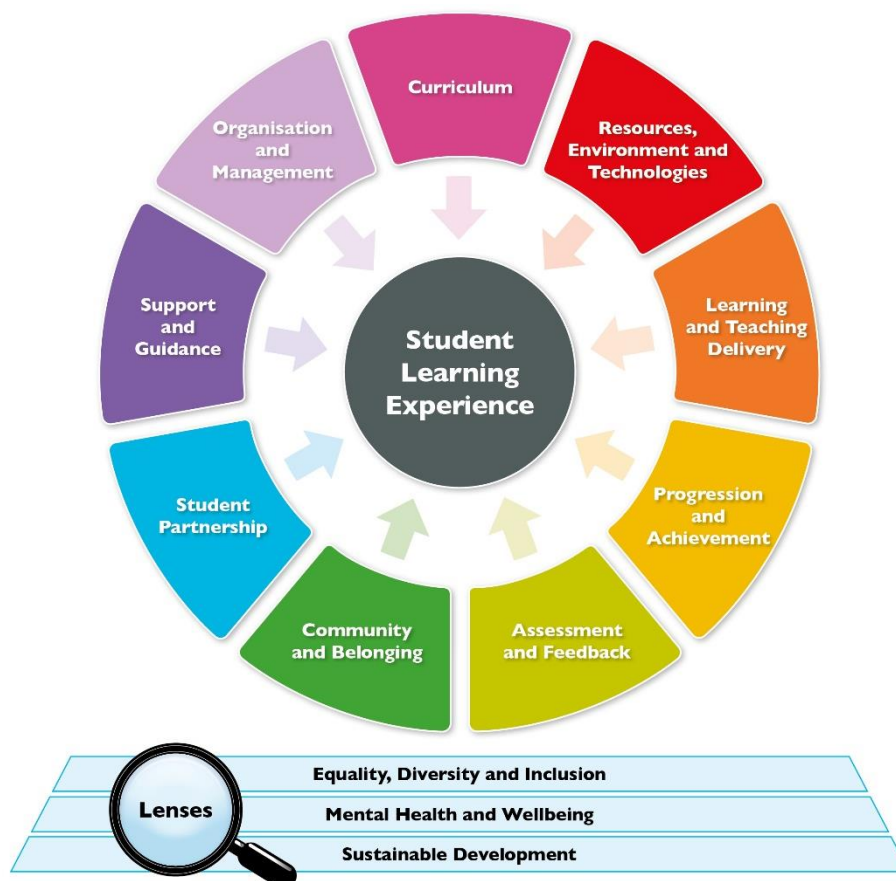


Online and blended learning: best practice for a successful student induction

This short guide forms part of a series of resources under the tertiary enhancement topic. This was a two-year project running from academic year 2022-23 to 2023-24 and led by four Scottish quality agencies: QAA Scotland, sparqs, College Development Network and Education Scotland. The topic, commissioned by the Scottish Funding Council was 'The future of learning and teaching: defining and delivering an effective and inclusive digital/blended offering'.

This resource is designed to support sabbatical officers to reflect on induction activities and resources available to students in the context of online and blended learning and to work in partnership with their institution to enhance the student experience. The induction phase is a pivotal moment in the student experience journey, and students' associations and institutions must design processes, systems and activities that accommodate different needs that may arise from having a range of delivery methods, such as engaging in online classes and accessing online platforms.

This resource has been designed around one of the reflective questions present in sparqs' redeveloped **Student Learning Experience model (SLE model)** ([SLE model](#)).



The question falls under the block "**Resources, Environment and Technologies**" and it is relevant to the tertiary enhancement topic of active blended learning:

Resources, Environment and Technologies

How are students and staff **supported and trained** to use learning resources and technologies effectively? To what extent is this support visible, regularly signposted, and provided consistently across all subject areas and levels of study?

This resource outlines ten examples of best practice which contribute to a successful induction process. These are based on the views of students, collected during workshops and network meetings which sparqs hosted during 2022-23 and 2023-24.

Best practices for a successful online/blended student induction

- 1.** Students complete an assessment about their digital skills with the aim to identify any gaps which may prevent them from engaging effectively with their course delivery.
- 2.** Tutors receive relevant training and development to enhance their online teaching and ensure their classes are sufficiently engaging, interactive and inclusive for students.
- 3.** Accessibility to online resources is applicable to all types of devices and operating systems and there is clearly signposted technical support in place for both students and staff, including assessment of digital inclusion, ensuring all students have access to suitable equipment to be able to engage with their learning online.
- 4.** Students are able to access the institution's virtual learning environment and their student email from as early as possible in the course.
- 5.** Online resources (including reading material, relevant software, and recorded lectures) are available to all students and up-to-date with the latest editions and technologies.
- 6.** Students have access to support and training to equip them with the skills to engage in online and blended learning, such as the use of course-specific, online tools and engaging with required software and online platforms.
- 7.** Students have access to assessments to identify whether they need adapted technology in place to support additional needs (e.g. speech recognition software). Students in need of additional support are aware of how to access or request any specific devices or software they require.
- 8.** The institution ensures there is clearly signposted support available to students when transitioning between different modes of course delivery, such as from online to in-person or vice versa.
- 9.** Students studying fully or partially online are able to benefit from community-building activities, such as online societies, forums and workshops, organised by either their students' association or institution.
- 10.** The representation structure is functional and effective for students studying fully online, as well as for other methods of course delivery.

Your role as an officer

As a student officer, your role is to support all students, including those studying online (both full-time, online students, as well as those accessing it as part of their course). Therefore, you need to think about how you will access those students and offer support. When developing policies and practices alongside your institution, you will need to consider the experiences of students studying online and ensure their needs are considered as part of decision-making.

When working with your institution, you may want to consider the above best practice examples and any feedback you receive from students studying online, so that you will be able to advocate for the online experience of students.