

# How Remote Teaching and Learning is Working at Gulf University for Science and Technology (GUST) – Kuwait





## Key information

---

- University:** Gulf University of Science and Technology (GUST), Kuwait
- Course:** English (Foundation and General) & Math (Foundation and General)
- Instructors:** Dr Shiny Verghese, Dr Milena Baeff, Dr Anwar Al Zayer (Math Foundation Unit)  
Dr Heba Elhadary (English Foundation Unit)
- Digital products:** MyLab Math, MyGrammarLab, MyWritingLab and Learning Catalytics, eBooks through VitalSource
- Student numbers:** (current approx.) 1000 Math and 700 English Language

# Introduction

These are the experiences of faculty members from Gulf University of Science and Technology (GUST) as they moved to full distance learning when universities across the Middle East closed (early March 2020) in response to the global COVID-19 crisis. The instructors continue to use this knowledge to inform their approach to blended learning.

## Motivation

The GUST Foundation Program teams were keen to keep students engaged during the lockdown, to progress teaching plans and ensure no students missed out on their learning.

## Action

In just one week the coordinators had agreed and settled on Microsoft Teams as the best video conferencing solution to work together remotely. After this, the Foundation Program Units 'met' regularly to share best practice, troubleshoot and collaborate.

The university's dedicated Pearson representative advised the GUST team on how to integrate live video lectures and course eBooks with other online resources including MyLab Math, MyGrammarLab and Learning Catalytics. The instructors also used Active Quiz in Moodle, embedded videos within live lectures and a combination of synchronous and asynchronous learning methods. Throughout, Pearson was in close contact with the GUST team, providing instructor resources and inviting them to exclusive master class events. They also worked closely to provide digital learning solutions to prepare the University for the Spring 2019–20 semester as well as the upcoming new academic year (September 2020).

## Challenges

The instructors had to overcome a number of challenges including, setting up distance learning alternatives at very short notice and the difficulty in verifying that submissions of assignments, quizzes or other work were from genuine students. Instructors were able to use the MyLab programs they already used in their courses to support the delivery of remote assessments. Training both faculty and the student body to access and use the resources in new ways and in a very short time frame was not easy. Nor was motivating students to accept virtual office hours.

Internet connectivity was not consistent for all students and some would face the issue of having to catch up if they had been out of town when the lockdown began. Pearson also offered advice on services to support the delivery of online high stakes assessments (including ProctorU) but it was decided not to use these as some students in the region are disinclined to use webcams. They faced another difficulty because some students initially found video lectures alone to be insufficient for their learning needs.

*"It was difficult at first to motivate students to accept virtual office hours but we believe ultimately the students became as excited as we are in using these tools for the future."*

Shiny Verghese, Math Foundation Unit

*"Because we were all in the same boat – as it was not subject specific – we were all looking for the tools out there that could help us keep students engaged during this tough time. The more we trained people, the more we asked questions and the better informed we became. A great advantage was the peer training – all the time learning from each other."*

Heba Elhadary, English Foundation Unit

# Positive outcomes for all

Everyone could still teach or learn effectively and safely from their homes and the asynchronous model allowed teaching and learning to happen at a time to suit people. During synchronous sessions, various tools (quizzes, lectures and 'in-class' style online discussions) kept students engaged, in touch and on track and everyone adapted quickly to trying out new learning styles.

## **Institution**

The process of working together across departments to find educational solutions to a rapidly unfolding global crisis, at very short notice, has brought far-ranging benefits to the university and its teaching staff:

- Close links created between GUST Math and English Units.
- Increased knowledge of the tech solutions available and how to use and apply them to the learning experience.
- Additional Professional Development opportunities through 3rd party software suppliers for distance learning products with strengthened Pearson support.
- Gaining confidence in synchronous and asynchronous online teaching and learning methodologies for future application.

## **Instructors**

Despite lockdown forcing the move to fully distance delivery in a very pressured scenario, the instructors at GUST have been pleasantly surprised by the positive outcomes they observed:

- Access to ready-made online learning modules through MyLab and in-class quizzing content from previous academic years through Learning Catalytics meant they could get up and running online quickly.
- Stored student grades allowed for easier assessment and learning development.
- Monitoring tools meant they could review student's work, assess their knowledge and identify areas where more help was needed.

## **Students**

- Experienced a new learning environment.
- Benefited from the flexibility to fit asynchronous learning around own lives.
- Found that interactivity through teamwork, questioning and participation in 'classroom' discussions remotely but in real-time, was made simple with synchronized login to Learning Catalytics through the Virtual Learning Environment.

*"Setting assignments and work in an asynchronous mode, allows educators like us to smooth the transition into the virtual learning environment."*

Milena Baeff, Math Foundation Unit



# Recommendations and advice for other educators

---

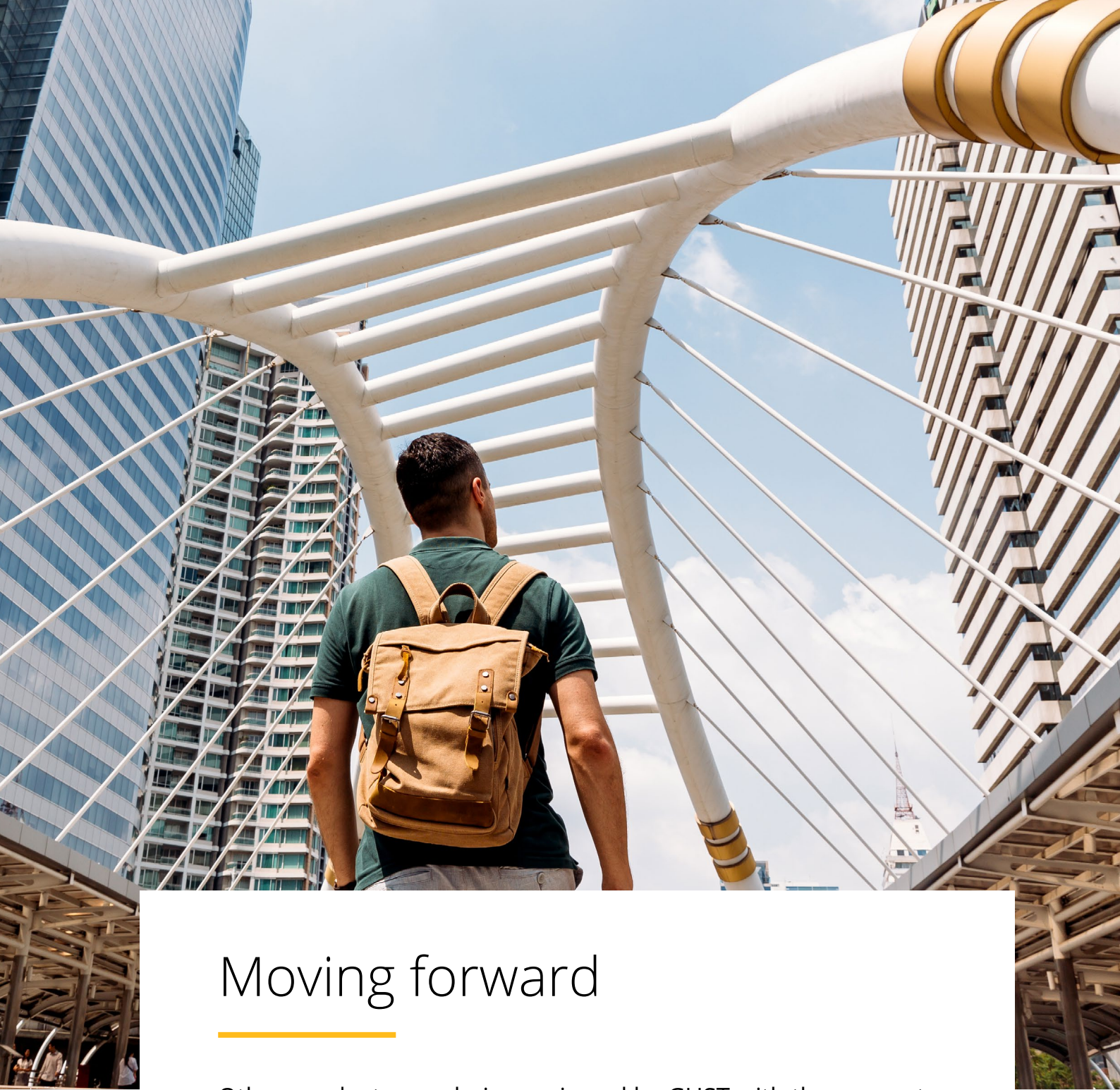
If you are thinking about implementing a virtual learning and assessment program for your own institution or university, GUST advises:

- Don't let yourself be held back! Pearson can advise on online tools – including best practice on deploying MyLab platforms for summative assessments and using invigilation services like ProctorU and Pearson Vue.
- Collaborate with other faculty teams – it speeds up the process and avoids duplication and implementing incompatible processes.
- You can collaborate effectively remotely – even across time zones – to create learning experiences that will be better for teaching staff and students.
- Both synchronous and asynchronous models, with virtual face-to-face time, will encourage students to learn in their own time.

*“We believe this framework can be used by other educators, institutions and universities who would like to transition from the traditional model to a virtual model. In fact, this could possibly be integrated into your existing model for a better teaching and learning experience.”*

Milena Baeff, Math Foundation Unit





## Moving forward

---

Other products now being reviewed by GUST with the support of their Pearson representative include:

- Revel interactive learning platform
- MyLab Education
- FlippingBook in MyGrammarLab

Based on their experiences of a distance learning system so far, GUST instructors are exploring other digital versions of Pearson products to enable them to continue offering blended teaching approaches which support both in-class and remote learning.

Learn more about  
how we can support  
with your digital  
transformation:

[middleeast.pearson.com/  
HigherEd/digital-transformation](https://middleeast.pearson.com/HigherEd/digital-transformation)  
[asktheHEteam@pearson.com](mailto:asktheHEteam@pearson.com)