



Online Learning Programme

Updated July 2020

Purpose and Structure of Document

The American International School of Lesotho aims to provide a continual learning experience for our student community. Ideally, learning experiences happen through an in-person programme on the AISL campus. Learning interruptions can occur through a number of different situations:

- Natural disaster in Lesotho
- Political or social unrest in Maseru
- Severe damage to the campus
- Public health crisis

Some interruptions can be short term (up to a week) or long term. Short term interruptions may just be a matter of closing the school and adjusting the academic programme when school reopens a few days later. Long term challenges should be catered for to ensure continual learning can occur.

This document is designed to outline what the procedures and expectations of the different stakeholders are for when the school is facing a long term interruption to learning.

Supporting Document

“Reopening the Campus” – in progress

This document will look at the mechanisms to be in place to return to the campus.

Recommendations and Expectations

School

For successful delivery of an online learning programme, structures need to be in place to support the programme.

- **Teacher internet access** – The school provides internet access to teachers to be able to deliver video lessons and communication through various portals.
- **Learning platforms** – The school has subscriptions to a variety of platforms that will allow for interactions, student work delivery, feedback etc
- **Monitoring** – The school will monitor the progress of the online learning programme through virtual drop-ins, staff mentoring and support, communication and administrative support. Conversations can occur during a 1:1 meetings, division meetings or whole staff meetings.
- **Communication** – The school will share information pertinent to school/campus closure and potential reopening as it occurs.
- **Professional Development** – To support teacher development, the school will aim to continue staff, division and leadership professional development meetings to support and discuss pedagogical issues.



Teachers

Teachers have a significant role in the online learning programme. As such, a number of key aspects need to be in place for successful delivery of online learning. (*Note there is a standardisation protocol later in this document*)

- **Engagement** – Students need to feel connected to the class. It is important that positivity and learning can be demonstrated from the teacher. Teachers need to be putting in the time during video conferences, 1:1 support of students, development of materials etc.
- **Preparation** – As a long term closure of the campus can lead to uncertainty, the curriculum needs to continue as if in-person on campus. Therefore materials need to be prepared to ensure suitability of work and allow students to develop creatively, academically and independently.
- **Rigour of Content** – To ensure that students are receiving the best possible learning experience, the content needs to maintain the same level of rigour as they would receive in an on-campus experience. This means the volume of work, age level appropriate work, variety of work etc is suitable.
- **Communication** – It is important that communication is clear, consistent, timely and relevant to ensure that students are aware of expectations, the learning programme, the work required, deadlines and how the work fits into the planned curriculum.
- **Feedback** – Learning needs to be bi-directional. Students need class and individual feedback to understand and develop further. This should be timely, regular and possible involve discussion.
- **Support** – Pastoral care of students is an important aspect of teaching. During on-campus learning, this is easier to achieve. It may involve contacting parents, but teachers can talk to students and support when they notice concerns. During online learning, teachers should monitor attendance to lessons, work completed or not, engagement during class time, quality of work etc should an issue be discovered, an intervention needs to be developed.

Students

For success with online learning, students are asked to adapt to a method of learning that may not be as natural as in-person and on campus learning. For success students will need to consider the following.

- **Engagement** – Participation in schedules video conference, and/or 1:1 sessions is important and should be attended and on time. Discussions are important and participation will help the learning process.
- **Completion of Work** – As with on campus classes, school work will have deadlines and there is an expectation that the work is completed. Not completing work will affect the learning process.
- **Communication** – Teachers are aware that this form of learning can create difficult situations emotionally and academically. It is important that you maintain positive communications with your teachers and the school and reach out if you are overwhelmed and need support. Ignoring small problems will make them larger problems.
- **Independence** – Students are asked to develop independence with their learning. There will be a lot of time spent working on school tasks as well as reading, homework etc. Without the teachers and parents there to push, students will need to complete work. Ideally, students should develop a schedule for home time so that they can use time effectively. This should be developed in conjunction with family commitments and have built in down time for relaxation and fun.



- **Academic Honesty** – Students should ensure that they following best practice and generating work that is their own or citing any materials that has been included in their work.

Parents

To allow for a positive learning experience a number of considerations need to be made by parents.

- **Internet Access** – Ideally, a strong internet connection is the best for video conferencing. Both of the major internet service providers in Lesotho have developed new packages which are cheaper in price compared to previous years. Using mobile internet data through your phone will get expensive very quickly.
- **Learning Environment** – Preferably provide a space in the home that is dedicated to learning. Good light, quiet, ventilation, working space etc. We understand that this may not always be possible, but a quiet place for students to work independently is important.
- **Structure Time** – Students need structure and standards that provide consistency with what they are doing. The school will develop a schedule for the online programme, but it would also be helpful that students are given structure at home with other duties – chores, family time, dinners etc
- **Encourage Independence** – We understand that parents support students in the home during an online learning programme. Students are being asked to develop independence and take ownership of their learning. Obviously this is age dependent, but we ask that parents work with students to also develop an independent approach to their learning.
- **Encouragement** – Long term lockdown affects us as adults, children are not immune to the potential to be house bound or without their social networks for a long period of time. When schools returns, we will be looking at including pastoral care support for students as well. We ask that parents take time to acknowledge student’s struggles and support as best they can
- **Communication** – The school and teachers aim to communicate as much as possible with students and parents throughout the process. We ask that if parents notice issues affecting their children specifically to contact the school to discuss ways we can support. Parents are also asked to consider tone and voice when using public methods of communication with teachers.

Standardisation of the Online Learning Programme

All students learn differently and all teachers teach differently. It is, however, important that there are some basic standards that are met in the programme that allows for rigour, learning outcomes and the delivery to students to be approached consistently within each classroom.

Baseline Expectations for Online Learning Classes

The following baseline expectations outline what is required by teachers in terms of class/lesson delivery. They take into account four aspects – content, interactions, assessment, and feedback. If the school closure is only short term, teachers will communicate required work. Should the closure be long term or potentially move from short term to long term, the following processes will be in place.

Any good lesson contains 5 stages no matter the age level of the class.

1. Introduction – a welcome as well as overview of what is going to happen. “What is going to happen this lesson and how does it fit into the unit”.



2. **Content Instruction** – This is the main instruction of the lesson and learning activities. Could be introduced through a short video of you explaining a concept. This will help students who are not available. They can look at a different time.
3. **Independent work** – Students are given work that can be done independently to practice a skill. This could also be small group or collaborative activities. Zoom breakout rooms could be used for this or google docs etc.
4. **Feedback** – Depending on the activity, feedback should be given to students or the class in a timely manner so that they can incorporate that feedback into future activities and work.
5. **Wrap up** – A lesson should allow for 1 to 2 minutes to wrap up the lesson. What was the aim, what did you do and what did you find out?

To support students during the online learning programme, make sure that students are aware of how they can contact you. Email, WhatsApp, forums on the learning platform etc. However for child safeguarding and protecting teacher’s personal information and time, make it clear when your office hours are.

Online Learning Programme Standards

Remember online learning takes a little longer to complete, but the following builds structure into the learning process.

- Schedule for week – this is a document that outlines the different subject areas. It should include the online meeting times, links for classes and specialist class information. You may wish to schedule 1 x 1:1 with each student in the week so that you can work with them independently of the whole class.

Sample schedule (not actual)

Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
Class Zoom Link	Class Zoom Link	Class Zoom Link	Class Zoom Link	Class Zoom Link
8:00am Mathematics 9:00am English	8:00am Science 9:00am Social Studies	8:00am Mathematics 9:00am English	8:00am Science 9:00am Social Studies	Specialists Day 8:00am Music - Link 9:00am Art - Link
10-12 Independent work	10am-12 Independent work	10am-12 Independent work	10am-12 Independent work	10:00am PE - Link 11:00am IT – Link
1:00pm Class check in 1:30pm PE - Link	1:00pm Class check in 2pm–3:30pm 1:1s	1:00pm Class check in 1:30pm – Library - Link	1:00pm Class check in 2pm–3:30pm 1:1s	12:00pm – 12:30 Weekly Class checkin
2pm–3:30pm 1:1s	Available between 10am and 1pm for office hours	2pm–3:30pm 1:1s	Available between 10am and 1pm for office hours	
Available between 10am and 1pm for office hours		Available between 10am and 1pm for office hours		

- Class Delivery
 - Meet the class on a daily basis – Students should have contact with you daily. It should be video and not via mobile. Looks more professional and that way you can show a screen etc.
 - You may wish to make short – max 5minute – videos of you explaining the work/content etc and then uploading that to the learning platform. An example of this could be a video



of you using a white board to show how to complete a mathematical problem. That way students have this to refer back to when off line.

- Make sure you are in a location that is suitable to teaching
- Use tools – this could be online resources, manipulatives that you have, mini whiteboards, or a book etc
- Do not expect the students to ‘teach’ themselves. It is good practice to have students read ahead on the next topic from the text book or watch a video, however do not expect them to learn from it without follow up. In the next lesson, the concept that was in assigned should be taught and discussed.
- Interact with students by name etc. Have students contribute their ideas and discuss.
- Ensure videos and online materials are age appropriate
- Feedback
 - should be timely and useful.
 - be specific to support student development
 - should outline what is deficient in the work
 - should outline what is being successful in the work
 - impact work is having on grades
 - Document student progress, attendance and work ethic. This will assist in report writing, parent conferences as well as supporting students.
- Lesson style
 - Keep in mind that families may not have access to printers etc, so materials should either be able to be replicated by the students themselves or completed or submitted online.
 - Make it clear what work should be completed offline. Online time with the teacher should be explanation and learning times. Offline time should be used for mastery of a topic.
 - Vary the work style so that things are not repetitive and monotonous.
 - Vary the types of activities that students do. Utilise tools like google drive collaboration tools, seesaw, online quizzes etc.
 - When checking in with the class, ensure that all students know the work before you disconnect.
- Workload
 - Remember that students have a number of classes and online lessons. Try not to overload, however do keep the rigour challenging.
 - Even though students are working online, the workload should be appropriate for the grade level.
 - Deadlines should be flexible but clear that students are expected to meet them
 - Remember students don’t have as many ways to ask questions.
 - Keep the tasks simple.
 - Avoid single large tasks, break into smaller manageable tasks that allow you as the teacher to monitor the progress
- Internet accessibility
 - Try to avoid sharing large files or long videos that will eat bandwidth.
 - Use sites like YouTube etc that optimise videos for smaller bandwidth use.
 - Share via google classroom or the chosen platform so that people are aware of the file



- Use universal file formats that do not require students to install or convert files to be able to use.
- Course Organisation
 - Whichever platform is used – google classroom or seesaw, ensure that the layout is organised with topic headings and sections so that students can find work easily
 - There are a lot of videos etc out there that can explain the concept you are trying to teach. This might save you time from making your own.
 - Include a unit plan in the content material so that students can see the progress through the unit.
- Assessment or Monitoring
 - Record attendance to a video conference
 - Keep document of assessment outcomes
 - Screen captures of students performing or showing work

Frequently Asked Questions – Online Learning

Logistics

- **Why are classes not happening every day?**

The online learning programme is not an exact duplication of what happens in the classroom. Meaning it is not simply the same schedule but online. Each class will develop a suitable schedule that will balance workload, contact time, as well as time for 1:1s if they need it.
- **What happens if my internet stops working or I cannot connect?**

Each teacher will develop a schedule, a method of contact as well as a class whatsapp group. Should you have problems connecting, you can try to contact them via other methods or simply when you do manage to get connected again, reach out to the teacher to explain the problem and find out what you missed so that you are not disadvantaged.
- **I have a number of children in my house, how do I share devices?**

If you do not have your own dedicated device to work effectively on, that is ok. Make sure that the teacher is aware of this and it can be built into the class schedule to make sure that video conferences etc are not going to occur at the same time. As for sharing a computer to do research or class work, then that will be a schedule that the family needs to develop.
- **I am not in the Maseru time zone for online learning? Will I miss out?**

Teachers will know if they have a student who is not in the same time zone or reasonable time zone as the class activities. Flexibility will be built into the schedule to allow for students to access at a different time or have a 1:1 session with the teacher.
- **When will we go back to campus?**

Ideally, on-campus learning is preferred, however if that is not possible, the online programme will cater to the learning experience. As to when we would return to the campus is possibly an unknown. The school in conjunction with the Board, local authorities, and security consultants will



decide when the best time would be to return to campus. This information would be shared with the parent community as it is known.

- **My parents are working and I will be home alone or with a nanny, what do I do?**
AISL encourages learning independence. However this is age dependent. If you are in grades 3 and above, you should be able to complete the required tasks without parent supervision of the work. But parents may wish to look at options. Teachers are available via email or online if you wish to discuss issues. If your child wishes to work collaboratively with other students online, that is a possible solution.

Academic

- **How will I be assessed online?**
This will be dependent on the grade and subject area. Teachers will be designing class work that will allow you to complete it and possibly submit online through the chosen platform. It is important that students put in as much effort as they would in an on-campus format.
- **Will we be doing MAP testing?**
At this stage, MAP testing has been suspended until we know we can complete it effectively and can easily administer the test.
- **Will report cards look the same?**
Trimester 3 (June 2020) was the first report card to have a modified comment on it to state that work was completed during COVID-19 lockdown. Reports will be reviewed each trimester to make sure that they share appropriate and useful information.
- **Will I be able to go into the next grade level if I only study online?**
If students complete the required work to the standard that set out in the standards for that subject area, there is no reason they cannot progress to the next grade level. However students who have limited interactions, do not hand in work or to a standard that is suitable, run the risk of being retained to repeat the grade level.
- **Can all assessment standards be met?**
The vast majority of CORE standards can be met through an online learning programme. However some specific standards may not be able to be met. This will be identified on the report card.
- **Is what is happening in my class the same as what is happening in other classes?**
No. The school has developed a baseline standard set of expectations as to what an online learning programme will look like, but individual classes could look different.
- **I am feeling overwhelmed with all the work. What do I do?**
The first point of contact is your teacher. Do not hesitate to point out that you are struggling. Online learning for an extended period of time can be difficult and the school wants to support you, but we need to be aware.