



A Recipe for Accountability during ODL

by Noor Azli Affendy Lee

With the shift to Open Distance Learning (ODL), lecturers are held accountable for the online teaching methods. By now, it has slowly become a norm for lecturers to produce daily or weekly ODL reports in order to self-monitor our own teaching and learning methods and as an evidence of our daily teaching responsibilities. At the same time, we are also challenged with different kinds of students with a variety of online learning difficulties, namely data and Internet connectivity which may cause issues for them to attend synchronous online lectures and learning activities. By hook or by crook, lecturers need to learn, be versatile, stay open to new innovations and explore the plethora of online tools and platforms to ensure all students are fairly assessed and given the opportunity to learn during this new era of tertiary education. With three semesters of ODL now under our belts, I would like to share some basic ODL strategies that fellow lecturers can adopt or adapt in order to ensure we are accountable for our ODL practices.

Ingredients:	Optional:
Google Forms	Google Docs
Google Drive	
WhatsApp	
Group	
Google Meet	

Students' Attendance

1. Access your students' full names and their student i.d. numbers from the available UiTM system (SIMS or UFuture) after they have registered the course. You may download the student list in the Excel form to ease transfer of details.
2. Using Google Forms, create the attendance list for the specific class with a specific title, for example, ELC151 PHM1152A1/A2 Week 1.1 (30/03/2021) – course code, class group, semester week (if you have 2 or more classes from the same group per week, you can use 1.1, 1.2, and so on), and date.
3. At the bottom of the title, for description, you can include specific day and time of the class. The description does not change throughout the semester, so you need not edit any further.
4. Add a question. Type 'Student' in the question box, then select Multiple Choice for the answer option.
5. For each answer option, copy your student's full name and student i.d. from the attendance list. This is where the Excel list will make it easier for you to transfer those details into the

answer option (Refer figure 1). So, when your students fill in their attendance, they only need to choose their own names in the Google form. It is a hassle at first but this method helps in the long run. At a later time, when you want to check the absentee, go to Responses, then select Question. As the first question is your student list, you can compare the response list with the Preview list, which has the same order, to identify the absentee. You do not have to worry about students misspelling their names or jumbling up the order (you will experience this when you make subjective answer options when selecting a short answer or paragraph). This will save you a lot of time tracking your own students.

Figure 1

6. In the same form, you can also add other questions such as the course learning outcomes (all outcomes will have checkbox options for students to select so they can tick more than 1), what they have learned in class, feedback or enquiries (answer options can be in short answer or paragraph form), which activity or exercise they have completed, their own learning satisfaction (multiple choice or linear scale), problems faced or reasons for their opinions or rating and so on. You can also add in survey reminders such as how prepared they are for an incoming assessment, whether they have submitted an assessment or filled in the surveys for the course (for instance SUFO and Entrance-Exit Survey). These questions can help both parties to evaluate each class and also serve as evidence for your ODL attendance report and accountability as a lecturer.
7. At the end of the form, you can add a description of the Peraturan Akademik Universiti Teknologi MARA 2009 regarding a student's class attendance that is found at the bottom of the normal student class list from SIMS. This will serve as a reminder for students before they click the submit button.
8. Once you are done with the form, you can duplicate it using the "make a copy" option and rename the new copy according to the week and date of your future classes. I personally prepare attendance forms before the start of a new class week.

continued on the next page ...



... continued from the previous page

Student e-Portfolio

1. One minor aspect that you will encounter when filling in the CDL-CQI report at the end of the semester is the student portfolio. I personally think the student portfolio is important for a few reasons:

- a) Students can self-assess their own learning based on their own compilation of activities or exercises they have done.
- b) Students can also train themselves to keep their academic achievements for future use.
- c) Lecturers can check which student does the tasks, identify weaker, problematic (read: lazy) or non-participative students, and develop their next teaching and learning materials accordingly.
- d) Lecturers can have evidence on the efforts made by students meaning e-portfolio can serve as evidence to be presented to the HEA for failure reports.
- e) Lecturers can easily access students' activity evidence each week for our ODL report.

2. To create the e-portfolio for the class, firstly, use Google Drive and create a specific folder for that group.

3. Next, in the folder, using the same student list from the Google Forms you have created earlier (full name and i.d.), create one folder for each student in that class list.

4. After you are done, click on the name of the class folder and from the dropdown menu, select share. To make it less of a hassle, change the get link option to Anyone with the link – Editor. Finally, copy the link and paste it in the class WhatsApp group.

5. From there on, you can instruct your students to place their completed exercises or activity tasks in their respective folders. It is good to consistently remind them to do so. To be more organised, students can create weekly folders to separate the screenshot photo, PDF file or Word doc exercises they have done on a weekly basis (which will also make it easier for your ODL report exercise evidence compilation).

6. The rounded i button at the top right of a folder allows you to view details and activity. Under the activity tab, you can check the date and time of edits – who uploaded which file on what time of the day. This can be the evidence when students are given a due date for online submissions and they have to

submit their work in a Google Drive folder (good to identify late submissions) (Refer figure 2).

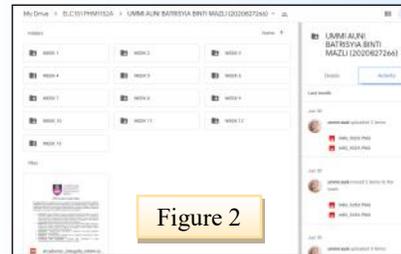


Figure 2

WhatsApp group

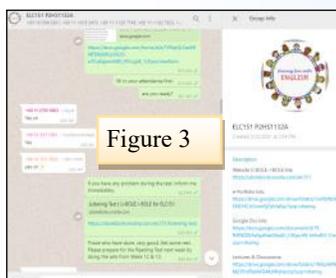


Figure 3

1. When you create a WhatsApp group for your class, I suggest editing the Group info description section to provide the links to important folders such as the link to the student e-Portfolio, the website or platform link that you are using for teaching and/or exercises, the Google Docs link that you use for writing classes, and the link for class recordings.

This is to ensure easier access for both students and you (Refer figure 3).

2. Make sure every announcement is done via the WhatsApp group so all students are aware. This includes students with low Internet connectivity who were unable to attend the online lectures. By doing this, you have solid evidence on any decision made for the teaching and learning of the class.

3. You can check who received and read your messages by clicking the dropdown arrow on the top right corner of that message and select the message info (I am making reference to my iPhone so there may be different options for androids). The read by list with double blue ticks means the student had received and read your message. Delivered to list with double grey ticks means the student had received but may or may not have opened the message (depending on that student's own WhatsApp setting). If your message has a single grey tick, that means one or more members in the group have not connected to WhatsApp due to being offline. Under each person in the list, there will be a date and time of the message received or read. So, you will know who received the message late and can show a screenshot of the list as evidence against

continued on the next page ...



... continued from the previous page

the excuses made by your students.

Class lectures and other recorded activities

1. Another use of the Google Drive is to upload your recorded lectures or other activities for students to refer or watch at a later time. This is helpful for students who have Internet connectivity problems as it gives them an option to follow the lectures on their own time.

2. In the Google Drive, create a folder and name it accordingly. I use Google Meet to record my lectures and speaking practices. Soon after you have stopped the recording, you will receive an email with the link of the recorded video. Rename it according to the class similar to your Google Form attendance so it is easier for students to identify which session of the week the video is. I regularly download the video into a personal folder on my desktop and then upload it into the specific drive folder that I made available for students to access within a day after the recorded activity.

3. By doing this, you are giving an option for your students to follow your class lectures or their fellow peers' speaking activities and this serves as another solid evidence of your ODL practice. Students cannot complain that they missed a class or forgot a lesson as all lessons and examples such as group discussion practices are transparently made available for viewing.

4. Finally, do not forget to post the folder(s) link in the description section of your class WhatsApp group for easier access by everyone.

5. Additionally, you can also screenshot or print screen the recorded lecture videos to be included in your daily ODL report.

Google Docs for writing activities

1. The Google Docs can work wonders in a classroom activity. Create and open a new Google Docs file for your specific class and name it accordingly. As usual, it is better to name according to the specific class session of the week for easier reference when you save the document after completing the session/week.

2. Share the link of that specific Google Docs to your class. The method is the same as sharing a Google Drive folder link. Again, it is easier for everyone if you put the link in the description section of the WhatsApp group.

3. I use Google Docs for any scheduling of speaking practices or assessment (by inserting tables) because the students can

book a slot for the session using it. It is easily accessible and everyone can do and edit the class activity at the same time. So, we can do real-time class writing activities using Google Docs.

4. Most of the tools available in Google Docs are similar to Microsoft Word such as font, font size, highlight, underline, text color, alignment, line spacing, spell check, and word count. You can also prepare a document on Word, and later copy and paste it into the Google Docs. Hence, there were instances when my students initially prepared their answers for a discussion in their own Word documents and then pasted it into the Google Docs upon completion. This method is helpful to save Internet data as students can go offline and work on their answers on a Word doc before submitting it online into the Google docs.

5. To download the Google Docs, go to file and download. You have several options to save the whole document such as PDF, Word and so on. This is beneficial for you and your students as evidence of daily or weekly class activities. You can also upload the saved files into the Google Drive folder of your class for your students to access and refer to (especially the essay exercises that they have completed in Google Docs).

6. Another benefit of using Google Docs is students get motivated and active when they can view their fellow classmates attempting the given task. It leads to collaborative learning and team writing.

7. The comment and suggestion tools are useful for you and others to give feedback on students' answers or writings. Just highlight the word or phrase you want to comment and select Add comments or Suggest edits. The feedback can be viewed by everyone who has access to the document and the student can then edit their work.

8. At the middle top of the Google Docs, there is a tool that indicates the last edit made by a user. When you click on that, you will be able to see the version history. You can trace who edited it along with the date and time. You also have the ability to revert the document to a previous edit.

In conclusion, there are many online tools that can assist lecturers to be accountable to our students' learning throughout the ODL period. The teaching and learning era has shifted to online-based and autonomous learning, thus lecturers must remain open to learn and apply new technological methods that can simplify our students' learning habits as well as our own administrative responsibilities and self-reflection.