



GUIDING A LEARNING PROCESS ON THE WEB

Guiding has a central function in web-based pedagogy. Web-based guiding refers simply to all the means you are able to use to further a student's learning and studying during the learning process.

Web-based guiding can be asynchronous or synchronous, i.e. happen in real time. Asynchronous web-based guiding refers to the use of learning platforms, Facebook, blogs, email and similar applications. Web-based guiding is synchronous when you use tools such as Team, Skype, WhatsApp or a chat.

It is easier to think about web-based guiding if you look at it in relation to the different stages of the learning process. You can think about what kind of guiding (for instance which instructions) you may need before the learning process starts, or as it starts, or during it, at the end of it and after it has finished. A time-based perspective helps you to think about the relevance of guiding at the various stages, the significance of guiding and its possibilities. It also helps you to plan the guiding acts. A guide helps the learners to get acquainted with the content, to orient the learner, to clarify points, to inspire and awaken curiosity. Planning the guiding develops your ability to effectively work as a web-based learning teacher and guide.

You can build the guiding into the learning process. Such pre-planned guiding includes a description of the learning process on a learning platform, all related instructions for work, the learning assignments and learning materials. As a teacher you can think about guiding through a series of questions:

How do I prepare the students to study a new learning process?

How do I guide the students in their studies?

How do I guide eLearning and the achievement of the learning goals?

How do I guide the collaboration between the students if such occurs during the learning process?

What are all the things I can prepare before the studying starts?

The last question is one of the most relevant. How can you plan the web-based learning process so that each student will be able to study using the instructions; so that each student knows what he or she should do during the various stages of the process? Guiding creates a good user experience for the students.

A teacher can also guide the students during the learning process.

It is important to plan the process of the guiding. The first question has to do with resources. What kind of resources do you have to guide the process? How many will you allocate to the whole group, and how many to each individual student? You also need to think about the goal of the guiding at the various stages in the learning process. What modes of guiding will you use? What kind of guiding will best



support the students in the different stages? How will you do that? Who will do the guiding? Is it only the teacher, or also peers or perhaps a mentor? Can you use technology to guide? How does the learning material and the assignments and the automatic feedback support the guiding? What are you guiding? Is it the studying, the working, the group process, or the learning? How will you guide and what means for guiding will you use? Will you use learning assignments, working methods, material, instructions or feedback?

Web-based guiding must be goal-oriented, effective, and timely. It must focus on the learners' needs. The aim of web-based guiding is to help the learners think for themselves, to develop their skills of learning and their ability to guide themselves.

Web-based guiding is an essential part of web-based studies, but web-based guiding can also be added as a part of classroom teaching, such as doing homework, guiding projects or learning that happens in a workplace.

Learning platforms and environments differ as guiding environments.

Some learning environments use learning analytics to give feedback to the students and guide them automatically to easier or more difficult learning materials and assignments. However, here too the main responsibility for giving feedback and for guiding lies with the teacher.

You can use mobile devices to do web-based guiding that is not dependent on time and place, and is therefore well suited to the students' different conditions of life. Remote access makes for better accessibility; students can access the guidance when they need it. Remote guiding lessens the threshold of making contact and also allows for multimodal expression. Some students find it easier to write, while others might be more comfortable making a video or recording to discuss their situation. A teacher may also give feedback in different forms. Remote guiding can include one or more students. You can make summaries of individual guiding and present them to all the students. This allows everyone to learn from individual student experiences.

Web-based guiding is more 'memorable' than individual moments of guiding. You can record the conversations, or the participants can make joint notes which can be agreed upon. The students can also make notes or record the next steps of learning and refer to these notes or recordings later to see how the learning is progressing. If a student has made a recording or video of his achievement, you can look at it together and discuss the project in detail. Such authentic recordings make it easier to evaluate the performance. You can also ask the support of the other students and compare the achievements, or the students could compare their achievements to that of an expert and think about where he or she is now.



When using written assignments, the teacher can give a model answer; then, during a guiding moment, the student can then reflect on his or her own answer in relation to the teacher's model answer.

The younger the students, the more important the role of the teacher is. The other students may also offer guiding, but the teacher must assess whether peer feedback is the best way to guide a student at any given time. You cannot also always plan all guiding beforehand, so you need to leave room for additional individual or group guiding.

Self-evaluation is an important part of guiding.

At the start of the studies you need to figure out each student's need for guiding, and their previous skills and knowledge, so that the guiding will best support each individual student's learning path. You must also monitor the start of each student's learning to find out who will need more support to get a start on the assignments and materials. A good starting point for any learning process is that all learning materials and assignments are clear and suitable at the student level. You must also make sure that the tools for studying are familiar to the students.

During the studies, follow the students' progress to monitor whether all is going well, or whether changes need to be made to your plan. Support self-guiding throughout the process, and give your own additional support as needed. Self-evaluation assignments are a good tool for evaluating whether the students are achieving their goals. The guiding runs through the whole process; at the end collect all the experiences and make a summary of the learning process. Evaluate this summary to see what the students learned during the process, and whether or how the goals were reached. Then, decide on the next learning goals.

If needed, change the next learning process on the basis of the student feedback. The guiding process is based on trust and an open climate of dialogue where differences are tolerated, so each student's individual learning potential can be supported. Your aim is to create a learning climate where each learner can learn at his or her own pace, even if mistakes might be made. If issues arise, guiding situations can become very personal, and may give rise to things you will not want to share with others.

You should make rules, together with the students, about how things will be handled in different guiding situations. Think about the information that travels through the digital environments you are using. Some information needs strong identification and data protection before it can be shared. In some instances, the new EU General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) requires the use of systems supported by the learning institution and the use of user names for login.



Web-based guiding is not without its challenges. Technology doesn't always work, or it might be difficult to find common tools to use. What are the most common tools that the students use? Does everyone need to use the same tool? Are all able to use web-based tools? Are all young people digital natives? Emotions are sometime hard to share using digital tools. How will you sense a student's mood, or attitude, when you are chatting with him or her?

A couple of final questions

In a group-based process you need to think about creating a natural group where thoughts can be shared and where the students can learn from each other. What happens if someone drops out? How can you monitor a group from a distance, or a group working on a project?

What kinds of rules do you need for guidance when you as a teacher cannot be available 24 hours a day even if students would like answers to their problems 'immediately'.

Does the educational institution's technical infrastructure support remote guiding and distance work? Are students able to use their own devices to access this infrastructure?

Web-based guiding evolves and develops with use. Experience will guide you in creating and developing a new web-based culture.

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