

# Flipped Elbow Room

Simple Framework for Interactive T&L on Moodle during a Pandemic.

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The following document provides a minimal framework to supplement the online teaching and learning strategy as outlined in the templates provided by UKZN for the **dry run** and going forward. It is intended as a simple guide for staff who require a flipped-classroom strategy upon which to base their online teaching tactics within the Moodle LMS. The focus is on **lectures** and **assignments**, with some notes on assessment and learner feedback. The goal is to provide as much elbow-room for lecturers to work within.

## Introduction

A primary challenge in online teaching and learning is **visibility**, something we took for granted previously whilst teaching and assessing our students, and something that we have become dependent upon in even the most 'socially distanced' of T&L scenarios due to the pandemic – engaging at both a **different time** and **different place**.

The visibility challenge is a double-edged sword, as it is experienced by both teacher and learner. How can we connect? How can we interact? How can we observe each other? Visibility, in this sense, is not just visible – it is 'observability'

For example, from the teaching perspective, after lecturing for a number of years, one becomes dependant on the energy generated by your students in the classroom – the sheer presence of so many people coming together in the same room gives one the immense amounts of energy to teach them. Each learner, in turn, then feeds off the energy given to the group, and the cyclic relationship sustains everyone for the entire duration of the semester. Assessments provide higher waves of the same cycle... Online, one cannot see them, or sense them without an explicit protocol of sorts...

It is this togetherness that is missing in the online classroom, which is why virtual visibility is so important in a successful teaching strategy. When online, **visibility is togetherness**.

## Flipped Classroom

Apart from the nature of online classrooms, blended/flipped teaching and learning methods also focus on this kind of togetherness. The 'flipped-classroom' takes the stance that lectures/lessons should consist of as much connecting and interacting as possible – so much so, that there is almost no lecturing in the traditional sense at all. Students engage with the content upfront, and lectures are effectively open discussions (forums) based on the topic at hand. I.e. Students are given material, they prepare, and come to classroom with questions, or desire for deeper insight.

The flipped lecture then consists of the lecturer, who answers questions to aid students' understanding, thus 'lecturing' in small units as needed by the learners. The teacher also poses guiding

questions for the majority, higher-level questions to push the unchallenged. Individuals who struggle are then taken aside for one-to-one consultation, etc...

So, how can we flip the classroom online?

In short, to flip the classroom online we have to:

1. Deliver online content (Moodle)
2. Allow for student engagement (internet access, laptops, Moodle, etc.)
- 3. Provide means for discussion forums/meetings with students on the content**
- 4. Provide exercises/assessments**
5. Grade/moderate/feedback
6. Receive student feedback

## Moodle

Moodle can be a bit overwhelming, which is largely due to its' flexibility. UKZN does, however, have an excellent in-house development and maintenance team for Moodle, and have done a lot of solid work in providing a platform that can cater for the needs of each discipline at UKZN, and many teaching and learning models that may be applied across the university.

The rest of this document recommends a handful of simple Moodle features that provide a framework for the CS discipline, possibly SMSCS and the wider UKZN community, which will allow a lecturer to get started for the dry run with regards to steps 3 and 4 in the flipped classroom list above (some notes on assessment and feedback at the end of the document):

...

- 3. Provide means for discussion forums/meetings with students on the content**
- 4. Provide exercises/assessments**

...

By minimal, we mean use the most basic Moodle **activities**:

<b>Choice</b> – single question and get an answer – one click	<b>NOTE:</b> <i>These activities are part of the protocol, not the actual activities performed by students, like accessing notes/sides, prac assignments, quizzes, etc. These details are left up to the lecturer...</i>
<b>Forum</b> – discussion forum	
<b>Quiz</b> – questions of various types, some automatically graded	
<b>Feedback</b> – like Quiz, but for surveys	

*(It would be prudent to familiarise yourself with the above Moodle features before reading ahead.)*

Below is an outline of the protocol, which is followed by the details of how to do it in Moodle using the features listed above.

## The Protocol

The protocol has to be simple because it has to cater for differing online teaching techniques as well as the challenges faced in student orientation – it has to be easy to understand and follow.

The **protocol** is simple:

1. **Handshake** (or online elbow rub)
2. **Interaction** – Lesson/Exercise/Assessment/Survey
3. ...

i.e. The same protocol can be used for learning **content** (notes, slides, screencasts, podcasts, etc.), **exercises** (practicals, tutorials, assignments, etc.), **assessments**, and **feedback**.

### *The Handshake*

The purpose of the handshake is to establish contact. It is a replacement of the traditional announcement regarding a lesson, exercise, or assessment, which is just one-way – rather than issue an announcement, issue a two-way invitation, which requires RSVP. By RSVPing, students make a conscious choice of whether to attend the interaction or not, and the teacher acquires a sense of confidence too. It will give the teacher an idea of how many students are attending the activity, and gives some time to assist with issues regarding attendance. The handshake also provides a sense of togetherness through minimal effort (one or two clicks) – it establishes a line of sight between all who will participate, and also acknowledges those who won't.

**Note:** If a student cannot make a discussion (flipped lesson) on time, it will be recorded/saved online anyway, and they can catch up with the classmates there, as well as post their own queries (which can be seen as 'offline consultation online')... A student may choose not to join the group at the time, or may have some or other reason for not 'being there' at the same time.

### *The Interaction*

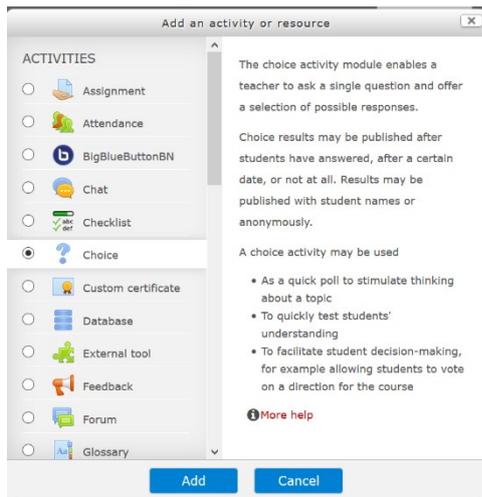
The interaction is then the actual teaching/learning event. It could be course content delivery (lecture), exercises (tutorials, pracs, quizzes, assignments, etc.), tests, or surveys. The details of the interaction are not part of the protocol, and are specific to each combination of discipline and module.

## The Moodle Implementation

Here's how to do it on Moodle. Firstly, check your moodle profile, and add a pic! 😊 (Seriously, do it...)

### *The Handshake – Choose to Participate*

The handshake can be done by use of the **Choice** activity. Here, the 'choice' is whether to attend the interaction in the invitation. It requires minimal data and effort on the student's part.

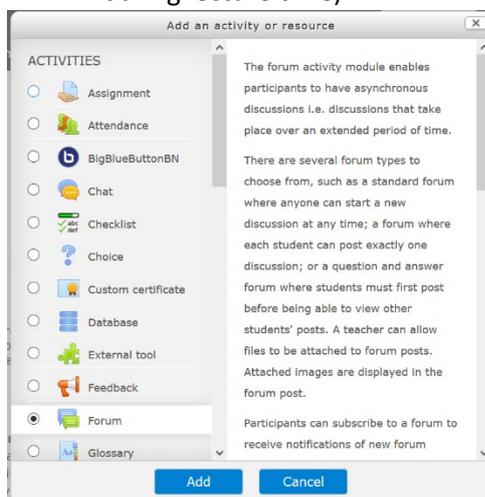


- Give the students a mandatory deadline to RSVP (e.g. 8am on the morning of the day of the event)
- Encourage those who have issues preventing them to attend, rather than choosing not to, to communicate with you before the event. Respond with them.
- Make results visible to students so that they can see who is attending or not

### Lesson

This is your flipped lesson. It is essentially an online group chat – a discussion forum on the topic of the lesson.

1. Publish content
2. Issue Invitation
3. Add a **General Discussion Forum** for the flipped lesson (lecturer must attend this forum during lecture time)



- Make sure students can post and reply – you can choose whether it should have a single topic or whether the topics can be posted (default)
- Tutors can scan this discussion to prepare for pracs and tutorials
- Make sure the timeframe is set for the timetable slot of the period, but allow for late posts/replies
- Make sure you are online during the timetable slot to reply to queries and discuss
- (Optional) Add a zoom meeting, or other groupware session if appropriate

## Practical/Tutorial/Assignment

Worksheets, programming pracs, etc. Here the tutors would be involved... either to attend discussion forum or to mark.

1. Publish content
2. Issue Invitation
3. Add a **General Discussion Forum** for the practical or tutorial (**tutors** must attend this forum during session time)
  - a. If an **assignment**, the forum can be regarded as offline, and the lecturer can respond to queries instead of tutors.
4. Add a Quiz in the case of a practical to assist with assessment. This must be performed at the end of the prac – i.e. once a student has submitted it.

## Quiz/Test

1. Publish quiz – question bank and quiz setup, or assignment submission if practical test
2. Issue Invitation
3. Conduct Event – make ‘visible’
4. Assess and moderate marks (see notes on gradebook in footnotes section)
5. Release marks to students (see footnotes section)

As you can see, there is some structure/framework within which we can interact with students this way.

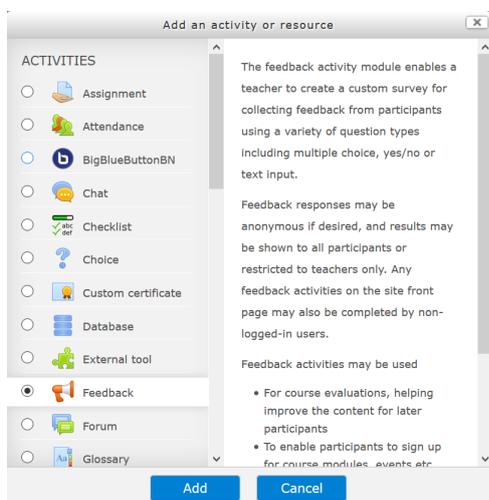
## Footnotes

Some notes for further consideration.

## Feedback

When taking surveys for feedback, the same protocol could be used:

1. Publish questionnaire
2. Issue Invitation
3. Conduct Event – make ‘visible’
4. Download results



## Assessment Preparation

A final note on Moodle grade books. We will have to figure the details out as we go along, but, for now, it is really important to avoid mass confusion by considering the following steps to hide all gradebook information from students:

1. Go to the gradebook setup section of your module
2. Hide all existing elements (activities you have added previously), including the course total. (Check this section **every time** you post an activity that will be graded for assessment. ) This way, we do not show the students anything until we are clear on what to show them during mock assessment week or the future thereafter.
3. When creating an **Assignment** or **Quiz** activity on Moodle, make sure the **grade type** property is set to '**None**' unless it will actually count for assessment. The default is '**Point**' (mark), which is good for activities that are going to be assessed. Furthermore, make sure it is hidden in the gradebook setup like in step 2

I hope this was useful. Please feel free to contact me regarding the content of this document.