

The Aga Khan University

Post-COVID Teaching and Learning Guidelines

Whilst teaching and learning was to put to test during Covid-19 pandemic due to the university-wide rapid transition to online and remote teaching and learning, the major challenge in the coming months is the opening of campuses in August/September and the start of on-campus teaching and learning. This calls for guidelines for the conduct of teaching and learning so as to make campus experience as safe as possible for both students and faculty. The foregoing notwithstanding, QTL_net is cognizant of the fact that entities have the responsibility and autonomy over teaching and learning matters and that programme heads are responsible for monitoring student experience. Hence, entities are encouraged to use the suggested guidelines at their discretion.

Based on international guidelines proposed by [Advanced HE](#), [University of Toronto](#), and [HEC Pakistan](#), below is a framework that addresses two components related to teaching and learning:

1.0. Administrative Guidelines (Plan to Manage Safety, Human and Material Resources)

1.1. Class Size

- a. Limit class sizes for in-person teaching to 30% or less of the total number of students¹.
- b. Create sub-groups of students by class where possible to reduce the level of contact among students and staff to only those within their cohort.
- c. The size of the group will depend on the physical space of the classroom or learning setting.

1.2. Class Schedules (Timetable)

- a. Encourage flexibility in the scheduling of classes.
- b. Limit the number of people physically present in a building at any given time.
- c. Consider using the split scheduling² strategy to create schedules for all cohorts by alternating days of the week or times of the day.
- d. Consider the rotation³ model to offer classes/courses to different classes on a rotation basis.
- e. Consider block teaching which may comprise alternate phases of in-person teaching with online teaching, clearly keeping in mind the course learning outcomes. Activities aiming to achieve low levels of outcomes (e.g. remember, understand) can be taught asynchronously, while those aimed at attaining higher level outcomes (apply, analyze, evaluate and create) can be conducted synchronously.

1.3. Classrooms Layout

- a. Reorganize rooms to allow for more physical distancing between furniture, students and the instructor.
- b. Use informational signage and directional markings to guide foot traffic flow through entrances and hallways by using barrier or markers on the floor.
- c. Install signage to promote and encourage hygiene practices (sneeze into elbow, avoid touching face, etc.).
- d. Limit capacity of rooms to a number that allows for physical distancing (i.e. fewer students in a smaller room and more students in a larger room).
- e. Space seating/desks at least 6 feet (2 meters) apart where feasible.
- f. For moveable furniture, arrange classroom setup in a way that students do not face each other (e.g. arranged in rows rather than in small groups of 4/5 or a semi-circle).

¹ The number of students will depend on the area of the classroom/lecture hall/laboratory/observation room in each entity at AKU

² This is a shift-study schedule where a student's day is split into two or more study and non-study periods

³ Students rotate between learning from a teacher in a physical classroom and learning online. This can be on a fixed schedule or at the discretion of a faculty member.

- g. For lecture halls, consider taping off seats and rows to ensure 6 feet distance between seats.
- h. For laboratories, distance the workstations and devices within the laboratory. Also, limit use of supplies and equipment by one group of students at a time and clean and disinfect between uses.
- i. Ensure ventilation systems operate properly in classrooms to increase circulation of outdoor air as much as possible.

2.0. Teaching and Learning Guidelines (Managing Teaching and Learning Activities for Engagement and Effective Interaction)

- 2.1. **Developing a plan for the new term/semester:** Entities can determine which courses and course components should be delivered remotely and which should be delivered in-person or in a blended (in-person, online, & combined) format. While developing course delivery plans, prioritize:
- a. Matters pertaining to quality of courses and instruction.
 - b. In-person instruction for courses with academic outcomes that cannot be measured or achieved virtually, such as laboratory or clinical/community-based experiences.
 - c. Courses for newly enrolled students based on the importance of the on-campus experience for student retention and progression.
- 2.2. **Course Design:** Maintain the course quality by ensuring the best possible learning experiences and outcomes for all undergraduate and graduate students. To achieve this:
- a. Prioritize the quality of the academic experience (including course management, student communications, and teaching) and appropriately resourcing course delivery.
 - b. Plan for a diverse set of courses and course activities aligned with academic requirements, including offering in-person and remote opportunities for labs, seminars, as well as practical work in the community.
 - c. Ensure a flexible course design as the situation might evolve during the term, considering the possibility that new outbreaks may lead to renewed guidelines for physical distancing measures.
- 2.3. **Modes of Course Delivery:** Develop a plan to creatively deliver quality learning experience via in-person⁴, online⁵ or a combination of both.
- a. Guidelines for In-Person Delivery: Course instructions are delivered in-person (face-to-face) to the students at campus. For In-person teaching mode, consider the following guidelines:
 - i. Ensure the value of the in-person experience to give students a sense of normalcy so that the quality of their experiences do not decline.
 - ii. Consider utilizing in-person opportunities for activities other than didactic teaching, in particular, when peer-to-peer communication is important, or students are interacting with unique facilities/equipment.
 - iii. As much as possible engagement activities during in-person classes should follow AKU protocols for safe distancing if requiring students to work in collaborative or pair or group tasks. Preference should be given to online collaborative tasks as an option if the course learning outcomes and scope of the activity allows.
 - b. Guidelines for Online or Remote Delivery: Course instructions are delivered completely online via synchronous or asynchronous methods. For online/ remote teaching mode, consider the following guidelines:

⁴ Face-to-face - Course instructions are delivered in-person to the students at the campus

⁵ Online course instructions are delivered completely online via synchronous and asynchronous methods

- i. Ensure accessibility of online resources to all the students when planning online classes.
 - ii. Share clear guidelines for operating online classes, in terms of time for each class, duration per week and total number of hours required for online component.
 - iii. Share clear expectations for online classes such as assessment, learning outcomes, possible engagement tasks deemed necessary as pre-tasks or during the class or post-online class tasks.
- c. *Guidelines for Blended Learning Delivery*: Course instructions are delivered using a combined approach of in-person and online learning. Each session or learning activity is offered in-person, synchronously online, and asynchronously online. Consider the following guidelines:
- i. Ensure that online or remote learning is accessible to all AKU students.
 - ii. Clearly identify the components of the lesson or course that will be covered online or in-person or remotely to ensure fairness and presence of students.
 - iii. Ensure that faculty members are trained and supported to engage in teaching using in-person, synchronous and asynchronous modes.
 - iv. Provide meaningful alternative participation modes and enable students to choose between participation modes daily, weekly, or topically.
 - v. Communicate clear expectations to the students for in-person, online and remote participation.
 - vi. Record classroom or webinar activities for later access by those students with limited bandwidth or who cannot attend class because of health or quarantine or are in very remote areas.
 - vii. Facilitate active participation⁶ by all (e.g., by having a co-facilitator or rotating student moderators for remote students' participation).
 - viii. Shorten the periods of in-person instruction with longer periods for blended online and independent learning.

2.4. Teaching and Learning Strategies Guidelines

- a. Be guided by AKU graduate attributes, programme and course learning outcomes whilst ensuring accountability and individuality: one size does not fit all.
- b. Add a statement to the course syllabus that explicitly outlines AKU guidelines for maintaining safety in face-to-face classes or around the campus and penalties for failure to do so.
- c. Maintain (where possible) student engagement by designing with rather than for students
- d. Be mindful that learning is a social process; therefore, pro-actively plan for interactive activities that could take place in-person or remotely to ensure equitable experience (e.g., multi-part case studies, peer feedback activities, individual or group applied projects, student-led discussion groups etc.).
- e. Use the flipped classroom approach to engage students with the content through asynchronous learning resources (i.e., video clips, readings) and use the 'in-class' time for discussions, feedback, and assignments.
- f. Identify resources for students with learning disabilities, difficulties with remote learning platforms or are in quarantine or admitted in hospital.

⁶ An example of active participation could be:

Teacher: No matter where you are in time and space, I want you to think about [topic X] or answer the following [question Y]. Write down your ideas for one minute only.

- If you're in the room, turn to a (distant) neighbor and share what you wrote.
- If you're on the videoconference, I'll put you in breakout groups of 2 or 3.
- If you're watching the recording, press pause and participate in the Think-Pair-Share discussion forum. Then come back and press play. I'll summarize the ideas of the people who are live.

- g. Develop specialized plans for courses and instruction that do not permit physical distancing and/or involve activities of higher risk (e.g. clinical, practical, field work, media and communication).
- h. Re-allocate and target resources to enable inclusion for all students, especially those who are most in need
- i. Ensure that all AKU students, whether they are attending in-person or remotely due to COVID related health or travel restrictions, are provided equitable access to courses, high quality learning experiences, and students' advisory support.
- j. Refer to Table 1 for group and lab/practical work.

Table 1: *Guidelines for Group and Lab/Practical Work*

Group Work	Labs/Practical Work
Set clear learning outcomes and guidance for any group activity so that students know what to do. Provide written as well as verbal instructions.	Where deemed necessary by course requirement, engage students in clinical labs by dividing them into small groups or teams in different time slots for assigned time duration. Alternative options for clinical lab exposure can be facilitated through simulation or tutorials or online video conferencing, where possible.
Ensure students maintain safe distance from each other during group activities in-person sessions as recommended by AKU.	Coordinate operational plans with other labs on the same floor to coordinate use of common areas and density.
Students gathering in lecture halls or closed spaces should not exceed more than the required limit (i.e.) maintaining 3 feet distance among each other.	Time should be left between shifts of lab personnel to provide for disinfection procedures and reduce density

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