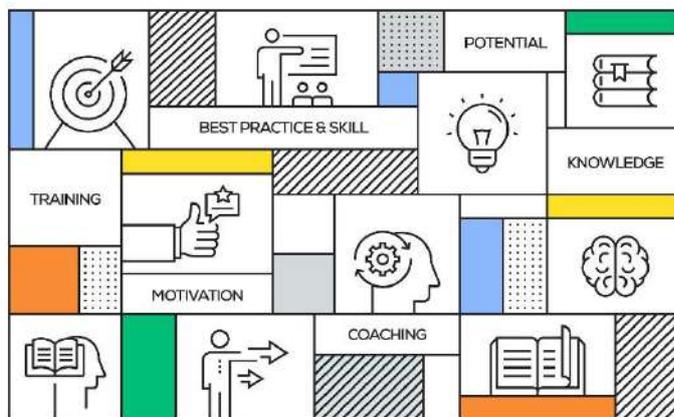
Here are some prompts for you to think about in terms of having an effective induction period for students joining a blended learning curriculum:

- Students will need access to technology for home-working (help them access support funding if necessary)
- Students will need to know how to use Microsoft Teams (and other digital tools you expect them to use)
- Students will need to know where to get help
- You will need to outline your expectations of them in terms of home learning
- You will need to make sure they know how to contact you
- Make sure you outline your availability to them and temper their expectations (be flexible, but you're not a '24-hour' service!)

In this [survey by education.com](https://www.surveybyeducation.com) (of HE students) it was found that students' two greatest concerns (with remote learning) were:

1. Staying focused and self-motivated
2. The lack of social interaction with classmates

Here are two significant factors to consider for induction and beyond and how you can negate these concerns.



Virtual classroom ground rules

As with any learning, you will want to set some basic behaviour expectations and rules for online learning (synchronous). Here is one example that could be easily adapted (thanks to Sean Errington):

- ✓ Everyone is expected to participate in learning activities via the chat box and audio as appropriate. You will take it in turns to be a 'breakout room spokesperson'
- ✓ Always show respect for the ideas of others about the session's learning topics when commenting verbally or via chat
- ✓ It is not acceptable for anyone to articulate ideas or views that are inconsistent with British values and the law of the UK
- ✓ At the start of the session you will be expected to say a friendly hello and identify yourself
- ✓ Let the teacher/tutor know if you have to leave the session for any length of time
- ✓ When making verbal contributions endeavour to do so in a concise manner so that others have the chance to contribute
- ✓ Mute your microphone when not speaking
- ✓ Switch off your webcam when the teacher/tutor presenting
- ✓ You will be encouraged (and expected) to ask questions
- ✓ Use the interactive tools (raised hand etc.) to alert the attention of the teacher/tutor.

Section 6 – Additional resources

Please refer to the links below to access further information which may be helpful to you in planning a blended learning curriculum:

Great Teaching Toolkit: Evidence review (June 2020) – by Evidence Based Education

<https://www.greatteaching.com/>

This is not focused on blended learning specifically, but page 6 of this document has a great summary of the 4 key things the evidence suggests you should do when planning learning.

Ofsted: Review of online education (July 2020)

<https://educationinspection.blog.gov.uk/2020/07/15/online-education-in-further-education-and-skills-learning-about-what-works/>

Paul Joyce, Deputy Director for Further Education and Skills, gives an overview of their review into online education during coronavirus (COVID-19) in the further education and skills (FES) sector.

ETF: Enhance digital teaching platform

<https://enhance.etfoundation.co.uk/content/pages/resources-for-remote-working>

A comprehensive bank of resources to support remote working.

University of Northampton: Learning Technology Blog

<https://blogs.northampton.ac.uk/learntech/2020/03/18/surviving-and-thriving-in-the-world-of-online-teaching/>

An interesting case study - The University of Northampton moved to a blended learning model back in October 2018 – it was a planned, progressive and really positive experience for students and tutors. This outlines how to do it in an ideal world.

QAA Scotland: Getting your teaching online

<https://www.qaa.ac.uk/scotland/en/focus-on/technology-enhanced-learning/getting-your-teaching-online>

A comprehensive overview with various sections and further hyperlinks to additional material.

JISC: Advice and Guidance (Coronavirus)

<https://www.jisc.ac.uk/training/planning-for-coronavirus#>

Some webinars to support converting to online delivery.