UNIVERSITY OF CAMBRIDGE
School of the Biological Sciences

4th August 2020

SBS Guidance for teaching in 2020-2021

This document provides guidance on how to effectively deliver lectures and practicals in a safe and organised manner and in agreement with University policy. While consistency between courses is desirable, we acknowledge, and value, that different people may adopt different approaches. This will be a challenging year and each one of us will have to take responsibility for the delivery of their material in order to ensure a successful outcome.

General

•   Safety of staff and students is the top priority and should be at the forefront of all decisions.

•   Courses will be taught in line with teaching methods used in previous years. When necessary these will be modified in line with University guidance.

•   The School understands from course organisers that all learning outcomes will be met. Please review the aims and outcomes for your course to ensure this is the case.

•   Decisions will be made at the local level by the relevant departments and course management committees in the light of guidance from the School and University.

•   Plasticity, positivity and patience will be key throughout the year as the situation will be dynamic and unpredictable.

•   A mixture of remote teaching, online learning and face-to-face interaction, where possible, is encouraged. Be mindful that we could be in a situation where all teaching is remote.

•   Courses have flexibility to do what they feel is best.

•   We welcome innovation and creativity in the delivery of teaching.

•   Adjustments to the normal timetable are discouraged and unnecessary complexity and rigidity in our arrangements should be avoided. As one colleague put it: simplicity leads to efficiency and complexity leads to catastrophe.

•   Managing student expectations is important and should be considered in all communications. It is better for students and staff to promise less and end up delivering more than *vice versa*.

•   While there is University and School level support available, individuals need to take personal responsibility for their teaching. We highly encourage everyone to become familiar with the online tools available (Panopto, Moodle, Articulate, etc.).

•   Conversation and collegiality will be key attributes in this new environment.

•   Supervisions will continue to be organised by colleges. Within Departments, small group sessions could be employed to supplement digital learning; however these should be notably different from standard supervisions.

Material delivered

•   As normal, Examiners will approach lecturers and practical organisers to set exam questions. It is important to ensure that all examinable is accessible by all students. Given the complexity of delivering face-to-face teaching, it is advised that course organisers focus on fewer practical aspects.

•   All examinable material must to posted on Moodle irrespective of whether it is also delivered face-to-face. This is necessary make sure it is available to all students since some will be shielding (or uncomfortable attending in-person sessions).

Support

- Online tutorials produced by Dee Scadden are available on Moodle (https://www.vle.cam.ac.uk/course/view.php?id=182351 – self-enrolment).

  - **'How to use Moodle' guide:** *https://www.vle.cam.ac.uk/mod/scorm/view.php?id=12221511*

  - **'How to pimp your Moodle' guide:** *https://www.vle.cam.ac.uk/mod/scorm/view.php?id=12419601*

  - **'Using the Panopto desktop recorder'** *https://www.vle.cam.ac.uk/mod/scorm/view.php?id=12111491*

- Please review the Teaching Support Sessions which were run and recorded on 29th and 30th July for more information.

- Financial support from the University for hardware and software requests submitted by Departments is forthcoming.

- A wide range of University resources are available online.

Lectures

- All lecture material must be recorded and posted on Moodle.

- Panopto can be used to record on your personal computer. This is the most straightforward way to record your lectures. If you prefer, space will be made available in your Department for recording. In some cases lecture theatres outfitted with lecture capture could be utilised, but keep in mind these may be booked for in-person teaching.

- Live streaming lectures at the scheduled time is a possible option.

- We strongly recommend not editing your recordings (e.g. removal of ums and hmms). Unedited recordings have been shown to be more engaging and are strongly preferred by students. This will also save you considerable time and effort.

- In previous years, certain combinations of modules were not allowed due to timetable clashes. Due to lecture material being made available online, students may begin to request permission to take these combinations, however we will continue to deny this. In theory students could access all the lectures, however, the scheduling of exams and additional sessions still presents problems. It also precludes the possibility for live Q&A sessions during scheduled lecture slots being available for all course participants.

Practical teaching

- There are many resources available for moving practicals to digital platforms (e.g Articulate 360, H5P).

- Use of pre-existing data sets or images is encouraged for online practicals (e.g. Learning Science resources, LT software).

- Where it is possible, in-person practical sessions can be run, although they will have to be reduced in number, student density and length to enable safe sessions.

- The current University policy is that in-person education provision offers no greater risk to health than social interaction.

- Practicals will be organised at the local level and assessment of the capacity of a room must be done by the host department. Remember to include both students arriving and leaving spaces and time to clean between them. Course organisers need to work with host department in the planning of each practical. More information is available in the *Education Space Safety Guidelines* issued on 22-07-20 (attached to the email).

- The usual practical timetable will be retained and rescheduling of practicals is discouraged.

- Any examinable material presented in live sessions must also be recorded and posted for students who are unable to attend in-person.

- Students will be allocated a practical slot for each course. Part IA will be organised with the normal algorithm. Part IB will use an online signup prior to the start of term. There will be no Part IB gathering at the Senate House and final allocation will be done remotely.

- Due to the reduced capacity of practical spaces, we recommend that you attempt to run either shorter practicals or fewer practicals. Below are some possible options which could both be used and combined with remote delivery.

  - Option 1 - Reduce practical duration by half and run two sessions in the original designated practical time slot. Hence there are half as many students in each session. This would mean reducing practical content.

  - Option 2 - Run fewer practicals with reduced size practical classes. For example, 8 weeks of practicals would be reduced to 4. A typical one-week practical would be run for two weeks. Half the students would attend the first week and the other half would attend the second week. This option would require courses to choose those practicals that are judged critical.

- Absence of face-to-face practicals in Weeks 1 and 2 of Michaelmas Term is advised. This is in order to reduce strain in the allocation systems and give time for organising the spaces. It would also ensure that most/all students will have returned to residence. In these first two weeks, we recommend running a remote safety briefing session to explain the layout and organisation of the lab spaces, along with online practical materials where relevant.