



The **ATENEO** **ONLINE LEARNING** **COMMUNITY**

*Borderless, Transformative Education
in the Ateneo de Davao University*

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Our **MODE OF ONLINE LEARNING**
at the *Ateneo*

Online learning at the Ateneo

At the Ateneo de Davao University, learners can interact directly with learning content found in multiple virtual formats (e.g. audio-visual, auditory, and other e-learning materials). Additionally, students can sequence, direct, and navigate their own learning pace. Teachers are there simply to facilitate, evaluate and mentor the process, but ultimately, the online format is more learner-centric.

This academic interaction can take place within virtual classrooms, accessed through a variety of synchronous and asynchronous internet-based activities which utilizes video and audio tools and online conferencing.

Our promise of a flexible online learning

Our flexible online learning shall apply a learner-centered approach where there is a shift from the teacher's monopoly of the learning interaction, to the learners sharing and taking charge of more learning responsibilities.

In our flexible online learning, students will be granted a variety of choices that assist them in directing their own learning experience. This flexible arrangement requires learners to be more skilled at self-regulation. They will learn first-hand what it takes to set goals and in their self-monitoring, make adjustments that best suit their studies. They will also learn how to communicate this to their teachers in a way that makes the academic interaction more collaborative and fruitful.

Additionally, online learning means that the pace of study is flexible in terms of time and location. Learners are offered options that let them navigate their own learning process based on their personal needs. They can choose to follow a disciplined workday schedule or choose to study mostly in the evenings or during weekends. They can specify the times with which they would want to interact with their classmates and teachers, and conversely, schedule the instances when they would want to study on their own.

The learning location is just as flexible since the access to learning materials and the accomplishment of activities are all found and done online. For example, instructors may post a list of tasks and upload related resources in the virtual classroom every Monday. Students can then access these resources at home at any time during the week, and submit their learning output and assignments before the next learning cycle during the following week.

Online learning for young learners

The flexibility of the online education framework is easily administered for young adults from higher education. The level of autonomy for college students is well-established since scholarly work requires a lot of individual research and problem solving. Young learners, on the other hand, need to be eased into the new modes of learning and instruction online.

In the Ateneo de Davao Preschool and Grade School, online learning takes a more structured form with set schedules that will help them establish routines as they engage in this new learning platform. Building habit and being guided accordingly in their transition from face-to-face learning is vital. Their version of online learning, therefore, is closely monitored by their teachers and parents. The flexibility of the new medium comes from the instances where the students are given liberty to orchestrate their own learning experience during offline study sessions.

Half-day sessions for pre-school and whole day sessions for grade school pupils are designed to attain instructional depth through mentorship. Children attend online classes daily through video conferences and discussion forums, either in the morning or in the afternoon, where they meet their teachers and classmates. During these times, pupils interact with their teachers and classmates regarding the learning content. They also have the chance to ask questions and review parts of the lesson that were not clear or understood. Pupils access learning materials in the Google Classroom during online classes and can go back to these materials at their leisure.

These real-time video conferences are complemented by offline activities, where the students spend half of their day doing school work offline. They are given exercises to be done offline that foster remedial and formation sessions. During these times, pupils spend time on writing activities, crafts, and other meaningful activities that will deepen their learning.

Throughout the learning process, the teachers monitor the pupils' progress through formative and summative assessments.

Roles of parents and home mentors

Especially for the Grade School and Junior High School, it is required that a parent or another responsible adult is available at home to serve as a coach or mentor to young students. Since teacher control and supervision are very limited in an online classroom, the mode of learning demands greater autonomy, discipline, and self-motivation on the part of the students. The home mentor or the parents must make sure that the learner can stay connected and immersed in their studies. Thus, the active involvement of a parent or guardian in the online learning of their child is a requisite to the student's success in the online classroom experience.

A home mentor is a responsible adult, usually over the age of 18 and is authorized by the parent or legal guardian to assist and be with the child during online classes. This person guides the child in maintaining healthy learning habits and academic discipline. He or she also monitors the learning activities, and provides assistance as needed.

The parents' level of involvement will vary based on their child's age, grade, and level of independence. The presence of a parent or guardian that serves as the home mentor will definitely elevate the learning experience of a child. Even in the traditional learning setting, this is expected and actually prescribed by teachers. This partnership between the students' teachers in the classroom, and their role models at home empowers learners considerably, especially in the online learning format.

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Delivery of the **ONLINE LEARNING -
TEACHING PROCESS**
at the *Ateneo*

Our Ateneo Virtual Learning Community

Ateneo de Davao University seeks to preserve its culture as a community that learns together and evolves as one. Hence, despite the limitations to the traditional modes of instruction and schooling, the University aspires to be progressive as a virtual learning community.

Since the University has become increasingly more active in online learning platforms such as Google Classroom and Moodle, opportunities for dialogue and collaboration among learners have become more dynamic. This means that students and teachers from all academic levels have increased chances of being in touch through forums and other social mediums online. This opens up opportunities for sharing information and discussing topics from a wider range of perspectives as intellectuals and people of the academe.

A virtual learning community has been described as a computer-supported knowledge-building community. This is something that we aspire towards. To become a community that builds on each other's learning experiences and enriches the conversation from multiple perspectives shared amongst equals. The goal is that as we pursue online education, we can still foster a sense of humanity in how we interact and learn from each other. We intend to become a community that inspires a sense of belonging in our conversations, debates, and continued *pakighinabi*, despite the new medium of interaction online.

This type of culture has been present in Ateneo de Davao even before the pandemic. The challenge is how to manage a transition towards online education while still upholding our principles as a community that learns together. The new learning process unfolds in what seems to be an unfamiliar threshold for formal education. Fostering a virtual learning community as we go along promises to help us maintain our principles of transformative and quality education in the University.

Preserving the vibrance in instructional delivery

We are fortunate to have the level of technology that supports our goals for online education. Google Classroom and Moodle are some of the examples of virtual tools that are empowering in terms of their dynamic set of applications and programs available to our students and instructors alike. They are more than just learning management systems, they are actually innovative learning platforms. We are slowly realizing the extent of this innovation. Not only do they help organize learning outputs and navigate coursework online, but they also make the process more transparent and accessible in a way that elevates learning.

For instance, it is important for home-based learners to have a constant stream of feedback from their instructors. Google Classroom and Moodle provide that by being transparent with grading, with clear sets of criteria for scores and feedback. Google Classroom presents the class syllabus in a more streamlined and categorized way. The platform organizes input and output strategically, allowing the students to clearly see the cycle of research, discussion, analysis, reflection, and evaluation in their learning experience.

Instruction is therefore delivered through a more vibrant dynamic between learner and teacher.

Of course, the mediums are not limited to Google Classroom and Moodle. Students are encouraged to use online platforms that they see fit. There is a treasure trove of learning materials in Youtube, in e-book servers, and even in social media platforms. For students and professors alike, online education is a matter of creativity and an active pursuit of what one could deem as instructive.

Ignatian Pedagogical Paradigm in Online Classrooms

One of the hallmarks of Jesuit education is its unique pedagogy that goes beyond the mere transmission of information from teacher to student. More than an exercise in memorization, Jesuit education is guided by the ideas that it is meant to be a transformational experience that affects the students on all levels—cognitive, but also emotional and behavioral. The student who has been through this kind of experience will have had old ideas unsettled in the service of developing a fuller understanding of self and the world, and in service of helping that world. Using this pedagogy, teachers accompany their students in their intellectual, spiritual and emotional development. Through consideration of the **context** of students' lives, teachers create an environment where students recollect their past experience and assimilate information from newly provided **experiences**. Teachers help students learn the skills and techniques of **reflection**, which shapes their consciousness, and they then challenge students to **action** in service to others. The **evaluation** process includes academic mastery as well as ongoing assessments of students' well-rounded growth as persons for others.

In our online classroom, this Ignatian Pedagogical Paradigm (IPP) will still be used as the framework of all teacher instructional plans.

Approaches for organizing online learning activities

The learners are given a variety of options in terms of learning approaches. There will be opportunities for lectures, tutorials, independent study, discussion, seminar groups, debates, student-led discovery approaches, and other educational gamification.

Social organization of these learning interactions can be done in several ways. One can study individually or in groups, depending on the student's preference and mode of learning. The Ateneo learning community, for instance, gravitates towards video-based consultations. The preference stems from the fact that video conferencing closely approximates the traditional format experienced in a classroom. Therefore, helps the students have a more personal perception of the interaction while addressing course work with real-time feedback and assistance from instructors.

What types of learning resources are provided to students?

Learning resources may include instructor-created content, compositions from the learners themselves, materials from online libraries, and various high-quality resources from the web. The modality of these resources come from a wide range of media formats such as podcasts, narrated screen capture, and full video lectures. Open Educational Resources (OER), such as EBSCOhost, JSTOR, and other open license systems, can also add to this rich source of knowledge found online. Instructors, therefore, can utilize, mix and match these resources to assist their teaching method.

Methods of instruction for online learning

Various teaching and learning strategies can be transposed into online mediums. The following are examples of such instructional methods:

- **Lecture:** also known as direct instruction. The Direct Instruction teaching strategy mainly focuses on teacher-directed approaches and is the most commonly used teaching method. Here, the content needs to be prepared and organized in advance. This strategy is effective for imparting knowledge to students in a step-by-step structured way and involves active student participation.
- **Case study:** A detailed analysis is made of some specific, usually compelling event or series of related events so that learners will better understand its nature and what might be done about it.
- **Debate:** A form of discussion whereby a few students present and contest varying points of view with regard to an issue.
- **Discussion:** Discussions occur when a group assembles to communicate with one another through speaking and listening about a topic or event of mutual interest.

- **Student-led discovery:** Students are given responsibility over particular topics and delivery methods. Students can choose how they want to research the material, and then how they will present it to the rest of the class in an engaging way.
- **Experiential Learning:** Experiential Learning focuses more on activities and requires the students to apply their experience to other contexts. It's more about the process of learning rather than focusing on the content. Students participate in the activities, reflect and share their experiences, analysis, and infer the solutions and formulate plans to apply their learning in new situations.
- **Academic games or competition:** Learners compete with each other one-to-one or team-to-team to determine which individual or group is superior at a given task.
- **Brainstorming:** In order to generate creative ideas, learners are asked to withhold judgment or criticism and produce a very large number of ways to do something, such as resolve a problem.
- **Drill and practice:** A form of independent study whereby, after the teacher explains a task, learners practice it.

Organization of social learning activities online

Several social approaches can be organized online as well, fostering just as much knowledge and experiential learning as its physical or traditional counterpart. The following are examples of such social learning activities that can be set online:

- **Independent study:** Independent study encompasses a range of teaching methods that develop student skills like initiative, self-belief, time management, and self-improvement. Students are encouraged to undertake a planned activity under the supervision of a teacher or guide. It also involves group study or learning with an assigned partner.
- **Cooperative learning:** Learners are placed in groups of four to six. Sometimes the groups are as diverse or heterogeneous as possible. In such cases, group members are often rewarded for the group's overall success.
- **Collaborative learning:** Students progress personally, while collectively working towards a common goal. Students are accountable to one another and, with appropriate direction, will self-manage this. Learners learn to better work with others having different individual differences (e.g. cultures, styles, etc.).

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ACCESS to

Online Learning

The University recognizes the economic restrictions that supersede the capacities of its students for online learning. Not everyone will be able to afford WiFi access. All students will, therefore, be provided with Home Prepaid WiFi units upon enrollment. Special load bundles were also realized through partnerships with internet service providers in order to make internet access more affordable.

Furthermore, to aid students who do not have the gadgets necessary for online learning, the University took the initiative to provide a limited number of Apple iPad units for the semester, free of charge, giving priority to financially challenged students and scholars.

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A **GAZE** towards the
Future

In all this, we are not saying we do not value traditional face-to-face instruction. We do. We value deeply how learning, especially in the Philippine context, is enriched by healthy socialization. When the pandemic is overcome, we will definitely find a way to navigate the new normal and come back to these learning traditions.

But even as we go back to them, we will be different. We are bound to keep the adjustments that make the learning environment safe and healthy for everyone involved. Blended learning, therefore, is the future. And we have hope that we will be stronger for it. By then we will have access to a treasure trove of global learning resources that have revealed themselves to be available because of our pursuits in online education. Our teachers will be practiced in accessing them, and so will our students. They will increasingly understand how digital instruction is best applied in our Mindanao context where the peripheries can be reached as long as the students are equipped with the technologies that will be aided to them. We will blend face-to-face learning with online learning and move towards the direction of an open university.

We will also be dealing with a student body that is more resilient and has a keen sense of innovation and self-governance towards their learning experience. They shall be more in touch with their desires for learning, and be more able to set learning goals for themselves. They will have learned how to collaborate with their mentors and improve themselves upon the guidance of their instructors. Our students will have a wider sense of what the world wide web has to offer—a world beyond the commercial aspects of social media that is able to foster relationships and a genuine connection between people interested in learning and growing together. Our students will know how to use digital learning resources not only for their sojourn at the Ateneo, but for lifelong learning. This is extremely important as the world of academe merges with the world of work and responds to the challenges of the fourth industrial revolution.

All this will unfold and our students will have emerged triumphant for having proven that they are capable of thriving as learners despite the challenges of a global pandemic. We need more resilience in how we view learning because this is not the first nor will it be the last global challenge that will face us as a people. Our students will face more of these trials. Hence, their success will inspire in us a stronger faith, and we will be the ones to look to them for hope in a brighter future.

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