

TECHNICAL AND MOTIVATIONAL SUPPORT SHEET

This document, developed by all PANEL project partners, is meant as a practical guide to solve the most common challenges in e-Learning and blended learning activities



UNIVERSIDAD DE MÁLAGA



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How to solve connection problems

- Reboot the modem, check for updates, use problem solving tools.
- Switch off your device and wifi connection, wait 60 seconds and switch it back on.

WIFI

- Connect an Ethernet cable.
- Relocate the router or move closer to it.
- Look for an elevated spot in your home, make sure that there are no metal or concrete barriers between the router and your device.

ETHERNET

- Check that your cables aren't damaged or loose.
- Try using a different device, if that works, the problem is not the connection but the previous device.

How to solve platform and resources problems

- Organize a brief informational meeting on how to use the platform with resources and video lectures.
- Have technical support staff on hand to help solve technical issues.
- Check for typos in the credentials and be sure to type them in correctly before saving username and password.
- Try different browsers (Chrome, Firefox, Safari etc.).
- Empty caches and/or use an external hard drive to increase storage space.

FINDING RESOURCES

- Explain where to find the download folder on PC (and/or the main possible folders in which to find downloaded files).
- Explain that files can be found in organizer apps named differently such as file manager, files, my files, etc, on tablets/smartphones.

How to solve audio and video problems

- Use headphones and connect from a private room when possible to avoid noisy background.
- Make sure speaker cable is connected to speaker's input.
- Check that the microphone is on and allow access to microphone both on PC settings and browser if necessary.
- Access computer settings, click on security and privacy, then click on microphone to allow the use of the microphone.
- Use blurred background or a picture if it's awkward to turn on the camera.
- Be sure to inform the teachers or the students if forced to shut the camera off because of connectivity problems.

How to solve software and app problems

- Appoint technology coaches or mentors to provide personalized advice and support in integrating new tools and software into teaching practices.
- Use equivalent open source software (Open Office for instance), if it's not possible to access desktop software (Word, Excel, etc.).
- Explain how to download from the app store and/or where to find the downloaded apps.

How to avoid the isolation feeling

- Recognise and understand that some students may feel isolated or stressed in the online learning environment.
- Offer emotional support and refer to wellness resources if needed.
- Offer a student support system in the institution through direct contact with advisors and/or academic staff.
- Exploit networking opportunities like chats and forums, team projects and group discussions.
- Use multiple communication channels: e-mails, discussion forums or chat.
- Recognise that some students may have legitimate reasons for not turning on their cameras, such as privacy issues or technical limitations.
- Communicate that seeing peers and the teacher creates a more interactive and human environment.
- Give positive and encouraging feedback when students turn on their cameras.

How to foster participation

- Implement a decalogue for respecting proper interaction in online lessons.
- Acknowledge and value student contributions to encourage participation.
- Provide students with the tools to make them feel part of the group.
- Start with icebreakers, also to identify and help those who may feel shy.
- Agree on classroom rules that include the use of cameras.
- Design activities that require students to work together in small groups.
- Have someone assigned in each group to be the monitor of a lesson, to help latecomers to the online class in group activities (for example breakout rooms). This person would be the one to explain what the task is and what each student's role was, so the teacher doesn't have to intervene multiple times interrupting the activities.
- Be sure to involve both those attending face-to-face and those connecting from home, to avoid the feeling of having a class divided in two groups.

How to avoid the tackling disengagement

- Set realistic and achievable goals/activities/deadlines for completing tasks.
- Use breakout sessions to distribute students into smaller groups, thus facilitating more interaction.
- Encourage course attendants to find a study group/partner to stay motivated together when offline.
- Break down the course material into small, manageable chunks.
- Implement end-of-session or end-of-activity polls to check understanding and reflect upon what has been learnt and what comes next.
- Give rewards and recognition through verbal encouragement, cheerful messages when correcting their homework or recorded messages emphasizing students' positive progress.
- Use group discussions, peer to peer conversations, quizzes, interactive games, pictures, platforms etc.
- Alternate the type of activities during a lesson and change often enough to avoid disconnection.
- Define a work schedule and respect break times, avoid excessively lengthy lessons.
- Spend time on off-screen activities.

How to manage time and avoid distractions

- Recommend that learners connect from a workspace that doesn't provide too many distractions (noisy roommates, family, etc.).
- Encourage planning an online meeting now and then among students to discuss difficulties of studying in isolation, which has proved to be hard, and learning from peers can only bring benefits.
- Set boundaries for family and/or roommates to be quiet during online lessons.
- Put social media notifications on mute.
- Encourage students to turn on their camera to feel more involved and avoid being distracted (for example, from social media, Netflix, mobile phone, etc.).

