The impact of COVID-19 on UK higher education students
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The impact of COVID-19 on UK higher education students: experiences, observations, and suggestions for the way forward.

Abstract

Purpose

This study examines the experiences of UK higher education students and the impact that emergency-imposed changes had on their learning, teaching and assessment (LTA) during the lockdown. It reflects on the views of students on how these changes impacted their education and personal circumstances. It makes suggestions, based on student observations, on how educators might support students’ LTA learning experiences more effectively.

Design/methodology/approach

The study employs an anonymous online questionnaire, imposed by lockdown and closure of universities, to gather the views of HE students across the UK on how covid-19 and lockdown affected their education and personal circumstances. Using a cross-sectional study, participants were asked to complete several questions, providing quantitative and qualitative data which is analysed for the study. A total of 349 participants took part in the questionnaire and data were analysed descriptively.

Findings

Key findings suggest that the use of online virtual classrooms as a substitute for traditional face-to-face LTA has its positives and its negatives. The most significant positives are the ‘flexible assessments’ and ‘digital content’ and, in contrast, one of the significant drawbacks is the lack of interactions, this being true for both male and female students. However, as compared to females, males found to be missing ‘the campus life’ more during the lockdown. Finally, the majority of student felt that there was a lack of support from the university and teaching staff during the lockdown. Universities’ governance must take control of how this issue is driven forward and learn from the experience of students.

Originality

The study makes three contributions: firstly, using students’ views to open a fresh debate on LTA approaches during the pandemic; secondly, examining the impact on student experiences due to the changes introduced because of lockdown; and finally, suggesting
1. INTRODUCTION

The world is now accustomed to life with COVID-19. Tragically infections have risen to almost 200 million worldwide with almost 4 million deaths (correct as of 12 June 2021) recorded and it continues to rise (WHO, 2021). New variants in the virus are materialising and vaccination against the disease is gaining pace, albeit more so amongst the world’s wealthiest nations. Everyone is learning to adapt to a ‘new normal’ (Carroll and Conboy, 2020) and this is no less relevant to students in higher education. A recent study suggests that teaching institutions were unprepared for such a sudden shift to emergency remote teaching (ERA) (Schuck and Lambert, 2020), therefore students, regardless of their level of study, nationality, age, gender, occupational background, or any other category, were affected by changes to their education that were imposed in response to COVID-19. These included academic changes such as the introduction of new learning methods, the imposition of online teaching, the cancellation of lectures and tutorials, the use of alternative assessments and grading methods and adjusting to new technology. External and internal pressures, such as home schooling, isolation, confinement, stress, anxiety, lack of clarity, financial worries, employment concerns, loss of jobs, etc., added to these stresses.

In the UK, a dramatic shift in educational practice since the start of the pandemic (Watermeyer et al., 2020) has been evident. In terms of COVID-19 impact, the UK has become the second most affected country in Europe with over 4.5 million infections but has the highest number of deaths. The UK applied extreme measures to stop the virus, and during the early part of the pandemic, its government advised that there should be a “limit (to) social contact as much as you can”, suggesting that “you can still work but we are asking as many as possible to work from home” (BBC, 2020). Although this study concentrates on the UK, Higher Education Institutions across the globe have adopted e-learning as a replacement for traditional face-to-face teaching (Dhawan, 2020; Fulton, 2020). The UK HE sector continues to encounter uncertainty, with many students unable to attend university due to lockdowns and travel constraints, and with no end currently in sight (Crawford et al., 2020). A postponement of face-to-face teaching has resulted in the cancellation of lectures, tutorials, seminars, graduation ceremonies, and open days, leading to modification of examination and
other assessment arrangements (Zhu and Liu, 2020). Early uncorroborated stories suggest that lives were disrupted with many forced to work from home, and some required to home school their children due to school closures (Zainuddin et al., 2020). It is suggested that the withdrawal of freedoms that were taken for granted has left some struggling with physical and/or mental health issues (Lee, 2020; Pfefferbaum and North, 2020). Early research, including Cao et al (2020) indicates rising signs of anxiety among students due to the rapid changes to education brought by the pandemic. Similarly, Kundu and Bej (2021) find that students were not prepared for the abrupt changes which brought online teaching, with many feeling anxious and uncertain as they struggled to adjust to changes, perhaps highlighting a deep digital divide between the most technically and least technically aware students, and between those with adequate and inadequate access to suitable technology resources. Burns (2020) highlights that the students are falling behind in their learning due to lockdown measures and enforced online education. Tan (2021) finds that many students lose motivation and that some are unable to perform effectively using online learning methods. Sundarasen et al., (2020) suggest that female students had significantly higher levels of anxiety during the pandemic.

Although several studies now explore the impact of covid-19 on students, there is little existing evidence that examines the impact on gender when exploring how these rapid changes have been perceived by male and female students. Therefore, it is important to consider the effects of COVID-19 on the student learning performance and to hear the perspectives of these ‘early impacted learners’ so that educators can reflect on the early support provided and consider how the online experiences of future student learners might be improved.

This paper aims to examine the impact of the emergency-imposed changes on students’ LTA. Emphasis is placed on the experiences of students in the UK based Higher Education Institutions (HEI) and includes the experiences of undergraduate and postgraduate students, whether domestic or international, it examines gender-related perspectives to ascertain whether perceived differences exist. In order to achieve this aim, the key objectives of the study are: (1) To consider the gender-based reflections of students on the aspects of the changes in LTA that followed the COVID-19 outbreak and subsequent lockdown based on gender; (2) To evaluate the views of students on how they felt due to the pressures introduced by COVID-19, and the impact of changes to their LTA; and (3) with reference to the opinions
set out by students, to examine their observations on how educators may better support
students through this type of learning experience.

This study makes several contributions. Firstly, it offers a fresh debate on the literature
relating to the teaching and learning issues of HE students by offering views from the
learners themselves. This is important because their experiences provide an opportunity for
university educators, managers, and advisers to learn from these experiences and to consider
how best to ensure that students, moving forward through the pandemic and beyond, can be
better supported. Secondly, it examines the impact that the imposed changes have had on
students’ learning, teaching, and assessment experiences. Thirdly, it offers a perspective from
the student community during the global crisis and highlights potential strategies for HE’s
governance to deal with the issues that students identify. Finally, it provides a basis to better
understand how policies and regulations might be formulated within HEIs to support
students, and which may result in a better experience for current and prospective future
domestic and international students, and subsequently comprehend the impact that this will
have on the wider society as it recovers from the effects of COVID-19.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Traditional teaching and learning
Traditional teaching methods which offer face-to-face contact between educators and learners
provide advantages that are less well served by online learning alternatives, such as an
enhanced social interaction and direct collaborative learning experiences, improved
information retention, and better developed key skills including communication and
teamwork (Hassani et al., 2016; Hatch et al., 2016; Männistö et al., 2020; McBrien et al.,
2009). Online learning, by comparison, offers alternative benefits, for example, cost-
effectiveness, flexibility, recording of lectures that can be watched as many times as required,
and an improved independent learning (Baisel et al., 2020). However, the pandemic has
halted face-to-face learning, some teaching and assessment opportunities, and face-to-face
social interactions, replacing these with synchronous and asynchronous learning, teaching
and assessment.

2.2 Online teaching and learning
Online learning is defined as a learning experience that uses a variety of internet-based
supporting technologies (for example, virtual learning platforms, videoconferencing
packages, smartphones, and laptops, etc.) for use in synchronous or asynchronous
environments. Synchronous remote education is provided by dynamic communication, such as video conferencing, allowing learners to pose questions to educators and fellow learners, and for responses to be obtained in real-time. Asynchronous remote education is static and uses learning channels with pre-set instructional materials or even simpler media such as e-mails and discussion boards (Hrastinski, 2008; Hrastinski et al., 2010). Learners can learn independently and communicate with educators and other students anywhere within these settings (Singh and Thurman, 2019). Due to the pandemic, these tools are widely used across the world, and attract a mass audience of learners and educators (Radonov et al., 2020).

Online platforms provide a means for educators to support continuous learning by offering organic live online classes, accessible lectures, instant feedback, and other learning, teaching and learning opportunities, primarily thanks to swift developments in technology that make remote teaching possible (Kukulska-Hulme, 2012; McBrien et al., 2009), particularly now that videoconferencing technology has become more accessible. Video conferencing software allows users to engage in voice and video discussions, use emails and messaging, share files, screen share, and attend online meetings. Such technology can support synchronous teaching and training in the form of workshops, lectures, webinars, and conference calls, etc. (Radonov et al., 2020). Since the outbreak of the pandemic, there are now multiple effective versions of online learning tools that offer efficient learning environments (Dhawan, 2020). For example, educators use platforms such as Zoom, Microsoft Teams, WebEx, Google Meets, Google Hangouts, and Google Classroom to support continuous learning (Basiliaia et al., 2020). These apps, software packages, and online learning tools enable learning to take place anywhere, at any time, and in any pattern, using a variety of digital and computer means (Cojocariu et al., 2014). Zoom, Google Meets, and Microsoft Teams are now the prominent remote teaching and meetings tools being used during the pandemic (Radonov et al., 2020). Undoubtedly, these apps are significant in strengthening online learning provision and offer greater flexibility, a student-centred experience, and support continuous learning. In using these technologies, educators offer a mix of audio, video, and text to reach out to learners, helping to ‘humanise’ the learning experience, and helping to create a constructive and engaging learning atmosphere in which learners can provide input, ask questions, and receive feedback instantly. However, there are potential drawbacks to remote teaching. Many learners find online teaching dull and unengaging. There is often a requirement for learners to pre-prepare for online sessions and to refer to additional online support materials post-session, and many appear to struggle to do this due to time constraints and the need to keep a balance between online study and jobs, family, and social lives. Recent research suggests that
many students are poorly equipped for the required e-learning competencies and lack many of the required academic skills (Feng et al., 2020). There is often a low level of readiness among students for the use of learning management systems (Parkes et al., 2015). It should be recognised that educators have an important part to play as their learning content can reduce the benefits if the online virtual learning support environments are not well constructed, are under-resourced, poorly signposted, or are used merely to ‘deposit’ materials that would have been delivered face-to-face. Due to the rapid nature of the pandemic and the limited time available for the transition to online learning, there may perhaps be an excuse for some of the above ‘faults’ arising. However, these can no longer be considered as the ‘excuse’ for current deficiencies and, if left unattended, will continue to hamper learning experiences.

2.3 Theoretical underpinnings of online teaching and learning

There are several education science theories but when it comes to online learning, with its unique features, connectivism theory is perhaps most obviously related to how the role of technology and the internet impacts on LTA within higher education. Connectivism, developed by Siemens, refers to a digital age learning philosophy with its influence deriving from concepts such as rapid globalisation, advancement in technology, lifelong learning, and the growth of digital world knowledge. Siemens (2005) argues that connectivity provides far greater opportunities for people (students in this instance) to create knowledge through the use of the worldwide web and the internet and further argues that connectivism theory of learning for the digital age was created in response to the rapidly changing digital world. Much has changed since Siemens’ definition of connectivism, but it is still relevant to recognise that, in connectivism, the starting point for learning occurs when “knowledge is actuated by learners connecting to and participating in an online learning community” (Goldie, 2016, p.3). Some argue that online learning is primarily based on connectivism (Barnett et al., 2013; Jung, 2019) and that it aims to eliminate obstacles so that lifelong learners can have equal opportunities, even during times of crisis. If not for the internet and technology in the education sector, students would have suffered more. Some of the key principles of connectivism include the ability and power to consider the role of technology in learning, the promotion of the idea of nurturing and maintaining connections to facilitate continual learning, learning through technology, learning and knowledge from diversity of opinions to see connections between fields and ideas, and access to quicker and more accurate up-to-date knowledge (Siemens, 2005). Based on the key principles of connectivism
theory, it can be argued that the theory characterises a rapidly evolving reflection of our world, in which society is more complex, globally linked, and mediated by growing technological advances (Duke et al., 2013). Given the circumstances arising during the covid-19 pandemic where face-to-face teaching became impossible and online learning became the ‘solution’ to the needs of learners and educators, the theory can be considered relevant when evaluating the student experience of learning and teaching through technology and might help us to understand the issues raised from a theoretical stance. It should also be remembered that because all human beings are biological, psychological, and social beings (Gove, 1994), learning requires more than these variables, and therefore online learning alone may not fulfil all student learning needs.

Earlier research suggests that the key obstacles to online learning are a lack of community, technological challenges, and difficulties in interpreting learning objectives (Song et al., 2004). It is likely that, for the foreseeable future, online learning will continue to be the dominant means of educational delivery, but that face-to-face delivery will return post-pandemic, albeit not as the sole means of delivery. A hybrid ‘blended’ learning experience may be more likely now that those in charge of universities and other learning establishments have had an opportunity to assess economies of scale (and perhaps also of scope), and that learners’ confidence and abilities in using the technologies have improved.

2.4 Positive impact of rapid transition of online teaching
Most early studies examine the emergence and adoption of digital learning and the impact on educational institutions in the immediate aftermath of the pandemic. A few studies find a positive impact from the digital learning that educators introduced in the absence of face-to-face teaching. For example, Abdulrahim and Mabrouk (2020) suggest that digital learning improves the capabilities of staff and Rajhans et al. (2020) infer that restructured education systems better support learning and teaching; with courses being rapidly transformed (Skulmowski and Rey, 2020). Zainuddin et al., (2020a) conclude that there has been an increase in multi-faceted e-learning due to technology and virtual connectivity. Jayathirtha et al. (2020) posit that there has been a better opportunity to provide feedback to students; and Martzoukou and Fulton (2020) discuss the development of information technology literature, digital creation, digital research, digital identity management, and students’ digital competencies linked to experiences, which relate to everyday digital life. The above issues call for widespread and contextualised investigation of the experiences of educators and
learners across the world, particularly in those countries that have been most affected by the pandemic, such as the UK.

2.5 Negative impacts of rapid transition during lockdown

Some recent studies suggest that there have been negative impacts from the rapid transition from traditional teaching and learning to digital learning. For example, Majanja (2020) comments that both staff and students were forced to transition fully to virtual learning within a very short period of time and leaving students with different learning styles with this option as their only learning experience. Zhou et al., (2020) point out that some educators simply copied existing materials onto an online platform, providing little by way of guidance or student teacher interaction, resulting in poor learning and teaching experiences. Code et al., (2020) identify a number of concerns about the move to emergency remote teaching (ERT), including; 1) the switch to ERT affecting the ability of teachers to support a hands-on competency development; 2) there being inequitable access to learning tools, materials, and resources which affected both motivation and engagement for some students; 3) some educators raising doubts about the overall efficacy of digital strategies; and 4) some educators raising concerns over the future viability of educational establishments in the event of education being offered solely by digital platforms. Kim and Ekachai (2020) find that engagement is lower among those students who rely only on online learning tools for their educational needs. Studies including Zainuddin et al., (2020a), Mailizar et al., (2020) and Zhou et al., (2020) examine the effect of online learning on the student body and student capability, compared to face-to-face teaching. Zainuddin et al, (2020a) suggest that this increases the disadvantages already felt by deprived groups around the world. Mailizar et al., (2020) highlight the difficulties affecting students and staff due to their lack of ability in using online systems for learning, whereas Zhou et al., (2020) suggest that some students not only lack ability, but also lack self-control when face-to-face teaching is not possible. They suggest that the overall impact of autonomous learning is likely to be far from satisfactory.

The rapid spread of COVID-19 is forcing educational institutions worldwide to change their educational practices at a previously unimaginable pace, and it is noticeable that the effect is perceived very differently by the above-mentioned authors, with some welcoming the reforms and acknowledging the benefits this will potentially bring to educational institutions, and others appearing less enthusiastic.
2.6 Challenges posed by rapid transitions of online teaching

Some studies point out the challenges that have been faced by educational institutions, particularly for educators. For example, Almaiah et al. (2020) identify many aspects affected by the COVID-19 pandemic. These include issues with change management; technical problems with e-learning systems; funding difficulties; technological factors; deficiencies in some e-learning systems; cultural factors; factors in self-efficiency; and confidence factors. It is worth noting that, although the research by Almaiah et al. (2020) is conducted solely in Jordan, many of these issues may also be applied to educational institutions elsewhere.

Similarly, Longhurst et al., (2020) classify aspects that affect educational institutions and identify some negative and some positive effects. Negatives include time pressure, shifts to emergency virtual assessment (EVA), consequences for engagement and relationships of students. The positives include the potential for developing new opportunities, and for promoting academic cooperation.

The ‘jury’ appears undecided and has yet to settle on the effectiveness of online learning, especially where such methods are forced upon educational institutions and their students. However, as Abdulrahim and Mabrouk (2020) suggest, it is “impossible to suddenly become an expert in online teaching and learning” (p. 303). Research is likely to continue to provide contradictory and confirmatory evidence of positive, poor, and indifferent practices resulting from this imposed change to LTA methods.

Although the full impact of university closure is still unclear, it is difficult to disregard the potential negative effects of the pandemic (Nicola et al., 2020). Some key issues are in relation to the personal and family struggles that students (both females and males) may have faced during the lockdown (Hasan and Bao, 2020; Luo et al., 2020). Many mature students who are also parents stayed at home, with unavoidable economic implications, with many having to take care of, and/or home school, young children while day care centres and schools were closed (Alon et al., 2020; Bayrakdar and Guveli, 2020; Power, 2020). Many PhD students, as an example, fall into this category, often being mature and have caring responsibilities. In the UK some of the less affluent towns and cities have universities that attract large numbers of mature and working students, and therefore these students may be impacted more directly. It is not yet known how much impact there has been on such students. Indeed, the closure of universities may ultimately lead to worsening social, economic, and health inequities, particularly amongst the most disadvantaged communities in the UK. Understanding how these inequalities affect students can potentially help find
solutions to reduce these risks. It is also possible that mental health issues are more prevalent among students from such backgrounds and that closure may have added extra pressures and socioeconomic problems (Cao et al., 2020). It is difficult to predict whether the LTA during the lockdown in the UK will have a positive or negative impact on the students’ experiences. Although universities are now using VLE platforms and video-conferencing systems to support student learning, using these to replace the entire learning experience may create disadvantages for certain students, if not all. It is not inconceivable that communities of students (e.g. newly arrived international students) feel significantly excluded from learning, as well as from socialisation with peers and their surrounding environments. These factors explain and justify a debate on the possible benefits of the closure of universities due to COVID-19 and must be balanced against any online LTA issues that HE students may have experienced. Whilst the impact of the rapid spread of COVID-19 is viewed very differently by the writers referred to above, there remains an inability to agree on the efficacy of online learning. The goal of this research is therefore to explore the views of students in the United Kingdom with a view to bringing new insights to the body of knowledge, and to learn from their experiences.

3. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1 The survey instrument
Using an anonymous online questionnaire, this study assesses the opinions and responses of students in the aftermath of lockdown and the subsequent closure of universities due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Data were collected during the lockdown within a seven-week period (18th June 2020 to 31st July 2020), beginning shortly after the impact of the UK government’s announcement of stay-at-home orders (BBC, 2020). This brought a time of self-isolation, remote working, and prohibition of access to indoor (e.g. educational centres, gyms and sports centres) and some outdoor spaces.

The questionnaire was developed by the author and informed by previous studies (Baloran, 2020; Cao et al., 2020; Code et al., 2020; Hendal, 2020) and some recent rapid reviews that investigated the impact of COVID-19 on HE (Rajkumar, 2020). This study uses a structured online questionnaire that gathers information including gender, type of student (e.g. EU, Non-Eu or Home Students), degree level (e.g. undergraduate, postgraduate and doctorate), and age. It covers several LTA areas: (a) LTA aspects that students enjoy the most; (b) LTA aspects that students perceive that they dislike or least prefer; and (c) students’ opinions on
how educators might improve the LTA experience going forward should LTA continue to be online for the foreseeable future. The first two not only help the researcher to analyse how student participants feel about the impact of changes but also help to ascertain which elements affect their perceptions, negatively or positively. The third requires students to provide suggestions on actions that educators might take to better support future online LTA.

A recent article from BBC by Burns (2020) highlights that students are behind in their learning due to lockdown measures and enforced online education. In closing this gap there is clearly a need to hear the perspectives of learners on how the online experience of future students might be improved. However, it is not the purpose of the research to look at which methods used for online learning are the most effective. The quantitative feedback allows participants to select predetermined options which indicate their experiences and is augmented by a qualitative feedback opportunity allowing participants to comment on their feelings and opinions on these experiences.

Based on previous research (Altintzoglou et al., 2018; Smyth et al., 2009; Sobczak et al., 2006), the study’s questionnaire also used open-ended questions which are aimed at exploring different perspectives on the transition of learning, teaching and assessment during the lockdown. These questions attempt to capture the views of students regardless of whether their experiences are positive, negative, or both. Some changes may add stress, anxiety, and other pressures to students, and recording their perspectives may help to support students, particularly those who are most vulnerable, going forward.

3.2 Sampling
A random sampling approach is used, and the questionnaire is designed to reach a sample of the student population. This helps reduce the possibility of bias. A total of 349 responses from all study levels (Table 1 shows the numbers at PhD, other postgraduate, and undergraduate levels who participated) is now presented. This is a relatively small sample and not representative of the student population but is considerably larger than the 100 responses originally anticipated given the lockdown circumstances and the timing of the survey (post-term). This is therefore considered a suitable sample for the purpose of rapid research. The target population includes students studying at UK universities in any discipline, and any degree or level of study.

Table 1 below sets out the characteristics of the questionnaires’ results. A total of 349 participants (female = 239 (68.5%); male = 110 (31.5%); female to male ratio (2.17:1) completed the questionnaires. The largest number of respondents are aged under 25 (150) and
these represent 43% of the questionnaire’s participants; followed by those aged between 25-34 years (132) representing 37.8% of the sample; 35-44 (42) representing 12%; 45-54 (18) representing 5.2%; and 55 and over (4) 1.1%. A further three participants preferred not to divulge their age.

Table 1. Sample characteristics

(Please insert here)

3.3 Data collection
This cross-sectional study used a questionnaire that was distributed via an online survey platform (Google Forms) and accessed by participants using a specified link (Karlsson et al., 2018; Sobczak et al., 2006). Prior to being made available to participants, a pilot exercise was used to pre-test the reliability of the questionnaire, allowing minor changes to be made where necessary. Due to the specific measures recommended during the outbreak, particularly the avoidance of close contact, the researcher considered an online questionnaire to be the most appropriate means of gathering data for this study. The nature of the pandemic, which necessitated the closure of universities, and the need to gather relevant data quickly, meant that reaching large numbers of respondents is a challenge. To maximise access to respondents, the link to the questionnaire was therefore disseminated using a variety of communication channels and social networks such as emails and social media (Facebook, WhatsApp, and LinkedIn) (Tan, 2021). To reach a wider audience, early participants were requested to share the survey link with other UK-based students thereby avoiding potential face-to-face contact and ensuring adherence to quarantine restrictions. The questionnaire included a brief background to the research intent and purpose, with participants informed that responses would remain anonymous and confidential. All participants were allowed to refuse to complete the questionnaire. No identifying information such as names, addresses, host university, email account details, IP address, etc. was collated, with responses recorded only after participants click the ‘submit’ button on completion of the questionnaire. Data were held securely at all times. Participants were not asked to state which university they attend as the purpose was to look at how the impact of COVID-19 affected their academic experience not to compare how different universities dealt with the academic impact of COVID-19, hence the number of universities involved in the study is not noted. The questionnaire took approximately 6 minutes to complete.
3.4 Data analysis
For this study, Microsoft Excel (Bree et al., 2016) is used to analyse quantitative data. Data is analysed using a simple weighted percentage distribution approach, allowing the researcher to examine the impact on LTA from the perspective of all respondents, by gender, and by age and gender. A basic testing approach is used. The purpose of the research is to ascertain the general LTA experience of students, therefore requiring descriptive data and this simple statistical analysis of the qualitative data is deemed appropriate for this purpose. The researcher recognises that the lack of application of more detailed rigorous multivariate analysis is a limitation of this study and encourages future studies to consider the analysis of the relationships and associations between variables. Qualitative responses are analysed by examining responses to open-ended questions, and a thematic analysis approach is applied to summarise the perspectives of students and identify the problems they faced during the lockdown.

3.5 Method limitations
Due to the nature of the research questions, the current study adopts a simple survey to obtain students views on online teaching and learning. The study incorporated a list of LTA aspects within the questionnaire, following consultation with other tutors. The survey is descriptive, with students requested to pick options from the LTA aspects list given in the survey. It is recognised that a more robust Likert-scale survey instrument would have generated a more rigorous analysis. The study also focuses on students’ views in general without specifically focusing on a demographic, course or discipline. Once again due to the nature of the research question asked, the study adopts a descriptive data analysis approach to interpret the results.

3.6 Ethical consideration
Formal ethical approval was obtained and before the data for this questionnaire was collected. All respondents provided their informed consent. Participants were informed of the research intention and responded voluntarily. Protocols for this analysis is consistent with the terms of the researcher’s University Declaration of Ethics with respect to human subject research.

4. FINDINGS
4.1 LTA aspects perceived positively by students during lockdown
Table 2 highlights that, in terms of positive aspects identified by student respondents, the use of ‘flexible assessments and examinations’ (n-164) is shown to be the most effective method used by universities to support students’ LTA during the lockdown, in line with the findings
of Garcia-Peñalvo et al., (2021) and Hauer et al., (2021). While exams can be used to assess knowledge and cognitive skills, the process of expanding one's knowledge through research, interpretation, analysis, and evaluation, followed by sharing one's findings in the form of a concise well-written document or an engaging presentation, can stimulate critical thinking and collaborative learning (Alqurshi, 2020). This is also in line with connectivism theory posed earlier which encourages educators to utilise emerging educational technology to enhance LTA as a means of increasing student satisfaction. However, this is based on a non-gender, non-age specific headcount. When these results are investigated further by gender, the ‘flexible assessment and examinations category’ remains important to both male and females.

Table 2. LTA aspects perceived positive during lockdown

(Please insert here)

Surprisingly, for females the second most important category (after applying weighted average), is ‘not having to come to the campus’. Lefever (2012) suggests that the campus is a key factor in helping students to integrate and socialise, creating a sense of belonging and leading to improved engagement and retention. The findings of this current study show a pattern that is, in terms of female students, at odds with the findings of Lefever (2012). For males, the second most beneficial aspect is ‘Digital lectures, as during lockdown most tutors uploaded recoded lectures on VLE platforms or delivered them via videoconferencing tools e.g., Zoom, this to avoid any face-to-face contact due to lockdown.

A few other LTA aspects such as “Virtual Learning Environment (VLE) platforms” (females 33.1% and males 31.8%), and “Online examination” (females 29.7% and males 32.7%) are perceived as important by females and males, respectively. In contrast, the LTA aspect “Online group work” (females 5.9% and males 10.0%) are least important for both female and male, respectively.

4.2 LTA aspects perceived negatively by students during lockdown

Table 3 shows the respondents’ choices relating to aspects that they perceive to be the negative implications of lockdown education. The least enjoyable aspect of LTA during lockdown is ‘lack of face-to-face support’ (females 57% and males 55%), “lack of interaction with fellow students” (females 41% and males 52%) and “lack of interaction with tutors” (females 54% and males 43%). These also received higher votes when gender is examined. It
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appears to suggest that both male and females missed the interactive elements of their teaching and learning.

Connectivism theory encourages interaction through the use of technology, however, the lack of interaction, referred to in this study, may suggest that technology was not used to its full capacity to create a sense of community in online teaching and learning during the lockdown. Male students specifically highlighted ‘not being able to go to the campus’ (48%) as the least enjoyable aspect of lockdown, compared to female students (34%) who highlighted “not having to come to campus” as a favourite LTA aspect during the lockdown.

Table 3. LTA aspects perceived negatively during lockdown

(Please insert here)

5. QUALITATIVE COMMENTS FROM STUDENTS

The quantitative analysis section of this survey is further supported by the qualitative responses provided by respondents in the open-ended part of the questionnaire. A content analysis approach is used to set out some of these supporting statements. These overarching themes represent views both on how participants perceive their early experiences of the enforced transition to online LTA and on how universities may better support the student body going forward, regardless of whether the pandemic continues. Similar comments appear across all genders, ages, and programme levels, therefore paying due attention to the overall student voice is something which universities should clearly aspire to. The comments are subdivided into key themes that are broadly representative of the views expressed by the respondents.

5.1 Learning, Teaching and Assessment Approaches

Students felt that there should be digital lectures and videos uploaded by the tutors as they can see them again and again and pause and take notes when needed. For example, “Whether we are in face-to-face teaching or not I think every lecture should be video recorded so if you have to miss it you are able to go back and listen again but also it would be a really useful tool for revision of the lecture” This point was echoed by several students with some adding that online teaching could have been more interactive to help them better understand the conceptual issues and to in discursive activities. One of the students suggested that:
“Be more interactive with students outside of just providing digital lectures and this could be things such as online communication tools or online Zoom type conversation to ensure there is still some sort of personal connections being made.”

In addition to this, students’ perceptions reflected that lecturers should create a more supportive environment within online teaching by making better use of VLE platforms and videoconferencing apps: “More face-to-face interaction through video conferencing or social media and interactive forum for each lecture so we can see the questions others have asked” and many other students opined that educators should be “Creating more opportunities of students’ interactions and create a better online community”. These students’ comments may suggest that the most important teaching skill that has to be improved is making learning a personalized experience for students, even when it occurs online (Mehta, 2021; Mishra et al., 2020).

5.2 Importance of face-to-face teaching

A mixed response was received when participants compared online LTA with face-to-face teaching based on their experience during the lockdown. An overwhelming number of student participants stated that LTA on campus, interactions with academic staff, and receiving feedback is better than the online environment. Two of the students commented that:

“No amount of online provision can ever truly replicate the experience of a real classroom”.

“I like the social aspect of going to university and the face-to-face teaching”.

It would appear that students appreciate the “social aspect” of onsite learning as students would expect traditional face-to-face learning opportunities, supported by VLEs, not learning replaced by VLEs and video conferencing. They expect to submit traditional coursework, make presentations within a class environment, meet with fellow students and work with them on formative and summative assessment tasks, and perhaps even to undertake traditional closed (or open) book examinations under invigilated conditions. Furthermore, one of the students is almost pleading with their university’s administration, suggesting that “I do hope however the University doesn’t turn its back on the face-to-face learning as I think this is key in a student’s learning experience- especially postgraduate”. The responses perhaps reflect the diversity within the student body e.g., for some mature students there is a preference for a traditional teaching and learning approach, so for them, onsite LTA seemed
to be very important as highlighted one of the mature students: “as an older student, I find the online mode of learning and exams extremely tough. I work better taking notes in a face-to-face lecture and a paper exam, I am hoping we will at least have one day per week on campus. If this can’t be done, I will need to have a year out”. Qureshi et al., (2020) found that mature students faced difficulties with online education, identifying issues such as poor internet connections, outdated devices (computers and laptops, etc.), low levels of digital competence particularly among older students, lack of technological support from the institution, and a stressful transition time. Emphasis is not only on face-to-face delivery but also on social interactions, whether face-to-face or in an online learning environment. Students appear to be suggesting that face-to-face teaching remains very important as it provides perceived value for their investment and a greater learning experience.

5.3 Student Support during lockdown

Several students commented on the support they received during the lockdown emphasising that HEIs must consider how to develop meaningful and efficient student support, whether during the pandemic or post-pandemic. Many of the responses, all obtained at the early stages of the lockdown, appear to stem from a sense of confusion and exasperation. One of the students’ comment is representative of others participating in this survey “I think during this COVID 19 teachers must give attention to the students because they are facing many problems and also worried about many things. Students are very far from their parents and relatives so teachers can support them so that they can feel free”. Some other support-related comments called for help with training on the use of the software used for online teaching, this is reflected in this comment “more explanation of how to use software needed for online classes” and/or related to the impact of perceived lack of support. For example, one of the female international student participants commented that “I felt abandoned by professors - they could have supported more we paid for tuition for the assistance, not to “figure it out alone”. Some students struggled with “technology poverty” in that they did not have the right equipment and technology required for online learning, with one student stating: “ensure that students are provided with the relevant Information, support, and technology/ equipment to complete tasks instead of assuming everyone has access”. This comment is an example of strong and robust viewpoints but elsewhere within the qualitative student feedback there are similar comments relating to recurring themes of ‘abandonment’, ‘lack of support’, ‘lack of guidance’, ‘lack of empathy’, ‘unavailability’, not being treated as a ‘client’, and ‘struggling’. This suggests that many students felt unsupported by their universities at a time when they
perhaps need support the most (Alnusairat et al., 2020; Jakimowicz and Maben, 2020; Ulenaers et al., 2021). A study by Robayo-Tamayo et al., (2020) adds weight to the opinion of the students commenting that academic support plays a partial mediator role in the relationship between students’ performance and their academic engagement.

5.4 Stress and anxiety

One very important aspect that comes out of the survey’s qualitative elements is the recognition that anxiety and stress-related factors are exacerbated, as also noted by Cao et al., (2020). For example, some comments clearly tell how they felt during the lockdown:

“I am an international student and being away from my family caused me so much stress and depression”.

“Nobody even asked if we were coping okay either, student’s mental health has not been on the agenda at all”.

“I would ask to be deferred. Due to my mental health, I struggle to work remotely”.

Interestingly, almost all these comments are made by female students. Key elements of anxiety, stress, and depression feature in their comments, in line with the studies by Elmer et al., (2020); Odriozola-González et al., (2020) and Wang et al., (2020). The most notable relate to lack of access to suitable study areas; not knowing who or where to turn for mental health advice and support; lack of focus due to isolation; confinement; lack of direction; lower productivity; and lack of pastoral support. In addition, students express concern about the impact on their studies, health, and families at home. These findings must be considered, because the stress produced by these dramatic changes faced by university students may lead to symptoms of depression or result in a state of anxiety that could later lead to depression (Rodríguez-Hidalgo et al., 2020).

6. DISCUSSION

This paper intended to study the perception of the UK based students on the LTA process during the COVID-19 lockdown period. New insights have come to the fore because of examining the perceptions of university students affected by LTA changes due to the pandemic. Both females and males enjoyed having the opportunity to be offered flexible assessments during the lockdown. This is consistent with Alqurshi (2020) who believes alternate assessment techniques will improve students’ overall capabilities. Consequently,
many advocates modifying the evaluation techniques specified in course requirements for
post-lockdown teaching. Overall, there appears to be a disparity between the priorities of
female and male students (Lipson et al., 2018; Michalak et al., 2017), with female students
enjoying the opportunity of ‘not to have to come to the campus’, but the reverse applying to
male students. A study by Shahzad et al. (2020) argues that this is perhaps due to males
finding the campus more of a social space than females, and females perhaps preferring to
work individually rather than with others. Other studies highlight the gender disparity
regarding learning and teaching. Richardson and Woodley (2003) suggest that female
students are more persistent and engaged than male students when learning online. Alghamdi
et al., (2020) suggest that whilst females have greater self-discipline in online learning
environments than men, males can employ more learning techniques and have higher
technical capabilities. In terms of emotional health, there remain some gender disparities, for
example, female students appear to be at higher risk of negative mental health consequences
than male students (Cao et al., 2020). Aslan and Pekince (2020) suggest that this is because
females are more emotional than males. It is difficult to ascertain why these differences
appear. Yu (2021) argues that findings on gender disparities in online learning outcomes are
inconclusive and even contradictory. The impact of gender on online learning outcomes is
potentially complex and perhaps controversial, and future research in-depth research into this
field is to be encouraged.

According to educational research (Hunter et al., 2003), interactions between students, and
between students and tutors, are critical for effective distant learning. In this current study,
participants felt that their interactions with academic personnel during online education were
not the same as when they were on campus, consistent with Alqurshi (2020) and Mishra et
al. (2020). A study by Ali et al. (2021) also found that their participants felt that their
interactions with educators during online education were not the same as when they were on
campus. Although technological advancements offer video features that simulate face-to-face
interactions, it is unlikely they will never be able to replace real face-to-face interactions.
Similarly, Alqurshi (2020) found that statistical analysis confirmed that lack of interaction is
a significant negative factor in student satisfaction. This study suggests that going forward,
adopting collaborative teaching and learning practices can promote group learning and
minimise solitary learning. Remote teaching, as opposed to traditional teaching, offers the
benefit of incorporating technology as this is theoretically backed by the connectivism theory,
allowing for the easy implementation of numerous instructional methodologies. A virtual
discussion room, rather than a virtual classroom, can be used to support students' collaborative efforts in learning, where interactions are enhanced and where peer learning becomes possible as argued by connectivism theory. Another example of an appropriate strategy to utilise in distant learning is problem-based learning, which is one of the student-centred teaching techniques (Hunter et al., 2003). In relation to learning and teaching, ‘digital’ where the use of interactive software products is discussed, most notably ‘Zoom’ (Aziz and Lawton, 2020), features prominently.

In terms of the qualitative section, many of the comments support the issues raised above and the researcher reemphasises here the importance of the student's voice. Additional skills discovered to manage the online teaching process included virtual classroom experience, patience, empathy, care for students, excellent presentation skills, and proper handling of the teaching-learning tools available with user-friendly features (Ali et al., 2021; Alqurshi, 2020). The importance of face-to-face education cannot be understated, but e-learning can be used in combination with these conventional approaches to offer improved productivity, efficiency, and comparative advantage to deliver quality education (Dhawan, 2020). Online programmes should be structured in such a way as to be innovative, engaging, appropriate, student-centred and group-based (Laurillard, 2013; Partlow and Gibbs, 2003). Certainly, considerable work remains in this respect.

Online education has been established as a feasible option within the constraints and limitations introduced during the COVID-19 pandemic. It is debatable if it will be effective in the future. In the wake of a crisis situation, it has lately proved beneficial in making LTA, but it may take some time to understand how the early attempts at online teaching-learning can satisfy the criteria for successful student satisfaction and a successful LTA outcome. Because online teaching-learning is still in its infancy, a lack of awareness of individual differences of students may lead to biased judgments (Mishra et al., 2020).

7. RECOMMENDATIONS AND DISCUSSION POINTS

The study suggests that the following are implications for educators, HE governance, and policymakers, and the author provides some narrative on how this may be considered in terms of improvements going forward. It is equally relevant to government and employers as all will play an integral part in the recovery of the education sector and the general global economy. It provides an interesting and, hopefully stimulating, snapshot of student opinions,
and contextualises their viewpoints in terms of implications for current and future educational direction.

1) Creating coherent and efficient student support systems and supporting networks can help to deal with any emergencies which may arise in the future. This requires universities, working independently or in collaboration with the student body, to design policies that ensure that support is put in place and developed for all learners, thereby encouraging the development of coherent and supportive communities within education. Gardiner and Lacy (2005) emphasise that “getting it right can only be achieved through effective collaboration between all parties” (p.183).

2) Teachers could design courses that consider gender differences by striking a balance providing a variety of courses and tasks that attract the attention of both sexes and improve their learning outcomes, whilst recognising their differing motivations. Incorporating VLE in the day-to-day teaching and evaluation process must consider the needs of a diverse student body. This will provide a better digital environment that enhances student-to-student and student-to-teacher interactions.

3) Providing all faculty members with training and technical assistance in the efficient use of remote LTA resources for student-centred teaching and evaluation methodologies. This may take the shape of a mandatory online course aligned with new doctoral graduates preparing to teach at the university level.

4) Universities must improve their communications, both internally and externally, whether to academics, support staff, or to students (Gigliotti et al., 2020; Kharouf et al., 2020; Sanders et al., 2020). The key to this is ‘dialogue’. Without two-way communication and understanding of one another’s issues, there can be no solution to the problems identified by the participants of this research. The use of social media can potentially impress upon students that they are part of a university and not a ‘number’ within a university. It is a means of engaging students and a means of communicating with the student body. Visser (2020) has noted the positive role that social media plays in rapidly changing circumstances.

5) It is recommended that policy-makers in education look closely at how they support students using digital media (Händig et al., 2020; Kohnke and Moorhouse, 2020; Lowenthal et al., 2020) and how they use the rapidly growing number of platforms which allow one to one or multiple person access via computer screens e.g. Zoom, Microsoft Teams. The effective use of modern and rapidly evolving technology, such as cloud technology is key (Asadi et al., 2020). Involving students in the policy
making and design process of programmes, modules, teaching materials and assessment could be a way of ensuring that students feel part of, and not remote to, university life.

6) Universities must recognise that there is not a level playing field when it comes to student access to technology. This is particularly relevant to those universities that attract domestic students from poorer backgrounds, and to those universities that attract international students. Many of these students have inadequate hardware and software, lack internet access, lack study space, and/or share accommodation in a lockdown situation with other students or, in the case of those with families, with children or elderly relatives. Universities need to provide more support for students who lack the necessary equipment to undertake home-based learning, teaching, and/or assessment. Although a university cannot remove the hurdles faced by students due to their home circumstances, they can be more flexible in terms of when students are expected to study, and in terms of how and when they are assessed. To paraphrase one student who makes a rather barbed comment ‘If I had wanted to take an Open University course I would have done so’. Perhaps offering a more flexible approach may make the student experience less exasperating.

7) Government must also play an integral part in the recovery of the education sector in supporting educational programme development and research activity. It is likely that things will not return to their pre-COVID normal. Much can be learned from this dreadful experience, but much can also be learned from creating opportunities from the student population and how it adapts to a ‘new normal’. As argued by Karlsson et al. (2018) that there is a need to use sustainable strategies to gain a competitive advantage.

8. CONCLUSION

The COVID-19 epidemic has had a huge influence on educational sectors all over the world. The aim of this study was to examine the impact of emergency-imposed changes on students’ LTA in the UK HE sectors. In doing so it adds to the debate on the impact of the pandemic and the future of LTA. The use of online virtual classrooms as a substitute for traditional face-to-face LTA has its positives and its negatives. The most significant positives are the ‘flexible assessments’ and ‘digital content’ and, in contrast, one of the significant drawbacks
is the lack of student-student and student-teacher interactions, this being true for both male and female students. However, when it came to ‘onsite teaching’ females felt less positive about this than males who missed ‘the campus life’ during the lockdown. Several students commented that they felt that there was a lack of support from the university and teaching staff during the lockdown. To address these issues, the author suggests implementing a variety of student-centred teaching practises, both onsite and digitally, that foster proactive learning. Importantly educators can learn from Chen and Eweje (2019) who present Confucian virtues of ethical guanxi (interpersonal relationships), and although this study refers to managers, the study’s implication could be followed by educators, especially when dealing with the needs of students during a time of crisis. In the end, everyone must learn to live with and endure, the current crisis. In the long term, no one can afford to ignore the digital change in HEIs.

8.1 Study limitations and future research recommendations

This study has a few limitations. Firstly, the study relies on a questionnaire compiled at a time when face-to-face data collection was not possible due to the virus and relates to opinions taken after the end of the academic year when accessing students was more difficult. The size of the sample is therefore relatively small, and a more detailed sample is recommended under more settled conditions. Secondly, the study’s scope is limited only to the UK student body, hence not representative of HEIs across the world. A detailed international study is recommended with a view to a comparative investigation. Finally, the questionnaire applies simple frequency counts and thematic analysis, limiting the scope for more rigorous investigation. Given the nature of the pandemic and the difficulties in accessing larger numbers of students, this paper provides a realistic and informative snapshot of student experience during a very difficult period in education. Future research may wish to consider the findings of this paper and look to examine more deeply any gender and/or age differences that have emerged or examine how changes in LTA during the lockdown will affect education, employment, and the wider society post COVID-19. The educators’ perspectives may also be investigated by further research in terms of changes in LTA during and post COVID-19. It will be interesting to see whether universities revert to their pre COVID-19 teaching methods or whether COVID-19 has changed the face of education for good, whether positively or negatively.
9. References


Deutschland GmbH, pp. 85–98.


Table 1. Sample characteristics

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Characteristic</th>
<th>Group</th>
<th>n (%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Gender</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>239 (68.5%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>110 (31.5%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age</td>
<td>Under 25</td>
<td>150 (43%)</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>25 to 34</td>
<td>132 (37.8%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>35 to 44</td>
<td>42 (12%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>45 to 54</td>
<td>18 (5.2%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>55 and over</td>
<td>4 (1.1%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Prefer not to say</td>
<td>3 (0.9%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Degree</td>
<td>Undergraduate e.g. BA, BEng, BAcc, BSc etc</td>
<td>211 (60.5%)</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Postgraduate e.g. MBA, MSc, MA, MEng etc</td>
<td>85 (24.4%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Doctorate e.g. PhD, DBA etc</td>
<td>53 (15.2%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student Domicile</td>
<td>Domestic UK student</td>
<td>222 (63.6%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Status</td>
<td>EU student (including Erasmus students in the UK)</td>
<td>31 (8.9%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Non-EU (not UK) student</td>
<td>96 (27.5%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 2. LTA aspects perceived positive during lockdown

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>LTA Aspects</th>
<th>Total students responded*</th>
<th>Females</th>
<th>Males</th>
<th>Weighted average Female**</th>
<th>Weighted average Male</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Additional support provided</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>12.1</td>
<td>10.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Digital lectures</td>
<td>103</td>
<td>65</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>27.2</td>
<td>34.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Flexible assessments and examinations</td>
<td>164</td>
<td>112</td>
<td>52</td>
<td>46.9</td>
<td>47.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Virtual Learning Environment (VLE) platforms</td>
<td>114</td>
<td>79</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>33.1</td>
<td>31.8</td>
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<tr>
<td>Not having to come to the campus</td>
<td>113</td>
<td>87</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>36.4</td>
<td>23.6</td>
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<td>Online examinations</td>
<td>107</td>
<td>71</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>29.7</td>
<td>32.7</td>
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<tr>
<td>Online group work</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>5.9</td>
<td>10.0</td>
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<tr>
<td>Online interactions with fellow students</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>9.6</td>
<td>15.5</td>
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<tr>
<td>Online tutors</td>
<td>75</td>
<td>54</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>22.6</td>
<td>19.1</td>
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<td>Online presentations</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>12.1</td>
<td>17.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Online support</td>
<td>61</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>16.3</td>
<td>20.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Total students responded – total number of students who picked that specific option.

**Weighted average – adjusted response from male and females. (Formula: (Number of females picked that option/total number of female respondents) x 100)
### Table 3. LTA aspects perceived negatively during lockdown

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>LTA aspects</th>
<th>Total students responded*</th>
<th>Females</th>
<th>Males</th>
<th>Weighted average Female**</th>
<th>Weighted average Male</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Alternative assessments</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Digital lectures</td>
<td>61</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lack of additional support</td>
<td>73</td>
<td>56</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>15</td>
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<tr>
<td>Lack of face-to-face support</td>
<td>197</td>
<td>136</td>
<td>61</td>
<td>57</td>
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<tr>
<td>Lack of interaction with fellow students</td>
<td>154</td>
<td>97</td>
<td>57</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>52</td>
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<tr>
<td>Lack of interaction with tutors</td>
<td>176</td>
<td>129</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>54</td>
<td>43</td>
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<td>VLE or other relevant platforms</td>
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<td>8</td>
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<td>3</td>
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<td>Not being able to go to the campus</td>
<td>135</td>
<td>82</td>
<td>53</td>
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<td>44</td>
<td>26</td>
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<td>Online group work</td>
<td>82</td>
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<tr>
<td>Online presentations</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Total students responded – total number of students who picked that specific option.

**Weighted average – adjusted response from male and females. (Formula: (Number of females picked that option/total number of female respondents) x 100)