Online Teaching and Learning during COVID-19

College of Agriculture, Engineering and Science

Guidelines and underpinning principles for the DRY-RUN from 18-22 May 2020

Purpose of the DRY-RUN

The DRY-RUN as explained in the communique sent by the Deputy Vice Chancellor (T&L), is scheduled to run from 18-22 May 2020 and has a specific purpose: to ascertain the ability of students to access the online course materials, interact with the academics and to attempt mock assessments (if possible). This exercise will culminate in a survey among both staff and students to ascertain preparedness for online teaching and learning (T&L), highlight areas of concern on accessing T&L course materials or interaction between academics and students, and fix system or related issues before the possible commencement of the official online programme on 1 June 2020.
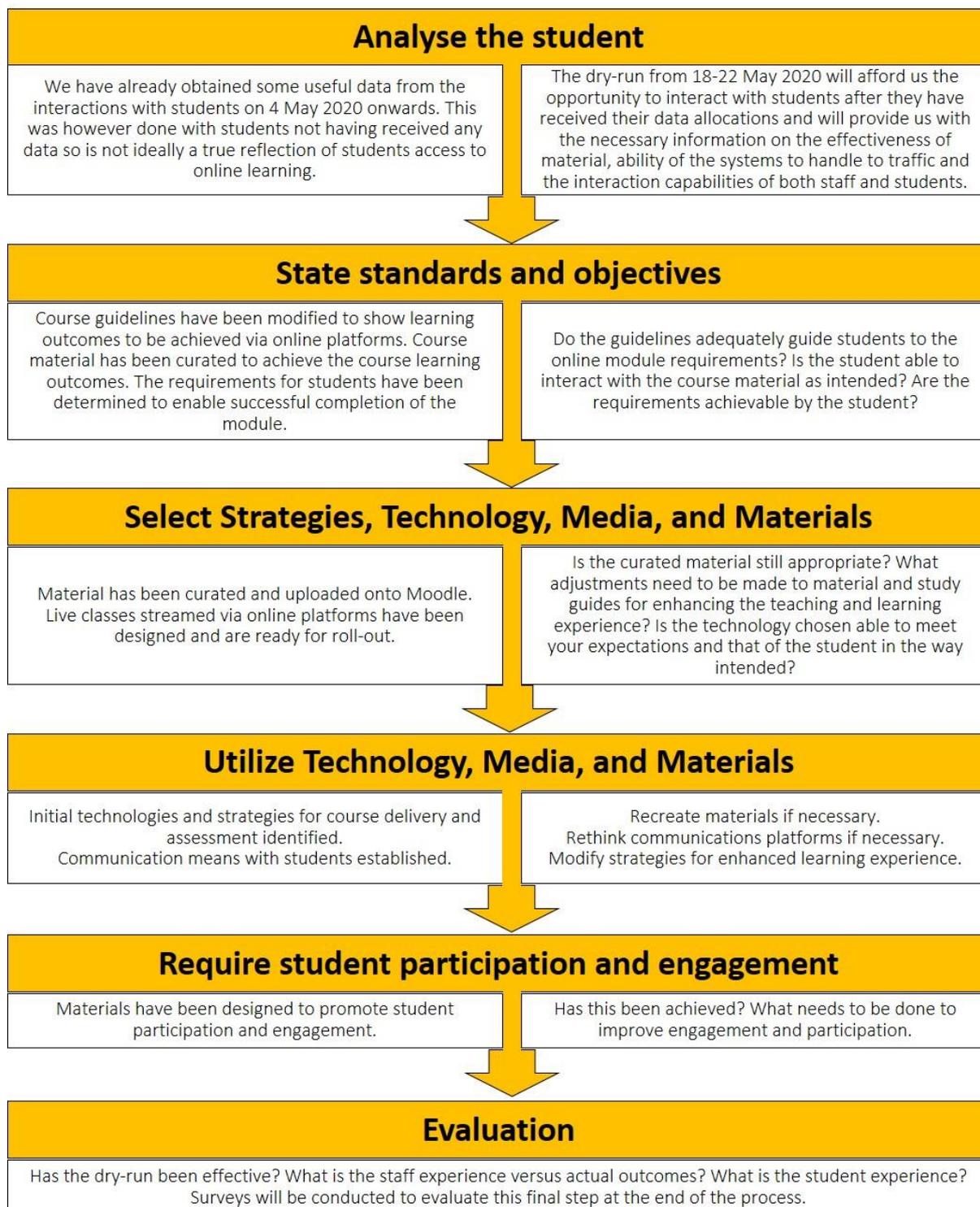
Guidelines

The ASSURE model by Smaldino, Lowther & Russell (2008)[1], can be modified for the purposes of the online teaching and learning drive currently underway. The ASSURE model is originally designed to assist academics to effectively integrate technology into their courses to help 'assure' learning.

There are six parts to the entire exercise:

1. Analyze the students
2. State standards and objectives
3. Select strategies, technology, media and materials
4. Utilize technology, media and materials
5. Require student participation and engagement
6. Evaluation

In the figure below, the left-hand column represents what we currently have and the right-hand column provides guidance to what we expect from the DRY-RUN.

[1]Smaldino SE, Lowther DL and Rusell JD, *Instructional Technology and Media for Learning*, 2008, Pearson Merrill Prentice Hall, 9th edition, USA

Analyse the student

We have already obtained some useful data from the interactions with students on 4 May 2020 onwards. This was however done with students not having received any data so is not ideally a true reflection of students access to online learning.	The dry-run from 18-22 May 2020 will afford us the opportunity to interact with students after they have received their data allocations and will provide us with the necessary information on the effectiveness of material, ability of the systems to handle to traffic and the interaction capabilities of both staff and students.

State standards and objectives

Course guidelines have been modified to show learning outcomes to be achieved via online platforms. Course material has been curated to achieve the course learning outcomes. The requirements for students have been determined to enable successful completion of the module.	Do the guidelines adequately guide students to the online module requirements? Is the student able to interact with the course material as intended? Are the requirements achievable by the student?

Select Strategies, Technology, Media, and Materials

Material has been curated and uploaded onto Moodle. Live classes streamed via online platforms have been designed and are ready for roll-out.	Is the curated material still appropriate? What adjustments need to be made to material and study guides for enhancing the teaching and learning experience? Is the technology chosen able to meet your expectations and that of the student in the way intended?

Utilize Technology, Media, and Materials

Initial technologies and strategies for course delivery and assessment identified. Communication means with students established.	Recreate materials if necessary. Rethink communications platforms if necessary. Modify strategies for enhanced learning experience.

Require student participation and engagement

Materials have been designed to promote student participation and engagement.	Has this been achieved? What needs to be done to improve engagement and participation.

Evaluation

Has the dry-run been effective? What is the staff experience versus actual outcomes? What is the student experience? Surveys will be conducted to evaluate this final step at the end of the process.

Underpinning principles

- The assumption is that the standard lecture timetable will be used. Only lecturers teaching a particular section during this dry-run period will be involved at this point. Not all lecturers in every module will be part of the dry-run, however, the teaching materials for all aspects/sections of the module must be uploaded on Moodle.

- It is encouraged that this time is used to revise material covered previously and to introduce students to the online content for the course. Further, the time should be used to test the system and engage with students to ascertain their experiences and avenues for change.
- The DRY-RUN cannot be used to introduce material that is likely to be assessed in the formal course. Proper online teaching and learning will only commence when sanctioned by the university and most likely on 1 June 2020.
- Mock assessments will not count towards the final course assessment mark.
- Information on students who cannot access the material must be determined and necessary alternatives such as course packs of printed notes or pre-loaded USB drives should be made available. This will be coordinated from the Office of the Dean, Teaching and Learning through the ALTL in your school.
- We will assume only 4 weeks of the contact sessions have been completed and that online learning commencing 1 June 2020 will start at week 5 of the module plans. The DRY-RUN can be used to revise material covered in the previous 4 weeks before lock-down and introduce material that will start in week 5 of the academic programme per module but now moved online.