Online distance learning case study: PGCert Antiquities Trafficking & Art Crime

Course code	SOCIO5085, 5086, 5087
Title of course	Antiquities Trafficking & Art Crime
Course lead contact	Dr Donna Yates (donna.yates@glasgow.ac.uk)
No of credits	60
Level of course (UG/PG) & year	PGCert (12 months part-time)
No. of students	30
Platforms used	• Moodle • Prezi • Slack Chat

Multimedia content	Learning activities
• Video – short clips e.g. YouTube • Video – Camtasia screen recordings or mini-lectures	• Forums • Peer-review • Readings • Case Study Presentations • "Digital Artefacts"

| Describe your online learning approach | This was an online distance PGCert programme, which comprised 3 courses at a Master's level that amounted to approximately a third of a Master's degree.

The programme was designed with the goal of creating the same experience as when taking an in-person course. Hence, the courses were developed by transforming a previously existing classroom instruction to online lecture material with almost one-to-one correspondence, with the only difference being that the lectures were divided into smaller self-contained snippets of 15-20 minutes.

The rest of the activities were designed to simulate classroom discussion. This included an hour long seminar twice a week, which involved real-time participation in a chatroom using the Slack platform (https://slack.com/, |

	attendance optional); creating a presentation using the Prezi platform (https://prezi.com/) and peer-marking it; the creation of shareable "digital artefacts"; as well as a group assignment, where the group discussion was again facilitated by the Slack platform.
	Alongside an academic discussion forum, students were also able to raise queries pertaining to administrative or technological issues through a designated tech forum on Moodle.
Why was this online approach taken? i.e. what issue was it trying to solve?	The development of this programme was preceded by an ERC-funded project into Antiquities Trafficking which attracted considerable publicity and interest in terms of in-person students. However, it was also met with inquiries from people who wanted an opportunity to learn, but faced various barriers with regards to traditional classroom participation. For example, many were working professionals in similar fields who could have benefited from the information, but were not going to abandon their careers for a year-long full-time programme.
What advice would you give to other teachers taking this approach for the first time?	Do not be intimidated by the online paradigm, and treat it as not very different from traditional teaching. With correct tools to facilitate real-time classroom discussion, it is possible to bridge the isolation of the online learning.
	When developing a course as a team (or when there are many contributors to the course), sort out the issue of agency/leadership at the beginning, in order to create a solid overall vision for the course.
	Especially with postgraduate courses (where there is more focus on critical analysis), think about the issue of enrolment limits, so that you can get to know your students well and tailor the content and approach to their needs/interest level.
What student support needs should be taken into account? i.e. how did you support their transition into this way of learning?	It should be always borne in mind that these are distance learners, and issues such as access to library material and making sure that the technology works are paramount. I have always tried to solve any issues that were flagged up on the tech forum as quickly as possible. This also feeds into a certain level of flexibility - I was softer with people who missed deadlines by a few hours and had a valid excuse.
	In general, I tried to be as present /reachable as possible - I offered a lot of office hours where we could speak one-to-one; these were either via Skype, or – for local students – in person. I also moderated and encouraged discussion in the chatroom.
What are the lessons for the institution and the sector from this work?	Drawing on the experience of this cohort of students, there is a strong sense that we can offer incremental approach to achieving degrees. In particular, it seems that we can offer students a low-commitment postgraduate distance course, which some of them will choose to top up to full degrees later on (if we offered such degrees). From institutional point of view, this would be a way to attract students who want or need an alternative path. Moreover, this notion is partially evidenced by the fact that many students on the PGCert actually learned about the programme by participating in my FutureLearn MOOC in Art Crime and Antiquities Trafficking.
	With regards to areas for improvement, it would be worthwhile to think about ways of improving library access to distance learners, especially in cases where an online copy of the book is not available.