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## PREPARING STUDENTS TO FOLLOW AN ONLINE COURSE

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Solvay Brussels School  
Economics & Management



# INTRODUCTION

This document provides professors with a checklist to follow before an online course starts, and make sure that the students are aware of:

- o the equipment they need in order to attend the course
- o the prerequisites in terms of knowledge and skills
- o any changes in the content and development of the course after it was transferred online

This information applies to all types of online teaching: synchronous, asynchronous or hybrid

## 1. Recommendations from the IDEA Quality Assurance Framework

Course design and preparation:

- Students are informed of which equipment (in particular computer/mobile device) should be used to follow and participate to the course
- The syllabus clearly describes the prerequisites (material, software and digital skills and competences)
- The syllabus provides information on the organisation of the course, the expected participation and contribution, and the organisation of the assessment(s)

## 2. Examples and recommendations

### 2.a. Students are informed of which equipment should be used to follow and participate to the course

To ensure that the students are aware of the equipment that is needed in order to attend the class, here's a checklist to follow before the course starts.

- Specify the compatible types of equipment that can be used in order to attend the class (computer or mobile device, camera, microphone, etc.)
- Make sure that all students have obtained the required equipment
  - If they were not able to, inform them of the help that is provided to them in order to obtain it
- Ensure that the students know how to use the (synchronous and/or asynchronous) tools selected by the university before the beginning of the first class by:
  - providing them with access to guidelines for the use of the platform
  - focusing on instructions related to the basic features of the tool (using a videoconference tool or the chatroom, hitting the “raise Hand” button, sharing documents, etc.)
  - inviting the students to log in a few minutes before the beginning of the first class, so that some time may be dedicated to troubleshooting (for example, for video conference tools such as cameras and microphones, etc.)

### 2.b. The syllabus clearly describes the prerequisites

If delivering a course online has caused changes regarding the knowledge and skills required to comprehend/succeed in the course, then the students must be informed. An educator can make sure of that by:

- listing and communicating the previous course(s) in which the students have to have completed/enrolled
- preparing a guide that includes the required references to read before the beginning of the course
- if possible, preparing an online placement test before the first class

### 2.c. The syllabus provides information on the organisation of the course, the expected participation and contribution, and the organisation of the assessment

If delivering a course online has caused changes in the structure/scenario of the course, then the students must be informed. Here's a checklist to follow and make sure that the necessary information is communicated to the students.

- Specify whether the course is synchronous or asynchronous
  - Explain the degree of autonomy that the students have in terms of organisation and access to the course (fixed schedule or fully autonomous work)
    - If students can work in full autonomy, provide them with an indicative schedule to help them organise their workload

- Specify whether the course is a lecture or a tutorial
  - If the course is a lecture, provide the students with the course outline in advance so they can familiarise themselves with the flow and content
  - If the course is a tutorial and more interactive, provide the students with a clear idea of what it is expected from in terms of contribution
- Make sure that the students know the work that has to be done before and after the course (homework, readings, online activities, etc.)
- Provide the students with the necessary information about their future assignments so that they can start organising their workload

### 3. Additional tips for the preparation of students at drop-out risk

For additional support to students who have previously faced problems or are likely to drop out, an educator can focus on communication with them during the preparation phase. An educator can:

- indicate to the students how they can contact him/her (forum, email, etc.)
- develop specific resources (automatic quizzes, revision activities, with automatic grading) to brush up their skills and allow them to work more independently and self-assess their progress
- post corrections and sessions recordings online once the class is over (if possible)



