Guidelines for Online Learning

Please read through these guidelines to help you get ready for your upcoming online learning journey.

These guidelines will assist in answering the following questions:

1. How can I best prepare myself and my surrounding for online learning?
2. Are there ways to ensure I keep on track – even if I will not have reliable Internet access at some point?
3. Do I have access to course material and notes?
4. How will I know what to do, and by when?
5. How do I ask for help?

1. How can I best prepare myself and my surrounding for online learning?

1.1 Be kind to your body

Unlike a seminar or lecture scenario, online learning will not allow you to look and move around freely – your focus will be drawn to a single, stationary point (often your laptop), which will have a notable physical implication on your body.

TIPS:

- **Stay mindful of your posture:** To avoid stiff necks and aching shoulders, learn to do regular check-ins with your body: Is your chin always tiled down toward your device, your shoulders slightly hunched, or your legs crossed? Try to adjust your chair or device so that you are looking straight when facing a screen, your shoulders are relaxed and both feet comfortable planted on the floor.

- **Move around:** For good blood circulation and focus, try to take a break every 20-25 minutes. (You can even set a timer, which will ensure you are more productive during that block of learning time, as well). During your break, move around or stretch, hydrate, breathe deeply.

- **Rest your eyes**: Every few minutes focus on another object, farther beyond your screen. Looking around close proximity and lighting of technological devices can put strain on the eyes).

1.2 Engage the support of family members to help you succeed.

- **Consider your study space (especially if it will be your home):** If you will be studying online in a space shared with others (e.g. at home), especially after working hours, let those you are sharing the space with know. If your family, friends, housemates know you are taking an online course , they will understand that you

may have to carve our time for study in times of the day they might normally assume you're available for other activities

- **Consider your colleagues:** If you are studying during working hours (and this does not infringe on a company policy, of course), let your closest colleagues, collaborators and line manager know. You can even commit to sharing a short report with them on what you have learned, and how it can be applied to their professional context. You can also consult the document for 'Tips for Online Communication (Netiquette).'

2. Are there ways to ensure I keep on track – even if I will not have reliable Internet access at some point?

2.1 Prepare for learning in areas without Internet/Wi-Fi

Use your time wisely when you *do* have a reliable Internet connection and download/copy and save reading material, exercise/forum instructions and video transcripts to work through when you're offline. You can even download the audio podcasts of the videos as mp3 files on your mobile device, so that you can listen to these as you commute, while you exercise or do chores.

2.2 Plan for dedicated 'study block sessions'

Distraction and other responsibilities can easily get in the way of online learning, since you will be given the flexibility of learning at your own pace. See document on 'planning for online learning,' to learn more about this. To structure your learning time, you could start by doing the following:

1. **Diarise time for learning:**
   In order to keep up your learning momentum throughout the eight weeks, decide before the start of the course at which times in each week you plan to dedicate to online learning. Make a provisional note in your calendar or diary for each of these time slots.

2. **Note important course dates:**
   As soon as you receive the webinar dates via email, add these in your diary or calendar. You will have to ensure that you are in setting with reliable Internet connectivity for the webinar, and that you will not be interrupted. Also schedule sufficient time to prepare your capstone assignment, before the deadline (this will be communicated accordingly).

3. **Try to really minimise distractions:**
   Although it may be tempting to check your email or phone, you will gain most value from the course if you commit to brief but focused 'sprints' of engagement: To do this, you could consider the Pomodoro technique, i.e. setting a timer for 25 minutes and focusing completely on the coursework. When the bell goes off, take a short 5-minute break, and return to your desk for another 25 minutes. If you do this a few times, you'll have completed a considerable amount of work in a 'study block session'

3. Do I have access to course material and notes?

As we are moving online for all learning, you will still have access to the mandatory course materials and notes, which will be updated and uploaded by your relevant lecturers. You will need to ensure that you are able to access and download everything. Should anything be missing please contact your lecturer or appointed tutor for the relevant course.

4. How will I know what to do, and by when?

You will need to navigate to your specific course work page, where you should be able to read information (provided by your lecturer) about various assignments and their due dates. If you can't find this information, you should contact your lecturer or appointed tutor to confirm these details.

5. How do I ask for help?

Online learning can seem daunting, please don't hesitate to ask for help. You can also consult the document for ['Support for Online Learning'.](#)

- For administrative queries, please contact your relevant course coordinator/lecturer/tutor.
- For technical support, please email [learn@sun.ac.za.](mailto:learn@sun.ac.za)
- If you have concerns about your health or Covid-19, please visit this website, http://www.sun.ac.za/english/CampusHealth/covid-19.