

Online Learning Experience Summary

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Overview (standards, learner outcomes, learner characteristics)

The Unit of Inquiry designed was originally to be fully online (although debating making it blended when deploying for real) for a Year 3 (8th Grade) Individuals and Societies Middle Years Programme (MYP) Geography Class. The Unit of Inquiry central idea (or “Statement of Inquiry” based on a “Key Concept”) is “The system of human movement is a process that involves causes with consequences that change people and cultures”. This is focused on the Key Concept of students learning about Systems and how these influence the related ideas of change in people and cultures because of forced migration. This Unit of Inquiry is four weeks in duration with several formative assessments and two summative assessments. Students will complete activities that will achieve published MYP final level descriptors in all four-assessment criteria (standards) for MYP Individuals and Societies Year 3:

A: Knowing and Understanding

B: Investigating

C: Communicating

D: Thinking Critically

Each of the level descriptors are assessed on levels from 0-8. See Figure 1 below

Figure 1. Sample rubric for Level 3 MYP

Criterion A: Knowing and Understanding

Achievement level	Level descriptor
0	The student does not reach a standard described by any of the descriptors below

1-2	<p>The student:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">i. Makes limited use of terminology concerning population policyii. Demonstrates basic knowledge and understanding of population policy from resources and how this changes a country through limited description of example
3-4	<p>The student:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">i. Uses some population policy terminology accuratelyii. Demonstrates satisfactory knowledge and understanding of population policies from resources and how this changes assigned country through simple descriptions and explanations
5-6	<p>The students:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">i. Use considerable and relevant population policy terminology accuratelyii. Demonstrate substantial knowledge and understanding of population policies from resources and how this changes a country through descriptions, and explanations
7-8	<p>The students:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">i. Consistently use a range of population policy terminology accuratelyii. Demonstrate detailed knowledge and understanding of population policies from resources and how this changes a country and through developed and accurate descriptions and explanations

MYP Students by this age are attuned to being independent and self-motivated learners but the inclusion of an Online Readiness Self Assessment (UNC Chapel Hill) reflection at the beginning of the course helps to give them a context for what are their strengths in this environment and some of the weaknesses that they now have the opportunity to work on.

Context

Originally, I hoped to use this as a fully online course. However, as development continued and as I would see the students every other day, the advantage was held that it might be a better-blended environment over the Unit of Inquiry period of four weeks. As this Unit of Inquiry is usually taught in Geography, it will be dependent on the assigned Year 3 faculty as to when this will be taught – generally Geography is taught in the first trimester (August – November). Students all have their own MacBook Pro in 8th Grade as part of the school 1:1 laptop programme. Student class sizes range from fourteen to twenty-one with generally more girls than boys.

Assessment practices

Student assessment using the published International Baccalaureate (IB) MYP Guides in Individuals and Societies as an International Baccalaureate World School is required. While these guides are age appropriate and leveled and can be placed into task specific rubrics, certain developmental structures cannot be altered to be task specific. This does translate online somewhat but as I continued to develop, the blended course to reinforce some of the approaches to learning skills that the students implicitly do in class would better support the learning outcomes. The strategies in the weekly formative assessments building to the summative

assessments would also receive better feedback in a blended environment, as some of our students do better in a face-to-face setting because of second language issues. Student reflection in the blogging and discussion forums also enrich their approaches to learning skills in terms of looking carefully at the level descriptors and understanding their achievement levels therein.

Accommodations

A Learning Support Teacher (LST) only supports special Needs students in AIS. In this context, therefore, there is no modification of rubrics and students do not carry IEP's. There are accommodations like extra time on tests and on some assignments, but the LST has one- hour period on the schedule of resource students, therefore their needs in real time can be accommodated in a blended setting for the students with special educational needs. Thus in the course design, there was need to include the contact details for the LST's, audio and visual enlargement for students with those accommodations and opportunities for students to schedule additional one-to-one time with me to help assist in reaching their task objectives without modifying the rubric.

Accessibility

While the course has many ways that meet these requirements (audio for pages, closed captioning on videos used in the course, ability to enlarge print, download major documents and make larger for the visually impaired), the nature of the LMS in Google Classroom is still very much in a beta format and it is unclear that the holistic value of Universal Design will be met for this part of the course at the moment.

Differentiation

This course is differentiated in terms of the student work formatively and the feedback received through monitoring of peer feedback in Google Groups and Hangouts; individual feedback on work with student and one to one tutoring through a Hangout or online Google Document commenting. If translation is necessary, the teachers in AIS do have access to an ESOL department liaison for support but generally these students are not in mainstream Geography classes. Students are given the opportunity to have some say in their learning outcomes by getting to choose some of their ways to show their learning (presentations, screencasts etc.) and engage in their own interests when assessing what makes a good TED Talk.

References

Online Learning Readiness Questionnaire. (n.d.). Retrieved from <http://www.unc.edu/tlim/ser/>