



Creating a great remote student experience – Tips from students

On 19 August 2021, the Centre for Learning & Teaching (CLT) in collaboration with the ANU Experience Accelerator presented ANU Lunch Vox #6 on the remote student experience. This is a list with practical tips from the remote student panellists for how teaching staff can help create a high-quality learning experience for remote students. You can find a wrap-up of the event or watch the recording on the [CLT Interact blog](#).

Fostering connection

- Encourage your remote students to join relevant Facebook groups and group chats for courses. Being able to exchange experiences with peers can help create a feeling that they are not alone in this.
- If your remote students are based in a city that has an ANU Study Hub, encourage them to access the service.
- Ensure your course has enough live lectures, workshops or tutorials so that students can connect with you and each other, at least two hours a week is a good starting point.
- Spend the first 5-10 minutes of your tutorial to interact with your students. Find out where they are, how they are etc. Encourage them to turn on their camera if they are comfortable to do so. Ask them whether they need anything.
- Encourage your students to attend social events, game nights etc, for example those organised by ANUSA. ANU Counselling also offers a [program of events](#) that are aimed at creating connection.
- Keep the chat function in Echo360 enabled so that your students can interact with each other.
- Encourage your on-campus students to interact with remote students so that remote students do not feel isolated. Remote students often struggle with work and assignments and can only seek help from other remote students (who are also clueless).

Online teaching

- Be consistent in your efforts to create accessible course content, e.g. offer online live lectures even if some students are able to participate in person.
- If dual delivery is not practical, offer online workshops specifically for remote students.
- Make workshops and live sessions about practicing/preparing for the assignments or link them otherwise to provide an incentive for students to engage and connect.
- Consider trying different lecture streaming platforms. For example, some students report that they have had a much better experience using Teams compared to Zoom because the chat function is more interactive.
- Assign tutors to breakout rooms to help facilitate group discussions, in particular if the students don't know each other very well.
- Incorporate group work in your courses, it's often the only chance for remote students to interact with their peers.
- Incorporate training or informative resources on online collaboration and using online tools in your course, don't expect your students to work out how to use a software/platform themselves.
- Consider using alternative formats to a print-only textbook, such as textbooks that are available in a digital, interactive format or share specific readings/PDFs via Wattle.
- Make your students aware of the [academic skills support](#) offered through Academic Skills.

(Lecture) Recordings

- If you recycle old recordings of lectures, check them first to make sure the content is up-to-date and that the recording meets the guidelines below.
- Ensure that lecture and other recordings are audible and complete. If a scheduled recording stops before the end of class or if there are any technical difficulties, re-record the lecture so that remote students don't miss out on anything.
- Repeat questions from the audience so that they are captured in the recording.
- Don't physically point at something in the room or on the screen.

Communication

- Consider prioritising emails from remote students over on-campus students who are able to interact with lecturers and tutors during classes and drop-in sessions. Creating a separate email or communication channel only for remote students might help triaging inquiries.
- Establish communication channels and platforms specifically for course related content, such as [Piazza](#).

Lab work

- Ensure that remote students have access to all relevant information they will need to write the report, for example by livestreaming the experiment or providing a recording of an informative session.
- Once remote students are able to come back on campus, consider offering a 2-3 week intensive before the start of semester to enable them to catch up on necessary lab skills.

Broader context

- Be mindful of the broader context your remote students might be studying in, for example when students reach out to ask for an extension to their assignment. A bit of compassion and simple signs that you care can go a long way. For example:
 - many of the University's remote students are based in countries where COVID-19 has had devastating impacts
 - many students have additional commitments that they need to juggle in addition to their study load
 - in China, hiring happens during specific times of the year and the usually intense hiring process puts additional stress on students who need to secure employment for after they have graduated.
- Find out what time zones your remote students live in and study from, and schedule tutorials etc for a time that's manageable across all relevant time zones, usually in the afternoon Australian time. This is particularly important when scheduling exams.

ANU

- Offer online clubs and societies.
- Organise fun activities that include both overseas remote students as well as on-campus students, such as movie nights.
- Provide certainty to remote students by being transparent about what is realistic in terms of returning to campus. Don't make false promises or feed false hopes.
- Make it easy for remote students to identify themselves as remote students early on, e.g. in ISIS. This can be used to for example to create greater awareness among academics and on-campus students and to fast-track special consideration requests.
- Offer training to teaching staff to increase cross-cultural competency with a focus on interacting with students with different cultural backgrounds.
- Offer easy-to-access training and resources for new students on how to use Wattle, timetabling etc as well as training on how to work together online.