



Staff Guidelines for Online Teaching

30 April 2020

1.0 Preamble

- 1.1. In order to safeguard the health and safety of everyone during the current pandemic, all educational institutions were shut down, however the courses and educational programmes they offer were not suspended.
- 1.2. These guidelines are aimed to help members of staff in their work and will remain into effect until updated or superseded by new ones.
- 1.3. All online teaching will come to an end on 19 June 2020.
- 1.4. Second year students had their last official sessions on 3 April, however, as in previous years, tutors should remain available to support them till end of year.
- 1.5. In view that these students will be sitting for their MATSEC examinations in September 2020, members of staff are free to decide whether to continue providing support. Students will surely be very grateful.
- 1.6. Students who are currently in their first year of their study programme will sit for the main session of the MATSEC examinations in 2021.
- 1.7. First year students shall continue following their study programme as planned and their timetables will remain unchanged until new ones are issued.
- 1.8. The respective departmental schemes for the 2019/20 should have been adjusted for both course years to ensure that the respective syllabi can be covered in time.
- 1.9. Individuals/Departments may decide to use the maximum available teaching time particularly during the end of June before the summer recess and/or as of September 2020 following the summer recess.

2.0 Main platforms for online teaching and communication

- 2.1. The official platforms provided by UM are the following:
 - a. Email account provided to all staff and students by UM IT Service
 - b. JC Virtual Learning Environment (JC VLE)
 - c. Use of Zoom and Panopto
 - d. JC website and JC social media
- 2.2. The use of **other platforms is not recommended** but members of staff may use them provided they can provide the same level of support, security and safeguards.

3.0 Support services

- 3.1. Services with respect to online teaching are provided through:
 - a. IT Services
 - b. Online courses organised by UM
 - c. [Technology for teaching and learning continuity](#)¹
 - d. [JC special VLE platform for staff](#)². The following enrolment key **teachingcontinuity-1920** has to be used
- 3.2. The Office of the Principal offers all the necessary support to deal with student matters including misconduct during online sessions.
- 3.3. Members of staff are kindly notified that the aforementioned support services are only provided for the official platforms.

4.0 Safeguards

- 4.1. Safeguards are mainly required in case of live sessions and direct engagement with students.
- 4.2. Lecturers should ideally make use of all the session management features provided by the online teaching platform to ensure the smooth running of live sessions.
- 4.3. It is recommended that all live sessions be recorded - definitely all the one-to-one sessions.
- 4.4. Students must be informed that sessions are going to be recorded beforehand.
- 4.5. If a student objects, the session can still proceed and the concerned student/s may follow the recorded session later on.
- 4.6. During one-to-one sessions, students need to be explicitly asked if they grant consent to the recording of the session. The verbal consent suffices. However, if the student objects to the session being recorded, then the session should be immediately stopped. The case should be reported to the subject coordinator and the student supported via email.
- 4.7. After a visual identification of those present, students may be asked to switch off their video if they prefer. It is up to the lecturer to decide if the student video feed must be kept on during the start, part or for the whole session.
- 4.8. Students should be asked to switch off their microphone during a live session, except when asking or replying to a question following the tutor's permission.
- 4.9. Clear professional boundaries should always be maintained to safeguard students and academic staff.
- 4.10. Students who fail to comply with the expected online-mode of behaviour as indicated below should be reported to the Vice-Principal via email (viceprincipal.jc@um.edu.mt). Reports must clearly indicate the student's name, ID number, details about the session and a brief narrative of the incident.

¹ um.edu.mt/services/coronavirus/instructionalcontinuity

² um.edu.mt/jc/vle/course/view.php?id=2791

- 4.11. Students have been informed that action will be taken if they abuse the system.
- 4.12. Recorded sessions with visible student data, including student images should be deleted by end of June 2020.
- 4.13. Recorded sessions where only the tutor and their data show may be kept for future use.

5.0 Student guidelines for online learning

- 5.1. To log into the official JC email/VLE account daily.
- 5.2. To visit the JC website and social media regularly.
- 5.3. To join any Zoom sessions through VLE or through their UM IT account only.
- 5.4. Not to share any content/images/videos to which they were given access, without the consent of the lecturer.
- 5.5. Not to share with anyone invitations to join Zoom or other sessions without the express permission of who sent them the invite.
- 5.6. To exhibit responsible behaviour particularly during live sessions and meeting chats. The JC Code of Behaviour is also valid for online behaviour.
- 5.7. To participate actively in all sessions, go through material provided and work out any tasks assigned.
- 5.8. To request that one-to-one sessions are recorded and to verbally consent at the beginning of the session.
- 5.9. Disciplinary action will be taken against those students who violate the above or in any way disrupt the learning and teaching process. This may include suspending the access of students to online learning.

6.0 Technical aspects

- 6.1. When using video, good **frontal lighting** is required. The use of frontal light such as from a window or a lamp is ideal. Backlighting should be avoided as it puts the presenter in silhouette.
- 6.2. An appropriate background should be used. Zoom makes it possible to choose a background.
- 6.3. One may gain confidence using online platforms by using them with someone else.

7.0 Run up to the online session

- 7.1. Only timetabled slots should be used for live sessions.
- 7.2. Live sessions should not be held during weekends, public holidays or recess periods unless absolutely necessary and at the discretion of the respective lecturer.

- 7.3. Invites for live sessions are to be sent to students at least two (2) days before a scheduled session or ideally they should be informed about their regular weekly sessions. In the invite, students should be reminded about the recording of the session, if it is the case.
- 7.4. Any material to be used in conjunction with a session should be sent beforehand.
- 7.5. It is highly recommended that students be provided with notes and assigned work gradually to avoid overwhelming them.
- 7.6. The web browser should be cleared beforehand if videos on the screen of the lecturer are to be shared. This avoids the disclosure of past history.
- 7.7. Live sessions should be started a few minutes before the lesson is due so that students can start joining in and settling down.
- 7.8. This time is ideal for the lecturer to engage with students.

8.0 Pedagogical issues

- 8.1. When planning how to cover the scheme of work, lecturers may use a variety of pedagogical styles.
- 8.2. Although the provision of notes, power point presentations and so on are essential in this context, these should not be the only source of teaching and learning.
- 8.3. In order to ensure effective engagement with students, it is highly recommended to include regular live sessions.
- 8.4. When planning a live session, one should be aware that most probably, less work might be covered than during a recorded session.
- 8.5. When recorded sessions are used, one-(1)-hour sessions should ideally be split up into two 20-30 minute clips each in order to maintain student attention. Recordings can be uploaded on VLE to be viewed by students in their own time.
- 8.6. Students should be encouraged to participate during sessions and to use the chat and forum facilities to ask questions.
- 8.7. A log of the topics covered, work assigned and sessions held should be maintained.
- 8.8. It is recommended that members collaborate together and pool resources.

9.0 Feedback and assessment

- 9.1. Teaching involves many facets, including assessment and feedback.
- 9.2. Students should be given reasonable tasks to test their understanding as well as feedback to appraise their performance.
- 9.3. Both assessments and feedback can take different formats depending on the nature of the subject and topic involved.

- 9.4. Students should be given a reasonable time frame to complete set tasks.
- 9.5. Marking of work should not be excluded, however it is not possible to do so in the usual manner. Use of model answers and marking schemes should be considered to enable students to self-assess their work in addition to the facilities provided by VLE.
- 9.6. Subject Coordinators will be directing staff about formal assessment during the third term.

10.0 Importance to wellbeing

- 10.1. There is no doubt that the current situation has taken everyone by surprise.
- 10.2. Caution should be exercised so neither staff nor students are overwhelmed.
- 10.3. Lecturers may come to know of students who are experiencing some kind of difficulty, this being of psychological, emotional, financial, access to online learning and so on. Kindly inform us about these students, as there are ways to support them.
- 10.4. In the same way that lecturers normally care for students, the same approach should be taken in the online scenario.
- 10.5. It is up to the lecturer whether to take formal attendance during live sessions, however, this practice is recommended.
- 10.6. Students who never attend the sessions nor hand in any work should be followed.
- 10.7. One should take into account that sessions are not taking place in the College environment. At home there are other issues and responsibilities, which have a bearing on both the teaching and the learning process.
- 10.8. One needs to be patient as there may be technical problems at both ends; connections might time out and so on.
- 10.9. Inevitably, everyone is bound to make mistakes. These should be used as an opportunity for further learning and growth.
- 10.10. Everyone should be supportive to both students and colleagues.
- 10.11. Reach out and assist colleagues who may have difficulties adjusting to this new style of teaching.

11.0 General

- 11.1. The Subject Coordinator should be regularly updated with the online teaching strategies being adopted to finish the scheme of work.