Quick Tips on International Students and the Online Classroom

While all members of the Lehigh community are certainly experiencing stress and uncertainty during the current global health crisis, international students are presented with additional concerns and challenges that potentially affect their ability to participate and learn in the virtual classroom.

Here are some possible situations that we are seeing international students facing:

- Some international students will return to their home countries in distant time zones from the U.S., making it difficult or inconvenient for them to participate in synchronous online classes.
- Of those students traveling back to their home countries, some may be quarantined for two or more weeks, possibly with limited access to online materials.
- While students may be adept at using technology and social media, many of them (including international students) are not generally well-trained in using such technology in a responsible and effective manner for the purposes of subject-matter learning in the academic disciplines. This is particularly true if they have been socialized into a very traditional teacher-fronted classroom or discipline, as is the case in many cultures outside the U.S.

QUICK TIPS FOR INTERNATIONAL LEARNING ONLINE

See also Youtube for [ICAPE teachers discussing suggestions](#):

Quick Tip 1: Design for Collaborative Online International Learning (COIL)

Combine students into groups for asynchronous and some synchronous collaborative work outside of class time (e.g., peer review, document sharing, discussion forums, blogging/vlogging and responses, etc.). Students in closer time zones may be grouped together for convenience of synchronous collaboration. Or, students from distant time zones can contribute to a shared project asynchronously only if specific roles for the project are assigned (e.g., researcher, leader, illustrator, layout designer, etc.). Collaborative online projects include:

-Group Podcast or Video	-Group Webpage	-Group Written Essay
-Group Photo Essay	-Group Powerpoint Presentation	-Study Group

Quick Tip 2: Engage in Individual or Small-Group Weekly Conferences

For all students, hold individual Zoom check-ins or required virtual office hours for 10 minutes with each student every week to address their comprehension and learning, but also the challenges they are facing in terms of the technology, time management, and the stresses they are experiencing. This may involve some inconvenience for the faculty member and for the student, e.g. holding a conference at 5:00 in the morning or later in the evening.

Quick Tip 3: Facilitate Differentiated Learning Experiences

Design your lessons, lectures, and assignments so that there are different media of delivery and different forms of engagement for groups of students with similar situational needs.

-Groups A: Students in the U.S. who can mostly Zoom in for class synchronously. Record those sessions and share them with Group B. Zoom also provides transcripts of these recordings that you can make available to students.

-Group B: Students in distant time zones who watch lectures and recorded class interactions and then record their responses for Group A to watch during synchronous Zoom classes.

Quick Tip 4: Plan for Independent Learning

In case international students find themselves with limited access to online materials, have a plan for allowing these students to use their textbooks to complete a 2-3 week set of tasks independently. The tasks should synthesize their learning of the subject-matter material. In this way, they can prepare to share what they have been working on when they finally do have access online.

Quick Tip 5: Make Your Instructions, Expectations, and Rubrics More Explicit

Because international students, if not all students, may not be used to managing their own learning online in very active and responsible ways, it is important to spell out each week what are the series of tasks they are to complete, when, for how long, how many pages, etc. Below is an example from one our ICAPE teachers:

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Assignments Due This Week

1. Review the sample Student TedTalk and Podcast assignments in **Week 9.**
2. Consider alternative multimodal formats: short Video/movie, Panopto, Youtube video, etc. You may submit ideas for alternative multimodal formats.
3. Finalize the outline for the script. **(An outline template is in Week 9.)**
4. Submit your outline to Turnitin by Friday.
5. Read T*he Circle* for Monday.

Wednesday, March 18th - Meet in Zoom at 10:45 am with Chris to review Panopto, Audacity, Peermark, etc. The remainder of the class time will be done asynchronously so that you may continue to work on your outline and draft.

Monday, March 23rd - Log into CourseSite and work in your Group's Discussion Forum Google doc. I will be joining in each group throughout the class time. **(NO Zoom meeting. Work in the Discussion Forum.)**

1. Complete *The Circle online* Discussion Forum Assignment with your group.
2. Finalize the rough draft of your script and upload it to Turnitin.

Tuesday, Wednesday & Thursday, March 24th, 25th, 26th - Persuasive Argument Individual Conferences. Sign up for a conference in the Google Link: https://docs.google.com/document/d/14EIub7GqKcIUMMq_fShsK07oyv1zp6j-ODrxilvnq38/edit?usp=sharing **(Conferences are required.)**

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Quick Tip 6: Monitor Student Engagement and Check Comprehension

International students, who may be traveling or not, seem to have a greater tendency to disappear online. That is, they can experience stresses with regard to travel plans, visa issues, their families' expectations, health problems, etc. Due to some of these stressors, their engagement in online learning and their responses to emails may wane. Therefore, it is important to check the active student engagement data on CourseSite. For example, who is opening files or watching videos, when, and for how long? Also, weekly comprehension quizzes via CourseSite are important to make sure students stay engaged. Similarly, Panopto offers the opportunity to pause the video and create comprehension questions that viewers must answer before being allowed to continue with the video.

Quick Tip 7: Tolerance of Ambiguity, Humor, Collegial Problem-solving, and Participation

Above all, international students may often feel uncomfortable with the uncertainty and awkwardness of interacting with the teacher and the whole class online, especially if the online class involves whole-class discussion. It is important to take a few minutes at the beginning of the online class and acknowledge this issue, expressing your commitment to working out unavoidable glitches together, and meeting these challenges with a sense of humor and a positive attitude. Lastly, it is important to be clear about your expectations concerning how and the extent to which students need to participate in the class (e.g., contributing to discussions, turn-taking, "raising hands" or "thumbs up" in Zoom, etc.).