

AE Education for the 2020/21 Academic Year

Constraints and Guiding Principles for Emergency Online Education

Current State

As of the date of revision of this document, it is the current view of the Executive Board that for the coming semester (Q1 & Q2 2020/2021) that students should only be on campus when absolutely necessary and that we need to be prepared to offer online alternatives for all education activities. Currently, it is envisioned that a limited portion of the student population may be allowed on campus (less than 20% of the total TU Delft population (incl. staff)). However, this could change at any moment and is subject to a number of restrictions and constraints that are not yet defined. The EMT interprets this as it being necessary for us as a faculty to be prepared for the plausible reality of beginning the academic year in an almost fully online state. **Thus, the EMT is advising that Q1 & Q2 of both the bachelor and master programmes be organized for almost all education (except for bachelor project work and master activities like labwork that need physical presence) for online delivery.**

Reflection on Current Online Education Efforts

It is important to reflect on the experiences gained over the previous period of Emergency Online Education. The move to online education brings about a number of challenges for both those delivering the education and those receiving it. Most teachers are already aware of the challenges from the delivery side, but there are a few points from the perspective of the learner that we would like to iterate based on feedback from students. This is not an exhaustive list of all of the challenges, but represents specific challenges that have motivated the guidance provided later in this document.

- **Time management and motivation:** students are finding these to be difficult to manage in a working-from-home situation with the flexibility provided by recorded lectures. From a student's perspective, they desire more structure and guidance in how to succeed in this new working condition.
- **Communication:** students are receiving communications from many sources and often do not know how to or to whom communications and questions from their side should be directed.
- **Assessment:** teachers are adapting to the reality of assessing in an online environment, which has led to a lack of clarity from the beginning of a course regarding assignments, quizzes, and final exams. Students have felt that insufficient time has been given to manage their time effectively and that in many cases students are being overloaded with additional assignments.
- **Tools:** students have expressed that in the bid to get education online in the short timeframe, many lecturers developed their own preferred methods to teach online using a variety of online platforms and digital systems. It would be desirable to limit the number of online teaching tools and methods to prevent an additional overload for students in learning and familiarizing themselves with new systems and software.

These challenges should be kept in mind, particularly for new incoming students in the Bachelor and Master that will have to adapt to a new online study environment without the benefit of having formed strong connections with their learning peers in an on-campus environment.

Boundary Conditions for Online Education

- I. Brightspace is and shall remain the central hub for interaction and communication with students in a course. Use of external resources and tools is possible (see point II) but the use of these resources and links to them should be clearly embedded in the BrightSpace page.
- II. It is important to understand the security and privacy risks associated with various teaching tools and the consequences for the university. Whenever possible, it is recommended that teachers use tools that have been centrally procured and supported by TU Delft. For tools not centrally supported, please check the page on Educational Tooling that provides the current state of the risk evaluation of such tools.

Guiding Principles

Based upon the above feedback from students, the following guiding principles are recommended for an online realization of the beginning of the 2020/21 academic year:

1. To establish a rhythm and structure to home-based learning, the bachelor and masters programmes strive to provide a clear schedule for learning activities and provide clear guidance on timing expectations for all self-paced learning activities.
2. To help the students in the transition from being-at-home to working-at-home, it is recommended that some form of live interaction moment be planned in the mornings of week days. This could be a live online lecture, tutorial session, online question and answer period, or any other online event where interaction and attendance is supportive to the other remote activities.
3. Balancing on- and off- screen time while studying. It is very exhaustive to study long periods of time behind a computer and passively watch videos. So were possible, courses should try to limit the amount of pre-recorded videos .
4. Clearly defined points of communication will be defined for students within and between teaching moments. Additional TA support will be made available to facilitate this (e.g., having TAs present to monitor chats for questions during live online lectures).

Additional Resources

In order to realize the remote, still high quality education, there are several boundary conditions to be addressed:

1. Additional budget for support of Teaching Assistants (and materials) to accommodate:
 - Moderating online lectures;
 - Stimulate social bonding and community forming processes (for instance: increasing number of mentors, installing “super-mentors” to oversee student cohorts, etc.)
 - Supporting staff to move lectures to remote environment, for instance by improving Brightspace pages;
 - Supporting online discussions to stimulate integration of knowledge over multiple courses;
 - The extra requested budget (for both BSc and MSc) have to be allocated to the COVID-19 budget codes.
2. Clear communication is of high importance in the following semester. Faculty E&SA (inventory and coordination) and Communications (fine-tuning communication) work together to coordinate and communicate what students need to study. They provide weekly emails for each student cohort with the schedule for the following week (taking note of the difference between the maturity in self-regulation of young and more senior students)
3. Faculty E&SA with VSV can offer extra-curricular online activities, such as professional workshops, lunch lectures, online physical exercise breaks, etc.