

Staff focus group 2

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SPEAKERS

Ffion Neal, Participant 2, Craig Morley, Participant 3, Participant 1, Participant 4

C Craig Morley 00:01

Okay, so the first sort of discussion from what we've got to try and keep thing or start things off on a positive, positive foot. Would just be we wants to know, did you have any or do you have any particularly positive experiences of when students have used webcams in your classes in your sessions before in terms of how this might have had time, how this might have made you feel as a teacher, how it made the session go, if anyone's got any really particularly positive experiences of students using webcams that you'd like to share with the group? Participant 1, if you want to jump in

P Participant 1 00:48

I think the thing that that I would say is that I've been running webinars since 2002. And when I first started using webinars, the bandwidth issues were always challenging and problematic. And our starting point was nearly always to ask everybody to switch their cameras, and audio and video off as a starting point. Just purely in some need to save on bandwidth. And so right the way back from from that time, what we started to do was, in terms of looking at student engagement was to look for other cues, rather than being able to look people in the eye. And so I think one of the things that we found with our teaching staff was that staff who were experienced at delivering webinars weren't necessarily looking straightaway for students to have their webcams switched on as a measure of engagement, they were looking for other cues. So they would have little activities built into their sessions, that would be maybe using the chat box, or maybe using a quiz and poll until that told you how many students from the audience said actually completed a particular question. And so for some colleagues, it's less of an issue initially. And what what I tend to do is where I kind of, I tend to think of that as an advanced use of video conferencing tools. So I'll start off in a course of teaching, with very few kind of activities that require students to have their web cameras switched on and over a period of time, i'll try and build up their confidence in their skills in using a tool to a point where they feel comfortable in doing that. But at the same time trying to design an activity that doesn't fundamentally require somebody to have that things which don't, because there's all sorts of good reasons why somebody might not want to do that. And so you've got to kind of try and build in a little bit of flexibility. But one of the things that we found that worked kind of,

well. So we've got a fully online master's program, in, in our, in one of our one of our departments. And we do a little bit of an icebreaker activity. And what what we do is we get people to produce a slide with no words on it, just with pictures on it, that introduces themselves to the rest of the group. And if they feel confident enough to switch their webcam on and do that, then they can't, if they don't, they don't have to switch it on what the slide allows them to develop certain skills. So they have to learn how to create slide in the first instance, to upload and share it into the tool, we do in a very low risk, non threatening way. They can present pictures of themselves, they, they can do cartoons, they can do pictures that are metaphors and things like that they've got loads of freedom, and it's about building their confidence in using using the tool. And what we found is by taking our time, not making it particularly kind of high risk, that over a period of time, we can build up confidence in students in using the tools in more sophisticated ways, which start very, very simple. Look for different types of cues. Don't impose anything, and do it nice and slowly. That of course does require you to have the space in your timetable in order to build those skills up. Over a period of time. Yes, thank you. Some really good points, Participant 2 do you want to jump in?

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Participant 2 04:51

Yeah, just building on that point. I think it is important to build up students skills and confidence around this and to do that in a supportive environment. So it's something they feel confident And because for many students at the end of this, they're going to have job interviews. And it's even more daunting to have a job interview in this kind of setting, rather than going to someone's office, it can be better, more intimidating experience to have a chance to practice that, you know, sharing a slide themselves contributing. So, you know, build building up those skills in a safe and supportive way so that students do feel competent being a being that we are the only have a group of people that are asking them questions a bit scary. So yeah, providing providing that I think is important, because the other positive reflection I'd make is for students who are part time so those working perhaps for the public sector organizations at local government, very often their computers would actually block them from engaging with lots of online materials and resources, so that their their IT department at their organization would stop them using it, including sometimes university resources. But that always fell away in April. So IT departments stopped putting all these blocks on things like zoom and other kinds of things. So part time students could then use their their work computers for the joining this, and that that was certainly one of the one there's organizational institutional blocks that fell away in in April, May a couple of years ago.

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Craig Morley 06:11

Yeah, that's really interesting. But you know, go goes back to that thing that the balance between sort of pedagogical reasons people might not and as you said, some of those more sorts of infrastructure around Levy, you can use certain tools or, or things like that. So that was really interesting. Participant 3, you had your hand up, I don't know if you still want to...

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Participant 3 06:34

Yeah, I'm happy to comment on, we ran Problem Based Learning small group learning for groups of 12 for students in for the Medical program. So over 500 Students for a whole year, so we got quite a lot of information about behaviors. And it's quite simple, really, what what we

took was to try and remove as many barriers as possible. technological barriers, so one of them is having been on mute. So in a small group, it's okay, if people are off mute, unless they've got a background noise. What that does is it sort of slows, people go looking for me to unmute when they've got comments to make. And with Zoom, it's quite smooth. And so you can just chip in and have what is as as near to a face to face on campus discussion as possible. So that's what we tried to achieve. What we did say to the students was that it's compulsory to have your cameras on. So these are medical students that we don't allow them to hide in a cupboard when they come into the on campus, you know, yeah, you have to be present. And I think we've all seen in the past couple of years that the, this is a, a medium that's here to stay. I think things have changed from the beginning of the pandemic, and views of been on camera, to now where people are a lot more comfortable with this a lot more Not, not everybody, of course. But in general, many more people are used to being on camera. And what we found was most a couple of important things is that students needed to turn up and be professionally dressed and presented on what we see their torso, you know, so if, ideally, it needs to be positioned, you know, like a news reader, you never just see the head or the nose or something. So if we're going to use cameras, we need to use them for what they are for. And that's to get some visual communication. Otherwise, you can turn it off, and you because you can still hear me. But what you can't see is whether I'm engaged and animated, and whether I'm emphasizing certain points, or whether I'm enthusiastic about what I'm saying, or whether I'm listening to you like this, you know, so there's lots and lots of cues that we pick up on on camera. And I think it's really important that we use it for those purposes and recognize, you know, it's efficient, this is very visual, we see faces, we communicate, I can't remember the numbers, but something like 75 80% of our communication is actually nonverbal, isn't it? So those are the main benefits that we've seen. As a lecturer as well. If I'm lecturing to 150 students, I don't want to see 150 Little they're of no value to me, because I can't extract enough information out of them. Whereas if I'm gonna, if I'm going to use a larger group and have a one to one and have a questions, then maybe it would be useful to see the student but even then it isn't I've done lots of those large group things and using as participant 1 says, using the chat box and engaging in different ways I asked them to do To use the little emoticons and whatnot, are you there still, and I'll say, give me give me some feedback. I'm staring at a screen here, guys, you know, are you following me 'Come on in the chat box and say give me thumbs up' and stuff like that. And I think that's, that's good from feedback. But large groups, I have a sea of faces and blank little black boxes is of no value. So I think for me, it depends on the size of the screen as well. Of course, some devices, it's rubbish, isn't it on a phone, where you've got you get four people, you got to flick across. Whereas I've got quite a large screen here. And I can get a group of 12 students and I can watch them, and I can respond to them. And I can see them if they're going like that. I can see them a fist smile in a film laughing if they go in, and I can engage fully and properly and they can see each other as well. So that's, that's my comment so far.



Craig Morley 10:53

Yeah, no, I think that's really interesting point, especially, especially around the numbers as well, because when we were looking at some of the the student responses to the surveys again, and a lot of them said a similar, similar sort of thing to you, that they were more likely to use them in those, those smaller classes where there is that added benefit of added value, but a lot of them would say but when they go into a 50s 60s hundreds, it's more likely just to switch

them off and things like that. So it's interesting to see that it's not just from the students saying that it's from the teaching side of it as well and Participant 1, if you want to jump in on anything raised there.

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Participant 1 11:35

I think Participant 4 was before me, actually.

C

Craig Morley 11:38

Participant 4, do you want to jump in? Sorry.

P

Participant 4 11:41

Sure. I think I come at this from a bit of a different perspective. I don't really think we should be privileging webcams, as the sort of most confident, most engaged method of a student participating in class. I personally don't like webcams, personally, like as a student, I don't want to have mine on as a lecturer, I don't want to have mine on. If my lecturer has them on as a student, I don't really care. Honestly, it's quite often distracting, especially if they're showing slides. And if I'm lecturing, and I am trying to make sure like trying to figure out are my students paying attention, I don't really care about their facial or body language, because to me, that's not a good indication of them paying attention, right? Sometimes people concentrate best, especially if, for example, I'm teaching a lot of new information, they might concentrate best by having their head down taking notes, which visually to me, I'm just gonna see the top off their head. Right, they might concentrate best by lying on the on a bed in the dark with their eyes closed, they're not distracted by something else, again, visually, to me, that's not going to look great. Whereas what does kind of unequivocally count as engagement is if I ask a question out loud, and I get relevant responses in the chat, you can't make that up. Like, it's really, really hard to answer to have an answer to a question. I don't ask for something like that. If I asked for emoji, so similarly, I'll do things like, you know, if you're happy with what we've done, or you're ready to move on, use the like, laughing crying emoji, if you're not sure, use a heart, because then it's not just a thumbs up. So again, you have to have listened to what I've said, in order to respond correctly. So I know that you're actually listening. Whereas if you're not like this, like, are you thinking about like, I, it's hard to know what that it's very easy to make assumptions what that means. It's hard to know what that actually means. So, as Participant 1 said, at the beginning, I mean, I've been teaching online since before the pandemic, so I use a lot of chat. I love emojis, especially in teams, how they can use emojis to vote on things in the chat, which is nice, emoticons and zoom are really useful. And I do agree that using webcams does have some like, sometimes we need to teach them how to use them, for example, job interviews. But I think this idea that kind of the goal of technological confidence is that at some point, we get them to the point that they can be confident to use a webcam, but that's like the goal. I think that's an assumption that we should maybe be a little bit more willing to poke at. Why is that inherently considered the best thing? I think maybe it comes down to personal preference a lot more than we currently give it. You know, there are some people like it sounds like Participant 3, you really like looking at students and having that kind of engagement. Great. Good for you. Like I'm not saying that it's bad. But I think right now we have sort of an assumption that kind of what participant 3 wants out of webcams is what we should all want,

and what we should all aim to get our students to. At least that's been my experience that that's kind of been a default assumption. And I think that that That's kind of not doing justice to us or our students or what the tech can do. So I come at webcams a bit differently. Like, it's more situation dependent. There are some contexts where like, we do need to get them to have that confidence. But there are some contexts where like, it's a tool like any other and you kind of pick and choose whether or not you want to, it's not a be all and end all inherent good.

C

Craig Morley 15:24

Yeah, yeah, I think that's really interesting, because we had a similar, similar sort of discussion in the focus group on Friday. And again, a lot of the student responses have been that sort of situation or a huge turn them in and that they will use it. In particular instances where they see adds benefits to them, or benefits to the learnings or others, they may choose not to, not just because of the personal reasons, but because they think well, what's this? How's this helping, helping me learn, Participant 1 i don't know than if you had, you want to come back,

P

Participant 1 16:03

I think I was going to make a similar point in random, maybe maybe slightly articulated differently in that, I think, for me, it kind of boils down to the design of the activities and the session that you're wanting to deliver. And so in participant 3's particular case, in a part of what he's teaching is communication skills. So we're talking about medical students who may be kind of working with patients in an online environment. And so we need to be teaching them about the appropriate ways of engaging with colleagues in that particular context. What I think we sometimes miss with our use of technology is explaining why we're doing it this particular way. And so my colleague of mine, **** talks about spending some time with your students talking about learning how to learn, and explaining the underpinning pedagogical process, the underpinning learning and teaching methods, and articulating to the students the evidence for doing things this particular way. And I think, rather than rather than it being about particular preferences, I mean, sometimes I do things that I'm not comfortable with, because it's not necessarily the way that feels right to me. But it's part of the learning design. This is what we're trying to get across to students. And you've got to kind of, you got to go back to that those basic principles about designing an activity or a session or an engagement for a particular purpose. One of the things, you know, that I was going to kind of point out in relation to Participant 4, I've had a lot of discussions with academic colleagues at the moment who say, well, in a classroom, I can tell when people are listening, because I can see them looking at me, there's loads of great research that shows that that is a terrible way of actually determining whether your students are engaged with the learning. So you might you might think, a student's listened to you. But if possible, if they got long hair, they might have earphones in, they might be listening to a podcast with something else, or they might have a phone under the desk, they might be watching in, watching Netflix. And so there's there's there's some really, really great research about being really careful about in both face to face and online teaching situations, about assumptions around visual cues, your best way of determining engagement is to get students to do something. And, you know, listening is I really like the kind of the notion of active learning, which is anything that students do in a learning and teaching session above and beyond listening and taking notes. So you get them to do something, a

tangible output is a much better way of determining engagement than seeing if somebody's making eye contact with you. And that's a principle that I like to kind of build into my learning design.

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Craig Morley 18:56

This was a good, good sort of middle ground to those to the two of us, should we use it? Should we not use it as well, I think. Oh, sorry. Participant 2, do you want to jump? Yeah,

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Participant 2 19:12

Yeah, I started actually putting it on my slides. So I put a little camera on or camera off symbol on my slides. So if it's a kind, if it's a if it's a lecture, and I basically imparting information, then I have a camera off symbol where it's fine to have your camera off. If they're in a small group, there are five or six of them in a breakout group that has a camera on symbol, and unless they've got serious technical difficulties with bandwidth, I kind of expect them to have their camera on so and that just makes it really clear and it can be really tiring looking at the screen for a long time. So that's that message is completely fine. When we're you know, in broadcast mode to have your camera off. There's no expectations there. So I think that's that symbol helps clarify both from a tutor perspective also participant perspective then what What kind of session is and, and sometimes even we're in plenary. So for the big group and plenary had been activity in plenary that we're putting lots of post it notes on the board or something together, then that can be quite useful to have camera on. And the final time I do ask the camera on is if we will be doing a longer session, and we have like a structured break. So you have a coffee break for 15 minutes, I asked people to put their camera on when they come back from the break. So I can see that people are back from the break, but that the way that that's communicated, is through that camera on off symbol on each of the slides.

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Craig Morley 20:32

Yeah, thanks for having me that's really, really good. It leads us on to some of the some of the next name discussion points that we had in terms of terms you've seen earlier that you might use webcams or ask for webcams at different times. And again, from the student surveys they were so I won't give the answer now to or the responses that they gave to sort of influence what you might say in in this next question or discussion. But all students did raise what they felt were benefits of them, having webcams on or of the people having having having their webcams on. So when they're when they're just bouncing off, you're approaches, asking students to use them at different times and in particular tasks or not. But people's thoughts on what, what the potential benefits of students having or using web webcams at different times can be, and I know we've talked about that a little way in terms of could you potentially use it to measure engagement or things like that, but I wonder if anyone had had any particular views on what you think the benefits of students using webcams might be?

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Participant 3 21:40

Oh, i'll come on, again. Yeah, yes, quite interested in this discussion here, in small groups, what's really important is and particularly for groups that hadn't met before is that we're

what's really important is, and particularly for groups that hadn't met before, is that we're human beings. We absolutely do communicate visually, there's no doubt about that whatsoever. There are numerous studies that demonstrate an enormous amount of visual communication is an important part of, of human communication. It's really important element of teaching and learning as well. And what we need to convey or what students in my students, certainly my experience, are concerned about with the online environment is the lack of personal interaction, the de humanisation, of of learning of that environment. And what the video camera brings is some personalization to that interaction more personalization than if we were just on just just doing it verbally. I think that's the fundamental difference, otherwise, we wouldn't have the cameras, there would be no demand for them. What we're doing here now is for all the meetings, six of us, we can see each other. And if there was no benefit, yet, we this wouldn't have been developed anyway, if there's no need or drive for it. So again, in my experience, when I've switched my camera on for students, and I've had a lot of experience teaching for the Open University in enormously large, very large groups, on the students want to see me at least the some part of of that I agree, it is distracted, and there's evidence that little image of you in the corner is actually of no additional value. And if anything, it can be distracted. But the students wants to see me as a person, I've never particularly if they've never met me before. And they can put a face to the voice that it creates a bit more of a personal connection improves their learning. And again, there's evidence for my literature. So I think students get that personal interaction through it improves the personal interaction. It's not that it's not a substitute, you know, and it's one element of how we interact with students, isn't it? And it's, it's not always appropriate, as I think we've heard, and it's not necessarily the only way we interact with our students. We've got the chat box, we've got verbal, we've got polls, we've got the visual. I think they're all important. They all come together, but this one gives you the there's a much more personal interaction.

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Craig Morley 24:28

Thank you. Thank you. I think that was balanced to what some of the student responses were where they were talking about for them. One of the big, big benefits, they didn't always link it specifically to pedagogic reasons, but that idea of getting to know for students that idea of a sense of sense of community almost and, and things like that. So yeah, I think that's different well, from the students who respond to the survey. That's one of the main the main benefits they see from that as well. So there's quite interesting that you see now sort of the teaching as well. Participant 1, do you want to join in on that?

P

Participant 1 25:08

Yeah, I just thought I'd share a little bit of insight that came back from our internal student survey. So we do a really big Manchester map, big internal student survey every year. And this year, there was a couple of free text comments there about asking students what their best experiences of online provision were, and what things were most in need of improvement, or were most challenging. And what was really interesting, it's kind of, it's linked to the role of web cameras, but it was about breakout rooms. And it was very polarized. Some students were saying that, they felt that the use of breakout rooms, including the use of videos, when they went into those breakout rooms, was very democratizing, it gave everybody an equal say, it was a good way of getting to know the students when they were missing that kind of socialization experience, etc, etc. And they were articulating experiences where they really knew what was expected of them in those breakout rooms. And they were, they were having a

good experience, well that was kind of against another group of students who said it was awful experience, that they found it terrifying. They were really anxious about going into breakout rooms, that they didn't want to switch their cameras on for a variety of reasons, you know, that it. They didn't live in the nicest of places, they didn't want to expose their backgrounds and things like that, you know, for some tools, we've got background fields, but not not for every tool and stuff like that. Also, you know, mentioned kind of being well dressed, you know, some of our students live in social and digital poverty. And they were they didn't want to switch their webcams on because they didn't fail that they looked at their best and things like that. But as we kind of drilled into this a little bit further, one of the things that did come out of it is that a lot of the a lot of the issue was was anxieties around not knowing what to do, because there was an expectation that students would go into these breakout rooms. And the discussion would just begin organically because we know what we want them to talk about. The better experiences were where really clear instructions were provided to students it had taken, you know, it wasn't something that they were chucked into right at the beginning of the course, they build up those kind of, they build up the skills where it was required. They'd been coached on how to put background filters on etc, etc. So part of it was acquiring the right kind of digital skills to be able to engage what the main thing was to design, purposeful reasons for using Breakout Rooms. And they think purposeful reasons for turning your camera on. And so that kind of goes back to the point that I was making kind of previously, but the experience was very polarized. And what we found is that some staff, who were better experience with online provision, were understanding of that, and designing things in the right way. Other colleagues who had no previous experience, 75% of our staff before the pandemic had never ever participated or delivered a webinar. And suddenly, bam, they're doing it every single day. It was a bloody, terrifying experience for a lot of colleagues, and very, very difficult and challenging. And I think we've learned a lot out of that. And as a consequence of that, and so I'll go back to the point I made before the learning design, the purposefulness of cameras and stuff has to be articulated and built into what we're providing for students.

C

Craig Morley 29:04

Yes thank you. Good. Yeah, nothing. Can we just seen in the chat there that their Participant 4 was agreeing with what you said that about that purposeful design and things like that? And, again, that's, that's enough. For again, from the what we've heard from the students in the survey so far is that, that they would agree with that, I would say, say by and large from those responses about know knowing, knowing why they need to do this, why they, what the benefit is for them, what those expectations are and things like that, which again, brings us on to another sort of discussion.

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Participant 3 29:45

Can i comment there, Craig? I agree entirely with that. That's good pedagogy, isn't it that that's, you know, having a well structured learning session is important whether you're online with cameras or not, you know, a lot of anxieties students will show in small group teaching small group learning, they'll show whether they're on, on computer online or live. And in many cases, some of the anxieties are greater when the live because the viscerally they're on there, they're flushing and sweating. And that sort of adds adds to the situation there. But I agree that it the design of the purpose of the activities is critically important to to ensure that the session is well structured, we found exactly the same thing as well, staff that have said, I'll have a q&a

zoom session, and then the students turn up. They don't ask any questions and the staff come back and they say, crapless, let's zoom business. It doesn't work. I had a q&a session, nobody asked anything. Because you haven't designed any, there's no structure to you to the session at all. You're not pulling the students out, you're not doing the job. So it's not it's not surprising, but I think those things are sort of would would exist, whether we had cameras or not. But I think it's important to recognize at what point do you use the camera and what, what benefits to do they have? Yeah.

C Craig Morley 31:17

Yeah, that's really good. That's really good point. Again, it sort of leads us on nicely to the next sort of discussion. discussion points, again, was, again, from those student surveys that we had, we noticed, a lot of students were saying that they didn't particularly mind being being asked by staff to put their webcams on at certain time. But what they always said was, they would want those expectations, clearly in terms of why they were being asked what the benefit was, so that they knew going in, what those expectations were and this comes a little bit off your points as well, you said you had those those images of camera and on camera, said in terms of students knew what those expectations were not just at the start of the class, but throughout the whole session as well. I was wondering if, if what does, what sort of strategies does everyone else use to sort of let students know what your expectations are?

P Participant 2 32:19

Just one more point to feed on. The other expectation I have is that people join sessions from a computer. So some of the sessions that I'm involved with involve using other things. So they'll use perhaps a virtual whiteboard like jam board, and I'll be using zoom for the video bit. And those are really, really difficult to do from a phone or tablet to get the functionality of those things working. So you know, there's an expectation that people are in front of their computer when they join the session. I mean, that that relates to your earlier point about digital poverty, that not everyone has those things, but the sessions are structured around, especially around the fact that there's a certain amount of technological hardware capability there to be able to have both both a keyboard and and the camera that function.

C Craig Morley 33:04

Yeah, I think that's really got good point two fingers, it's a lot of time when we talk, talk about online you can fall into that trap that it's, it's, it's naturally much more inclusive and things like that. But as you say, the money that goes into being a students, having those devices can sometimes be a block on that as well in. So Participant 4, do you want to jump in?

P Participant 4 33:28

Yeah. So on the question of kind of what do I tell students about camera use? So I pretty much say the exact same thing. And I say it in every every single session. And I don't just do it at the beginning of the module, I say it at the beginning of every single session. So that absence doesn't cause confusion, essentially. And so what I say, you know, Hi, everyone, welcome to

the session. Today's session is designed to be interactive. So I am going to make sure you know, you do need to be engaging in the session. So we're going to do something in a minute, that's going to test out to make sure everyone's able to use the chat, you will need to participate in the chat. Whether you choose to use your microphone, choose to have your camera on or off is entirely up to you. You can have it on at some point, you can turn off other points, you can change your mind halfway through the session, you can have it on today and off tomorrow, it's really up to you make the decision that works best for you. And I literally just say that every time it's also the very first slide I show in any sort of session, and it's literally an identical slide. So every single time they see me they have the exact same expectation. It does tend to be that people are more willing to put them on as the module goes on. That tends to be the case but my guidance and expectations about it quite literally is copied and pasted. Like it doesn't change. And the kind of the points that I'm trying to hit there are that I want to nip in the bud any anxiety about 'oh, I turned my camera on once Now the lecture expects me to keep it on.' Right, I want to kind of nip that in the bud. So if people, for example, want to have it on in a breakout room that's smaller, but then don't want to have it on in the main room, even if the main room is only like 20 people, they aren't inhibited from putting it on and the breakout room with the expectation that they're not allowed to then turn it off. That's kind of one thing I'm trying to stop. The other thing I'm trying to stop is the idea that you have to sort of prove to me your need to have it off. I don't want students to feel like they have to actually tell me that they think that their background is not good enough to be shown, if they want to tell me that fair enough. But I don't want them to be put in a position where they think they have to justify their decision. And that that justification might make them feel vulnerable. Whether it's digital poverty that we've already talked about. Another one I've had quite often are Muslim women, who if they're studying at home, are not wearing a hijab, but if they're on camera, in a class school environment, then have to put on a hijab. And the other big one, a lot of my work is with neurodiverse, disabled and mentally ill students. We've already talked about anxiety. We've not talked about autism and eye contact, we've not talked about ADHD and fidgeting. We've not talked about physical disabilities and chronic pain, were sitting still in front of a camera for an extended period of time, literally may not be physically possible. i If students want to come talk to me about that. Fair enough, they are more than welcome. The next sentence I have at the beginning is if you have any accessibility needs, please let me know. But I don't ever want students to feel that the expectation is that they should have their camera on unless they have a good reason. And that they have to justify what that is. Because I think that that creates a lot of pressures and anxieties. So that's how I approach it. Pretty much in every session. I'm trying to think I don't think I do anything different if it's like a small group versus a large lecture. Obviously, in a large lecture, they don't turn their cameras on. I don't expect them to, but I do still say it.

C

Craig Morley 37:07

Yeah, I think everyone's, it was really, really good point again, that we have the similar similar sorts of discussion around those issues on in the focus group on friday. And remember one of one students in particular within the survey responses as well as they were talking about how how webcams help them a lot with with that reading and things like that. So again, it's sort of, it's hard to balance all the different competing things at all, just as it just as in a natural classroom, not not a live classroom, physical classroom and meeting all those different sometimes competing expectations, I think it is useful to to be aware of those things well, so thank you for thank you for raising now, Participant 1 if he wants to jump in.

P

Participant 1 37:58

Just because said, like Participant 4 said I, I try and articulate for every session, what's going to happen during the session, particularly with use of technology. My name is a little bit different from from all the universities and that we through the pandemic, we went to what's called a block delivery model. So we moved away from kind of terms and semesters, and each of our 30 credit units was delivered over a six week block with 6 weeks of teaching. However, I strongly made the case that six weeks be been very short, I wanted to have a welcome week at the beginning of it where I essentially did a digital induction, which was really, really low risk activities. And two things. One is that a kind of a set, I set some online tasks for every student before the start of the course, which was designed to try and in a very low risk way, address all of the technical and access issues that students might have before the teaching started properly. And so why we use the VLE for this particular purpose. So we sent all of the students a joining, a set of joining instructions. And that went via email and via teams. And it said, you've got three things to do. One is to log into the VLE. And then you'll find a welcome week set of activities. And in the Welcome Week activities they were asked to log into the team space and post a GIF that essentially explained their feeling about this particular topic or subject and stuff and to introduce themselves to other participants. We then asked them to make sure that they could access a couple of other sort of the library and their timetable that was online and things like that. And and then we said that this was all leading into a welcome webinar. And in the welcome webinar, what we did was we kind of had a little introductory icebreaker type activity using all of the technologies that we were going to use throughout the, throughout the course. But they're all very, very low risk. And we said to Students, if you're having technical problems, now's the time to have that, because we'll get these all sorted out before the real teaching starts, etc, etc. And in doing those set of activities, we made sure that everybody was correctly enrolled in Moodle, everybody was in the correct team space and channel etc. And we give some basic instructions around, you know, how to switch webcams on how to put background filters on all of that kind of stuff. But I think like participant 4, the ports I tried to kind of build into that was one of flexibility. So that for some students, webcams are very important, for other students, there are really good reasons why they might want to do that. And we didn't want to kind of impose right away from the start a particular way of working, we did explain that in some instances, they would be required to, say one of the things in my courses was with with students doing a presentation based on an activity that they had chosen to do, and to present it to the others. And I think from a professional point of view, we felt that it was important that during their presentation, as Participant 3 said, it was important for the rest of the class to be able to see who was who was presenting, at least for part of their presentation, even if it was just to introduce themselves. So we go some flexibility in that as well. And I think that's an important thing to try and build into your your activities. Rather than making things absolutely compulsory, because they can really build in tension. The point about accessibility is a really, really good one, we've done a lot of thinking around this. So we've got kind of provision for British Sign Language provision. And you know, being able to pin a particular video when you've got a sign language interpreter in the session is really important. So some of those little technological skills are really important to help students to develop. But being clear and consistent, as participant 4 says, I think is really important.

C

Craig Morley 42:27

Yeah, yeah, that's really interesting, because I've just seen participant 2's response to that about, about sort of how we can't just make assumptions on how digitally digitally fluent students are on because their younger maybe mean that are going to know how to use all of

these technologies and things like that, remember that sort of discussion that was going on in the research about how appropriate is to use as a digital native digital migrants and all those, those type of things. I think that's a really good point that I say sometimes sometimes gets forgotten about a little bit when we're talking about webcams and how students can show they, they engage in different ways and things like that. So yeah, I think, again, from those surveys, I would say they came across particularly important that students want to be able to sort of develop those skills and be shown different ways to do sort of...

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Participant 2 43:24

It sort of builds a bit on Participant 3's point from earlier. But I think it is really important that students that we do support students in developing those skills for work contexts, because as well as the work I do in the university, I also work on an early careers program that's run by one of the professional bodies in my area for for impairment of managers and ecologists, and the professional body and a group of employers got together, because they're feeling that students are not leaving graduate programs with the sets of skills they need for the workplace. So some of those are kind of technical and policy skills that students can write essays, but they can't actually do lots of things doing their jobs. But that students also need skills to be able to work in a business context online as well. So one of the employees have brought in a thing where in their team meeting every Monday, the team take turns giving a presentation on a topic. And that means you get some learnings in that work team. But it also means that everyone in the team, including the new graduates get a chance to give an online presentation. So I think employers are seeing this is a really, really important thing and we are doing our students a disservice if we're not in a university setting, helping them develop and build those those skills they need for their their careers.

C

Craig Morley 44:42

Yeah, yeah, that's pretty cool.

P

Participant 3 44:44

Sorry, Craig. I can comment if that's okay. In I think it clearly depends upon the cohort of students and the makeup of the view of your class and purpose and aims of what the teaching session the learning session is about. Most of my experience with the small group learning is with medical students. And obviously there are particular cohort for for all sorts of reasons, professional reasons, as well, we insisted that students were visible on the cameras. And that if the worst situations for individual students were, that was a difficulty, that they should have that conversation with their tutor privately. And of 530 students that we had none of them, not a single one of them failed to put their their camera on. There was some leniency there, you know, obviously, if there's a noise or if there's, you know, you have an environment that is not conducive to that, then of course, you can flick your camera off, but again, for for the learning environment for the students to see each other. And to get that verbal communication was important, and is important for them going forward in their professional lives as well. And as participant 2 said, when our students go from here, not just medical students or students, of course, one of the life skills that is now an expectation is for them to present online. And I think where students are having difficulty, as we've heard, having, having that providing support for

students to develop these skills is critically important. You know, there are there are students, of course, that do have difficulties around it for all sorts of reasons. Wherever we can support them to do that, I think it's important to recognize that and support them to resolve the issues as if it's possible to do so of course, yeah.

C

Craig Morley 46:58

Yeah, thank you. I think that's definitely something that's come on, I say you, within the discussions that we've had in terms of recognizing those individual needs and approach and things like that, just as we would do in a normal physical process, it doesn't. I don't think for me, that changes just because we're online, it's about how we can support individuals and groups of students in the best way. And, and although the focus we've had so far in our discussions been around the potential benefits to students and how we can make things better for them and support them. But again, a lot of a lot of the initial discussions in social media and blogs and things like that, when we all made that transition to online teachers around sort of staffs perceptions of teaching to or teaching classes, when webcams were using, they're potentially sometimes emotional responses to how it made them feel as a teacher and things like that. And I wonder if anyone had those sorts of feelings or what what sometimes might be your, your thoughts around when students don't have or they don't use webcams Is that something that you've had a particular I don't want to say negative button, negative response to or an emotional response to almost in relation to your, your own approach to teaching or if anyone else has had that sort of response to those those blank screens and things like that.

P

Participant 1 48:36

I suspect we're all we're all very different in that respect. It just, you know, we've got five people here. We're teaching very different subjects, we're teaching in very different contexts. And we've all developed kind of a context specific approach that that that works for us. And I think I think that's really important. The problem with the pandemic is that people had such a short amount of time to be able to develop the skills that they might need. That, that it was. Some of my colleagues have described it as the most stressful professional working year of their lives. And it really stretched a lot of us, not only technically, but but pedagogically as well. I think one of the things that surprised me a little bit I don't know why, with hindsight, I don't know why. But it surprised me a little bit. The primacy that the video platform took during the pandemic, I, I had expected that the virtual learning environment would be used a lot more effectively in a lot more widely to develop independent, self paced learning in a lot of subject areas than it was, but it seems that the, that what happened with colleagues is that the virtual classroom resonated more closely with a face to face teaching experience. Then then the other environments, I think I've lost connection now. Am I still with you?

C

Craig Morley 50:27

Yeah, the sound still coming through it looks like just the video is out.

P

Participant 1 50:31

So yeah so the the what people tried to do is to replicate online the face to face teaching

so yeah, so one, the what people tried to do is to replicate online, the face to face teaching approach that they were previously comfortable with. And I think we all know that that is, that is a very difficult thing to do. And so we, you know, we found a lot of kinds of situations where, you know, staff were teaching almost exclusively in virtual classrooms and their online VLE spaces were absolutely terrible. They were just kind of dumps of loads and loads of stuff for students to read, and there was no indication of how those things might get used. And so the, you know, the issues around, cameras been on and cameras been off, we're actually kind of much less important than the fact that students were utterly confused about what they were supposed to be doing in their online teaching experience, full stop. And I think it's taken, you know, a good two years for colleagues to start thinking about the a wider range of tools that are available to them to teach online. And of course, now as we've kind of, like many institutions, we've flipped back completely the other way. And we're getting sort of lots of messages now that all of our teaching should be face to face wherever possible. And we're potentially losing some of the flexibility or the benefits that were brought to our provision by the pandemic and that we've flipped back too far the way.

C

Craig Morley 52:09

Yeah, that's really good when I see people who have nodding heads and things like that, so participant 4 and a few hands, your hands up, and then participant 2, we can jump to you as well.

P

Participant 4 52:18

Yeah. To be honest, I found the move to online teaching and online learning a massive relief, I was really glad that I could teach. And I didn't have to look at all my students all the time. You probably can guess I'm not neurotypical. I have a disability. It is exhausting to teach in person. For anyone. Like let's be clear, we all know that it is exhausting to teach in person. We love it. But it is quite exhausting. But there are extra ways for me that teaching in person is exhausting, that are replicated, if suddenly you're online on zoom and everyone's got their cameras on. So being able to teach and not half, like being able to pace around the room as I lecture and not have to worry about what I look like while I'm doing that, particularly let's be real, as a young female academic, not having to worry about what I wear to class in the same way, was a huge relief, I was actually able to take on more teaching, because of it than I literally could have before when we were doing everything in person. So I was actually more able to engage in the thing that I loved because we could be at home and I didn't have to deal with fluorescent lights. Because I could have my camera off and pay attention and not take as much energy. And I know for a fact that I had at least some students who felt the same way. Because they told me this explicitly. Now, that's not true for all students, some students really did find it very isolating. Looking at black screens. I know that for some of my colleagues, it was incredibly isolating, looking at black screen. So I'm not negating anyone else's experience. I think multiple different reactions can all be true at the same time. But something that was quite frustrating at the beginning of the pandemic, similarly to what participant 1 talked about was at staff meetings, for example. There was a sort of automatic assumption that of course, this must be bad. Of course, we all hate staring at a blank screen. Of course, we all hate this. And that kind of idea that we all must be feeling the same thing was really frustrated. And particularly given as we all know, the power dynamics in academia, again, young woman, you're not really the kind of person that's meant to talk in a staff meeting, at least not in my field. It was really alienating to be in an environment where everyone was acting as if the sky

was falling all the time. Which in some ways it was true. Like we didn't have a lot of time to adjust and it's not something within our control. And there are definitely, you know, if we had all had the as much time as we wanted, I think people would have been less panicked. And that's completely fair. But I think this kind of assumption that it was horrible for everyone was actually harder to deal with than going into a classroom and having no visual input of whether my students were engaged. Like, yes, I had to change my teaching style. Yes, that took time that took energy. But that felt more possible than sitting through staff meetings of everyone going, I hate this. I hate this. I hate this. I hate this. I hate this. And going Oh, actually, I don't hate this. How much more other Does that make me? Can I even say that out loud without being shouted down? I don't think so. So I'm not saying like, I never want to go back teaching face to face. But there are some silver linings of the flexibility.

C

Craig Morley 56:02

Yes, around the theme, naturally, really good point, we've had similar sorts of discussions in our team about about it's been a real split of those who do like you say, didn't didn't like teaching online. But then as those who have who really enjoyed teaching online, and then I'll mention some of those things that we could do online. And we've gone back to the physical space and not been able to use some of those tools effectively, and things like that. So I'd say that's, that's sort of not found to be replicated that perception that you given there as well. So that's a good point. I mean, I don't know if you

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Participant 2 56:38

Sort of fight off, I think some colleagues who really hated it, they take they took their model of what they were doing before, which was getting a two hour lecture, and then took exactly that thing, and then put it online. And then it went really badly. And they hated it and the students hated it. And but perhaps the thing they were doing beforehand, wasn't that great anyway, so perhaps a two hour lecture without a comfort break, or any interactive activity whatsoever was not wonderful in the first place. And it just magnified, it shows it up the fact that pedagogy was problematic beforehand. And if there had been activities built into it, and interactivity and students doing short tasks, and watching the video clip and work in small group, that that could have then transferred with technology to an online model. But perhaps there were pedagogically things that were not great about how they were doing that. The teaching experience essentially hadn't changed as I was doing my undergrad that you know, the lecturers model their teaching on what they had as a student, just basically, a two hour lecture. And maybe you have a seminar once a week where you discuss a paper for not not not not pedagogically building, I guess, right? It's not surprising that perhaps people didn't use more of those virtual learning environments. If you look at places that do like the university, they have a team of like 12 people that spend two years putting those together. So it's not surprising over fortnight people didn't, didn't put that together. But there are there are really good models out there, where where students have that that virtual learning environment, but it needs the staffing and resources, but just academic staff, but also all the other professional staff that go into making those those Open University modules work works so well as a virtual learning environment.

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Participant 3 58:19

Can I comment there? Yeah, it's, I think, for us, it's been a cultural shock. And I think it's important to recognize that lecturing exists for a reason and has done for 1000s of years, certainly, hundreds of years in, in universities in Britain, where the primary role for many of our staff is all that they view their primary role as well, is their research. And they, they can pick up their stack of they used to pick up the stack of slides, they can go down with their PowerPoint stack each year, and rattle off their 10 lectures that they have to do. Their lecturing, they're not teaching was a fundamental difference in the role they're on what the online environment doesn't lend itself to is lecturing, who wants to have a 15 minute online lecture, you know, I, Martin Well, is very articulates this well with his analogy or metaphor of the theater where you know, if you are going to the theater, if you ask a student, Have you have you asked anybody do you prefer to watch a play online or fake or go there face fit? Of course the answer is going to be I want to go to the theater and physically be there because there's all sorts of The other stimuli that I'm getting there. And it's the same with a lecture, if we ask students, you know, we'd want to prefer a lecture online or a lecture. Face to face. Of course, you know, who wants to sit watching a flat, boring because you lose a lot as well don't you in the video, if you just take a boring lecture on putting it on video, it's even more boring. And for students to then go home and be sat in their rooms watching four lectures, of 50 minute videos all afternoon, I can't think of anything more horrendous. So the environment doesn't lend itself to. So the online environment is is an active learning environment and should be used as such. It's not for passive dumping of, of material in that way. So I think we're talking about a cultural change here. And when when the shift was made, certainly most of our stuff for right temporarily, we're putting the lectures up online, will be going back to normal. And that's one of one of the reasons why they do invest. And we're reluctant to invest the time and effort required to do the other activities as well. So it's a big, big shift. This is we're talking about a cultural shift. And an identity shift, we're called lecturers.

P

Participant 1 1:01:21

Participant 3 has made a really funny, really important point there. And Manchester met we're widening participation institution. And I've been doing this student survey now since 2012. And we do a kind of a keyword search every year to extract related comments from about 50,000 free text comments that students leave. And the most the word that actually gets the most tail related comments, or is this PowerPoint. And it's usually in the context of the phrase 'death by PowerPoint.' So for the last six years, our students have been telling us that they do not like lectures, that they want to be more actively involved in their teaching. They don't want to be passive recipients of information that they can read PowerPoint slides and lecture notes for themselves. And so we've seen this kind of, or we've tried to have this shift away. We haven't been successful. And it's it's not that many institutions are kind of wrestling with at the moment, because it's part of it. It's such a huge cultural shift that for, for many colleagues, but I think what the shift online, there was a real magnifying glass on that. And so where the, the transmissional method of delivery was, it was seen as been, you know, kind of the main cultural approach to teaching. That was where we saw the biggest challenges for colleagues in shifting online. And that probably is also where we've seen the biggest concerns over students not putting their cameras on. Because staff who've come from that teaching culture, that kind of visual cues that you get in a teak face to face teaching situation, act sort of taken away from them. And so they feel that teaching online is a deficit model from from their experience. And I think Participant 3 is absolutely right, that cultural shift here, is has been the biggest, the biggest challenge and the shift away from transmission approaches towards more active learning is something that we're going to have to really think about as we transition into

whatever the new normal might be. One of the things that we've really found is the thing that students like more than anything about online provision is flexibility. It allows them to take a greater deal of control over where, when and how they engage with their learning. Allowing them to maximum get the maximum benefit out of that will go back to the point I've been kind of coming back to how we design our provision. And that's, that's part of the cultural shift that Paul mentions, it's going to, it's not going to happen overnight. It's going to take us a long while and we're gonna have to invest in the pedagogical and technical skills of both our staff and our students in parallel. If we're going to be able to get the best advantage out of the flexibility that digital provision provides, but also to maximize, you know, Manchester is a University of place. Students really value being in Manchester they really value the kind of the physicality of being on our Campus, they talk about their incredible new learning spaces that we've built as part of our capital investment, or their institutions have invested the same. And to get the most out of both of those things, is going to go to take us a while, and a lot of investment in staff and students.

C

Craig Morley 1:05:22

Yeah, thanks. That's really interesting point in terms of that long term development, remember again some of the discussions that that that were going on in sort of newspapers and things like that, where we're sort of online teaching again, had to go to a bad place, but then people can look back and say, well, that's get away it doesn't emergency we moved on, teacher, maybe it's not given the full picture of what, what we can do shifting towards long term and cultural shift that you and Participant 3 were talking about, that is really important to recognize in our own practices. Well, and and that's sort of takes us on quite nicely to the last discussion point that we've got an idea of sorts of active engagement in all the importance to active engagement in online learning and, and how maybe it's not as suitable for that passive recipients or information transfer approach. And again, in the survey, even we would ask them sort of how do what activities do staff use to enable them to gauge student engagement and student understanding? One thing we noticed when we were looking at that was there's, there's quite a disparity in how some staff viewed active engagement within the classroom. So sort of joining in those polls using jam boards, jam boards, jam boards and whiteboards. But then how that was sometimes you differently to the engagement students did in their own time. So the taken notes to following up with research and things like that. I wonder if how, how have you gone about sort of trying to gauge shoe and engagement not just within the immediate Class, Class space, but the things that students might do outside of the classroom, as, has being online, sort of allowed you to do that in in different ways? And to understand how students are taking that forward themselves? I mean, you had your hand up before I finished if you wanted to jump in.

P

Participant 2 1:07:29

Yeah, I think just just being on the class bit for everyone, just like what I do with it afterwards, I suppose that I have found Jamboard as a technology quite useful for that in the way that say you have a group of a nice 30 students, and they're in little breakout groups of five each, and they've got a purposeful activity to do and their jam board was an area that that they're filling in, that you can like, look across and see 'Oh, group one, three, and five, all look great, they will route two haven't posted anything yet'. So you might drop into group two first, just to see how they're getting on if they're doing the task. Maybe they have, they're just not posting on the

board. But their best be the one that you then prioritize, to just check in with them first see how they're getting on. So and so yeah, I find technology quite a useful way. And in some ways, it's like you're in a room, you could see that maybe group four hadn't written anything on their on their flip chart paper yet. But it's a way of kind of keeping that overview of how a group are getting on when they're split into into smaller groups. So as a as a solution to, I guess, looking at interaction, whether people are purposefully engaging with a task, I found that useful technology.

C Craig Morley 1:08:40

Yeah, thank you, Participant 4, if you wanted to follow up on?

P Participant 4 1:08:44

Yeah, so very similar. I use Padlet. For a lot of the same things. I used Google Docs for a lot of the same things. And I'll also use them between sessions as well. So okay, your group, you've got a Padlet, your group, you've got a Google Doc, you know, but sometime between now and next session, here's what you need to do, the instructions are at the top of the doc type thing. And of course, I can set that up if I want to kind of get notifications. So I can see like, oh, yeah, they're doing stuff. Or I can decide, you know, I don't really care when they do it just that they do it. So you know, I'm not going to be bothered about the notifications during as you know, as long as we get it by next class. So those kinds of tools, I find it can make quite a nice bridge between live teaching and asynchronous activities without having to go through the VLE in the same sort of way. Right, you put a link in the chat during the session you've ever opened up during the session, they bookmark it, and then you just go back to it next time. I've often found that makes it like I get a lot more students engaging in asynchronous things when it's delivered that way, because like they've already opened it, they already know where is like there's no additional startup cost. On the other hand, I think there's no reason inherently you cannot do that with real things you just kind of have to introduce it the same way like in the actual class, rather than like, oh, yeah, at some point, please log on to the VLE. Like, in my experience that some students will do that, but you're looking at like 1/3 will do it versus if you do in class, you're looking at at least two thirds. But I think in terms of asynchronous, like properly, like, doing a lot of things asynchronously, I really liked that I really enjoy it. I in fact, designed and delivered an entirely asynchronous course for undergraduates where they never saw my face. Not once there was no lecture element. I didn't record like it was maybe a little too asynchronous. I will take that feedback. To be fair, it was before the pandemic, so we didn't have all of the nice bits of technology. But that actually worked really well. Literally, everything was asynchronous, so students could do whatever they wanted. You know, there were deadlines, but they didn't often at the same time, what I find is the biggest kind of barrier to doing that is how much agency and time you have over your curriculum. So I am a very young academic, I don't teach my own modules. I've taught my own module once, like my own actual module, where I get to design, everything. The rest of the time, I'm a GTA on someone's module, I'm a guest lecturer on someone's module, I'm a junior lecturer on some of the module. And so I can tweak things, I can change the reading list, I can change the lectures, I can bring in guest speakers. How much I can fundamentally change the structure where it's a weekly lecture in a weekly seminar, not so much. And that creates a lot of barriers to building in asynchronous activities that are kind of considered by both me and the students as being like equally valid, and therefore worthy of time and energy. It builds in a lot of barriers, with kind of

act as learning. I think that's a big challenge. And I've seen that kind of across my cohort of people that, like, realistically, I'm the youngest possible millennial that exists, my younger sister is Gen Z, like, I didn't know how to use Moodle, because Moodle is older tech than I am. Like, it's not digitally native, because Moodle is bloody old looking. That's the problem is it's too old for me to be used to it. And I think that's probably true of a lot of my students. But my cohort of people are not necessarily in positions where we can be designing modules necessarily. And I think I wasn't expecting that to be the biggest barrier, I was certainly expecting a lot of other things to be. But practically year after year, that's the thing that I feel most gets in the way in terms of bringing in more active learning in terms of balancing asynchronous and live, whether that's online or in person.

C

Craig Morley 1:12:55

You think thank you for that. And I know Participant 1 had your hand up, anything you want to add on to that?

P

Participant 1 1:13:03

Just follow up on that. And we so our student surveys for years has been telling us that students wanted to be more actively engaged in their learning and teaching and less passive. Our teaching staff surveys were telling us that stuff aspired to that. However, they didn't feel that they had the digital tools for the job. And so they were using lots of free tools, like Padlet, like Kahoot, you know, quizzing and polling tools and stuff. But that was really challenging because they had concerns about things like getting students to sign up for free accounts, and GDPR problems, that they were really worried about the changing of terms and conditions. You know, padlet, for example, used to be completely free, stuff get used to use it suddenly Padlet change to a commercial model, you have to start paying for it. All of those kinds of things were really problematic for teaching staff. And so before the pandemic, we were beginning to think about how we might provide an institutional toolkit. Along comes the pandemic, we're all teaching via teams that are institution or zoom. And when those tools first became available, they didn't have native quizzing and polling tools. They didn't have very good whiteboards built into them. They didn't have interactive tools, they were actually quite passive environments. And so we invested very quickly in licensing a set of interactive apps for teaching and learning for all of our teaching staff that we made available to all of our students as well. And so they were there to address that kind of issue of being able to design interactive activities for online provision that would give you the sorts of cues for engagement that you might not get visually. So you know the quizzing and polling tools tell you how many students have signed up for the session? How many have completed this particular question? And, as you know, against, you know, 15 out of 20 students have completed the poll, you know, that kind of thing is in good, good good queues. And what we were finding, though, is that some colleagues who were used to lecturing, really struggled to think about how they could design activities in their teaching. So me and my colleague, came up with a, with a little model, which we call the trek model, I'll share a link to it in the in the chat space there, which was how to design really simple, interactive tasks into your learning and teaching using the set of digital tools that we'd provided institutionally. And we've had a lot of success with colleagues, because you can get them to look at their PowerPoint presentation and say, Where are the opportunities to change these presentations in your activity. So where there's lists of things where there are definitions where there are controversial topics and stuff like that, you can look at a PowerPoint presentation, and you can

kind of look at opportunities for embedding simple MCQs and things like that in it. And we've had a lot of success, working with colleagues doing those those kinds of things. And then to take it a stage further, you can extend some of those activities in front of the live session. So you can set trigger activities in the VLE, or you can set consolidation aspects of it into the VLE, as follow up and use them as a bridge to link into your next session. And to kind of provide in that simple frame where we've had quite a bit of bit of success with that goes back to the original thing about designing for activities, rather than designing for presentations.

C Craig Morley 1:16:45

Thanks for sharing that. Definitely, definitely take another look at that after after the session. I know, I've looked at it before when we spoke. So I would recommend that to people as well. And yeah,

P Participant 3 1:17:00

Can i comment, Yeah a couple of things. The online environment, as I've already alluded to, and I sort of pushing in our faculty is, is an active learning environment, it does give you the opportunity to engage with your students and to interact with your students. And what do they say, a student in an online lecture, every student has a front row seat, every student can put something in the chat box or can engage in some way, which is not the case in a live interact a live, like face to face on campus lecture. In, in my I've got a couple of ways of interacting with students primarily. And there are lots of apps out there. And I think one of the dangers is and that has been overdone. Is is too many ways of interacting with students. And we create what they call a transactional distance where there's so many barriers that, you know, it's that becomes around the tech rather than what you're trying to do here. You're just trying to engage with a student, I am a big fan of the chat box, you know, I'll be, and I changed my style of lecturing where I do a lot more polling of the students, I might be telling them about something but before I start, I'll just ask them, okay, who knows about... in the chat box, any? What would What's this, you know, what's this cell type or whatever it might be that I'm talking about, just to try and, and in some ways, it helps me to gauge for the present knowledge of the audience as well. So I'm sort of checking in and making sure that, you know, for what I'm about to tell them I'm hitting the right, the right note. The other thing that I've got some experiences with is learning analytics, and through the Open University, we have a dashboard, and I can see all the interactions my students have made throughout the semester. And it's the Oh, you have such a large data set that what they can do is so I can see a curve of a student's interaction. And it can predict the probability based on years of all the students the probability of the students submitting that next piece of work, for example. And then what I can do if I'm concerned about that student is I'll write an email, not to say I've been watching you or anything, it's just to say how things going you know, there's different levels of escalating the intervention is just another tool to be able to monitor students and we can you can see their interaction and it's open students know that, you know, they can use the analytics as well. So, I think there's for online learning or the online learning aspects of blended learning program is to be able to see that data because we can see and record every interaction students make with the learning materials is just another additional tool that staff have to be able to provide a more personalized teaching to students. So that more interaction allows you to give the students the right support that they need at the right time as well.

C

Craig Morley 1:20:27

Yeah, thanks. Thanks. Again, I'd say I'd say from from some of the responses we've had around from students around the chatbox, even better than that they sometimes preferred, then some of those external tools as well. So fingers are really simple but powerful tool to, to use to start to gauge that student engagement and understanding as well. And what to do here to be that person who draws these conversations to an end, but I think we've made it through exactly 12:30pm at the minute. And I think we'll call it to an end again, I'd like to really thank thank everyone for, for getting involved and talking about your experiences and opinions. Now, I think it'd be been really valuable for me and Fi in terms of how we can, how we can feed this into the wider project as well. And so just in terms of what will happen next. So we've still got, we've got the students focus groups coming up in the next few days. And then once we've done that, Fi and I have got the long and arduous task of putting the transcript together, and then silence finalize all the survey data and the the food risk group data to pull out those common themes and things like that. The plan is, once we've done that, is to disseminate as widely in as many different formats as possible. So that's workshops, infographics and reports and things like that. And what we'll hope to do is as you've contributed to this, what we're going to do is pull everyone put everyone into a list, and make sure that you're some of the first people who get access to those, the outputs that we be put into this project as well. So just as an event, thank you for being thank you for being involved in the project we have really, really, really appreciated. So thanks for taking the time to to join us and hopefully we'll be able to chat to you again in the future soon as well.

F

Ffion Neal 1:22:24

Thank you everyone!