Tip sheet - Managing FLO for students in different time zones

Students may need to access FLO topics from a different time throughout the academic year (e.g. temporary international field/study trips or studying online either offshore or interstate). Students could be interstate or overseas and may access FLO with anything from a 30 minute to an 18 hour difference from the local time in Adelaide, South Australia. When designing any time-based activities in topics, be aware of interstate and international time zones. Adaptations for time zones are particularly critical for the success of international students if they are based offshore. As a key consideration, schedule online activities within a period of hours that works best for students (taking all the time zones they and you are in into account).

FLO is an ecosystem of core and recommended tools and there is not a singular way to convert all times in FLO topics to local time zones for individual users. Important supporting information about how to work with dates and times across common FLO tools is available on the FLO staff support page, dates and times in FLO.

Challenges for students using FLO in a different time zone

Date and time considerations often begin before topics are in FLO, for example; SAMs, setting assignment due dates/times, scheduling lecture live streaming dates/times, online tutorials (e.g. Collaborate), determining synchronous participation requirements. Some of the activities that students may find difficult from a different time zone include:

- Submitting assignments by due dates and times
- Submitting draft submissions and reports (e.g. Turnitin)
- Applying for assignment extensions
- Participating in synchronous online activities (e.g. Live lecture streaming, Collaborate)
- Accessing time-based releases of content and digital resources
- Engaging with online activities with specific dates/times for participation
- Completing quizzes that have time and date limits
- Participating in online scheduled assessment activities
- Synchronous collaboration for group work activities
- Presentations or consultations with tutors or topic coordinators
- Experiencing downtime of FLO or related tools and accessing FLO help and support

FLO activities in different time zones

When setting up activities in FLO, learning activities should be accessible and inclusive for students in different time zones. Successful approaches for your FLO topic will depend on whether you have individual students or groups of students in different time zones and which FLO activities you are using.

Plan online activities with consideration to time zones

Ideally, times of synchronous online activities should be universally accessible, within standard business hours in the country students are accessing FLO from. This will likely be more feasible for students in time zones similar to Adelaide (eg. Singapore, China).

Lectures that are live streamed in FLO will likely be pre-timetabled.

Adelaide business hours may create a pattern of regular weekend or outside of business hours online attendance hours for students in different time zones. The following table shows various times around the world for 2 examples 9am Monday and 5pm Friday in Adelaide when daylight saving is not occurring:

Coordinated Universal Time (UTC)*	New York (UTC-0400)	London (UTC+0030)	Dubai (UTC+0400)	Hong Kong (UTC+0800)	Adelaide (UTC+0930)	Auckland (UTC+1200)
Sun 23:30	Sun 7:30 pm	Mon 12:30 am	Mon 3:30 am	Mon 7:30 am	Mon 9:00 am	Mon 11:30 am
Fri 07:30	Fri 3:30 am	Fri 8:00 am	Fri 11:30 am	Fri 3:30 pm	Fri 5:00 pm	Fri 7:30 pm

For accurate time zone and daylight savings time comparison use www.timeanddate.com/worldclock/meeting.html
* UTC was previously known as Grenwich Mean Time (GMT)

For online activities that are not pre-timetabled, consider staggering/rotating dates/times to avoid creating a non-standard study week for students in significantly different time zones to Adelaide.

When creating Collaborate sessions for virtual tutorials you could stagger occurrences to enable students in different time zones to access some of the sessions.

For other FLO activities, setting up groups for students in different time zones and using restrict access date and time settings may help with customising access.

Adjust dates and times to suit users in different time zones

Submission and availability dates on FLO are usually recommended to fall within 09:00 to 17:00 Adelaide business hours. Allowing for flexibility of times outside of local Adelaide business hours may be a suitable strategy if you have students in different time zones. For example, removing date/time criteria or using a midday assignment deadline could be one option. However, these changes could disadvantage onshore students.

In some situations, making adaptations specifically apply to students who are in different time zones will provide a better experience for students:

- For assignments in FLO, you can add a group or user alternative due date for students in significantly different time zones.
- For quizzes, you can change quiz date/time settings for a group or user (override)
- To adapt dates/times for other FLO activities, see the information on how date and time is managed within the activity in the FLO Staff Support page dates and times in FLO.

Build in flexibility for timed or synchronous activities

You can enable students to indicate their best availability for synchronous online activities that may be outside normal business hours.

For scheduling appointments for presentations or reviews with teachers, Scheduler can be a useful tool to provide date/time options.

To help students work with each other at mutually convenient times across time zones, you could provide a Group self-selection activity and setup groups specifically for different time zones.

Record session and provide follow-up discussions

Where synchronous participation is difficult for students, they may depend on recordings for access to sessions.

When you share pre-recorded sessions (eg managing Collaborate recordings, Video lectures, embedding Kaltura videos in FLO) provide options for students in different time zones to discuss these sessions with their peers/teachers e.g. via asynchronous discussion forums or synchronous Collaborate sessions..

Add a local time clock to your FLO topic site

The clock block can be added to any FLO site by a topic coordinator. This is usually added to the top right of the FLO site. The clock block displays the user's current local computer time and the FLO server time. In suitable circumstances, the clock block can assist students with the digital skills of converting due dates and times to their local times.

FLO user profile time zone setting

Students can opt to change their FLO user profile time zone setting. This will automatically change many of their FLO activity dates/times to match their local time zone. Students can find out more about this option in the FLO student help pages.