



# LEARNING TO TEACH ONLINE

## Managing your time

### **Aims and overview**

*This episode highlights some important issues regarding managing your teaching time online. It examines some of the benefits and potential pitfalls of online teaching, and offers some practical tips and suggestions on how teachers can make their time teaching online more effective and productive.*



Watch the video  
<http://bit.ly/d18ac5>



Written by Karin Watson

**“Give small bits of feedback regularly”** (Dr Andy Polaine)

**“I put boundaries around the amount of time I will spend online”** (Dr Garry Allen)

**“When you teach online you have to realise students won’t be sticking to the same time schedule”** (Associate Professor Matthew Allen)

## Time is different online

One of the many myths about teaching online, is that it always saves time for both students and teachers.

The issues surrounding management of time are in fact much more complex: online teaching does not necessarily save or increase teaching time, but it highlights how teachers need to use their time differently. In an online environment the use of time tends to be more flexible and fragmented, so it is more effective practice for teachers to work in smaller blocks of time, more often, rather than concentrating their teaching on one large block of time once a week as they would in the traditional face-to-face class environment.

## Time benefits of teaching online

- **Flexibility of time:** Teachers and students are able to work at a time which is convenient and more productive for them. This flexibility also allows for study to be incorporated more easily around the many other commitments of time poor students and teachers. Where teachers/students need to travel during semester (to conferences for example) they can continue with their teaching/learning while away
- **Continuous discussion:** Online message boards, forums, blogs, etc allow the discussion surrounding content or a topic to develop and continue between face-to-face class times
- **Time for reflection:** Most online discussions take place asynchronously over a period of time. This offers opportunities for both students and teachers to reflect or further research a topic before responding and making a post
- **Global classroom:** Online education is able to include participants from various international time zones which promotes a greater and more diverse mix of students and teachers. In addition, overseas guest lecturers or institutions can easily be given access to the course online to participate and share their knowledge
- **Maximises face-to-face time:** Online education allows teachers to transfer certain components (for example: administrative matters, resources, etc) online which can free up face-to-face class time
- **Class available 24/7:** Course material, resources, etc are always available and accessible at any time.

## Effective online time management strategies

- **Work in smaller, more fragmented blocks of time:** To prevent feelings of isolation and to maintain motivation, it is important for students to feel their teacher's presence online. This can be achieved by teachers 'checking in' online more often, but for smaller amounts of time (daily for 15 minutes for example) to join the discussion, answer any queries and guide the students
- **Avoid burnout - set boundaries:** It is easy for teachers to become a slave to the online environment, and to be checking in frequently to see how students are progressing. This can lead students to expect their teachers to be online constantly. It is essential therefore for teachers to set clear boundaries up-front about how much time and how frequently students can expect them to be online. For example:
  - The teacher will log into the website once a day to answer questions and contribute to the discussion board conversation, but will be unavailable on weekends

- **Expectations of Students:** *Teachers should set clear guidelines up-front for their students outlining their expectations of how much time and how frequently they expect them to be online. Where online participation is assessable and forms part of their grade, teachers need to clearly outline how these will be assessed. For example:*
  - *Satisfactory Contribution - two posts per discussion topic which indicates a sound understanding of the content*
  - *High Distinction - multiple posts throughout the development of a discussion topic; demonstrates a high level of understanding and synthesis of the content; also includes several responses to issues raised by other students.*
- **Project submissions and deadlines:** *Plan carefully when projects are due. While most students prefer to work on an assignment over the weekend and submit early on a Monday morning, the days preceding submission is often the time that students have the most queries or requests for extensions of time. If the teacher does not intend to be available over the weekend, it is essential they clearly indicate to students that any such issues need to be forwarded to the teacher before the weekend*
- **Different time zones:** *Teachers need to be mindful of different time zones if there are students from different locations or countries participating in the class, particularly regarding assignment deadlines, live online chat sessions, etc. Where necessary, be specific. For example: Project Deadline - Monday 13 June 2010, 9am Australian Eastern Standard Time (AEST)*
- **Access to high speed Internet :** *Not all teachers and students have access to high speed Internet, while others may be limited by a capped monthly usage plan. When preparing course material, teachers should consider how long it takes to download/upload large files or content which contain large graphics, videos, audio files, etc.*

## Conclusion

The fact that online learning offers so much flexibility means that time will always be used in smaller, more fragmented pieces by students as they fit study in around their increasingly busy lifestyles. We hope that this episode has raised some key issues to help you manage your time more effectively when teaching online. If you would like to share your own tips on how you manage your time, please log onto the [Learning to Teach Online forum](#) and offer your suggestions.

## Additional reading\*

McIntyre, S., Watson, K., & Larsen, S. (2009). [Strategies for large scale blended learning initiatives: Training, teaching and management](#). Paper presented at the 4th International Blended Learning Conference, University of Hertfordshire, Hatfield, UK.

*\*Note: Some readings are held in subscription only databases. In most cases accessing the link from your institution's network will enable access*

## Acknowledgements

Interview and Production: *Simon McIntyre and Karin Watson*

Camera and Edit: *Creative Development – L&T@UNSW*

COFA Online would like to extend a special thank you to those who donated their time and expertise to the project by allowing us to interview them for this episode:



### **Associate Professor Emma Robertson**

*Coordinator, Bachelor of Design, School of Design Studies*

### **Dr Catherine Suttle**

*Lecturer, School of Optometry and Vision Sciences, Faculty of Science*

### **Andrea North-Samardzic**

*Facilitator, MBT Program, Australian School of Business*

### **Tam Nguyen**

*Associate Lecturer, Faculty of Built Environment*



### **Associate Professor Matthew Allen**

*Head, Department of Internet Studies*

### **Associate Professor Anthony Herrington**

*Head, Centre for eLearning*

### **Dr Tama Leaver**

*Lecturer, Department of Internet Studies*



### **Dr Garry Allen**

*Director, Information Technology in the Faculty of Life Sciences*



### **Associate Professor Lydia Kavanagh**

*Director, First Year Engineering*



### **Lynette Zeeng**

*Education Development Coordinator, Communication Design*



### **Dr Leicha Bragg**

*Lecturer, Mathematics Education and Information Technology*

Lucerne University of  
Applied Sciences and Arts

**HOCHSCHULE  
LUZERN**

### **Dr Andy Polaine**

*Research Fellow and Lecturer, Service Design*



### **Julie Hughes**

*Head of Post-Compulsory Education, School of Education*

## For more Learning to Teach Online, visit the COFA Online Gateway



To find out more about the Learning to Teach Online project, or to view the video component of this episode, please visit the COFA Online Gateway.

[www.online.cofa.unsw.edu.au](http://www.online.cofa.unsw.edu.au)

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**Simon McIntyre**  
LTTO Project Leader  
[s.mcintyre@unsw.edu.au](mailto:s.mcintyre@unsw.edu.au)  
Phone +61 2 8936 0631

**Karin Watson**  
Co-Project Manager  
[karin@unsw.edu.au](mailto:karin@unsw.edu.au)  
Phone +61 2 8936 0631

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### About the project

The [Learning to Teach Online](#) project is a free professional development resource designed to help teachers from any discipline, whether experienced in online teaching or not, to gain a working understanding of successful online teaching pedagogies that they can apply in their own unique teaching situations. It hopes to encourage dialogue, discussion and the sharing of ideas about online learning and teaching across disciplines and between institutions around the world.

### About COFA Online

COFA Online is an academic unit at the College of Fine Arts (COFA), The University of New South Wales (UNSW), Sydney, Australia. It has been innovating online pedagogy, academic professional development and effective online learning strategies since 2003.

### About The University of New South Wales

UNSW has an enrolment of approximately 40,000 students, and is the leading international university in Australia with over 10,000 international enrolments from over 130 nations. UNSW was also ranked as the top university in 2009 in the Australian Government Learning and Teaching Performance Fund for the quality of its teaching.



### Australian Learning and Teaching Council

Support for this activity has been provided by the Australian Learning and Teaching Council Ltd, an initiative of the Australian Government Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations. The views expressed in this activity do not necessarily reflect the views of the Australian Learning and Teaching Council.



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