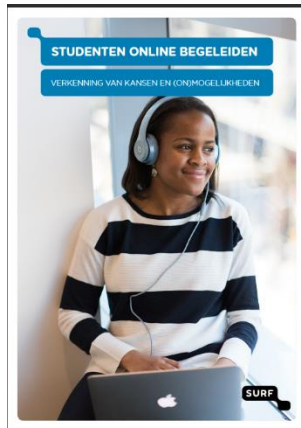


SURF Seminar: online guidance of students

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On behalf of the University, I (Barend) attended a seminar on Friday, September 21st, on the topic of coaching students online, which was organized by SURF. This subject is the annual theme for the online education pillar in the [Open and online education incentive scheme 2019](#). These grants enable institutions to experiment with setting up online student coaching and to investigate its effects within their own context. This pillar can divide 700.00 euro, with a maximum of 100.000 per project.

Online coaching of students can be a good way to maintain extensive contact between teachers and students and to improve the quality of education. For example, teachers mention that students prepare better for online meetings. This allows for a higher information density and more focus during contact. In addition, students can record the online interactions, which creates the opportunity to listen back and reflect. However, when does online coaching have real added value? Moreover, how do you organize in-depth interaction through digital channels in a way that it integrates within your own educational context?

To investigate this, SURF brought together five higher education institutions that already have experience with coaching students online. They discussed opportunities and needs and put together a list of do's and don'ts. Based on this input, an [exploratory brochure was recently published](#) and the [seminar the UL visited was organized](#).

The seminar started with a keynote about [the theory behind online coaching](#). Then, four university teachers presented their good practices (see below for links and more info).

Overview of the good practice presentations (in Dutch):

- [Ervaringen met het online asynchrone begeleiden van groepen in een cursus setting](#) (pdf) door Cora Busstra, **Wageningen Universiteit**
- [Veranderende rol van docenten in asynchrone en synchrone online begeleidingsvormen](#)(pdf) door Iwan Wopereis, **Open Universiteit**
- [Rekening houden met online begeleiding al tijdens de ontwerpfase van online/blended onderwijs](#) (pdf) door Mirjam Westerlaken, **Universiteit Utrecht/Elevate Health**
- [Online begeleiding bij de Digipabo](#) (pdf) door Suzanne de Lange, **Hogeschool Inholland**

Finally, a SURF employee gave an illuminating story about the General Data Protection Agreement (GDPR) and what this means for the use of online tools in our education.

The do's and don't's of online coaching

- Only switch to online coaching when there is evident added value. For example, upscaling, better served students, higher quality, more study success and/or better pedagogic.
- Research shows that our target group, young people of today, prefer newer forms of communication. The majority of youngsters from 18 to 30 years of age prefer to send a written message to making a phone call (Motivation, 2018). We must ask ourselves how we can adapt to these forms of communication.
- Many different platforms facilitate online coaching. However, the most widely used systems, such as Digital Learning Environments, focus primarily on content management. It is therefore important to distinguish between such systems and systems that specifically target online coaching.

The biggest challenges of online coaching

Maybe even more important to be aware of are topics, which they presented as challenges when you want to coach your students online:

- Maintaining a relationship at a distance
- Strong dependence on technology
- Lack of non-verbal communication
- Delayed response time / managing expectations
- Direction lies more at student-level
- Privacy and security (GDPR); whatever way you work towards a tool, i.e. designing yourself of purchasing, etc., privacy by design is always the leading principle. However, beware: many companies have online privacy statements saying they are GDPR-compliant, but practice shows this is often a façade. Therefore, always ask for the processing agreement.
- Additional skills and different attitudes are required for teachers.

When testing any type of communication, the following criteria are used:

- 1) Proximity: Are you in close proximity?
- 2) Visibility: Can you see each other?
- 3) Form of expression: In what form does the communication take place?
- 4) Time: Does the communication take place simultaneously?

Based on these criteria, the following table can be drafted:

	Proximity	Visibility	Form of expression	Time
Face-to-face	Yes	Yes	Spoken	In sync
Video-calls	No	Yes	Spoken	In sync
Telephone	No	No	Spoken	In sync
Chat	No	No	Written	Asynchronous
Email/forum	No	No	Written	Asynchronous

At the end of the seminar, I received a draft publication on *Privacy for online student coaching*.
A very interesting brochure (in Dutch) going online in a month. We will keep you posted!

Want to ask a question or share your experiences?

Leave a message at blended-pbl@maastrichtuniversity.nl