ACADEMICS' EXPERIENCES OF ONLINE TEACHING IN UCL ARTS AND HUMANITIES

This report summarises the survey carried out by the authors in March and April 2021. Based on analysis and discussion of data from a survey of academics, it provides a characterisation of the range of experiences, and provides a series of conclusions and recommendations for the Faculty, including the Arena Liaison and the Faculty Learning Technology Lead, for 2021/22.

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1. Executive Summary

This evaluation is a direct response to academic requests for an opportunity matching that afforded to Arts & Humanities students in January 2021, which allowed students to detail their experience of teaching and learning online during 2020/21.[1] This report focuses on staff experiences and is based on a five-question Mentimeter survey, which was answered by 134 academics from across UCL Arts & Humanities.

Our findings indicate that academic voices and experiences were similarly diverse and polarised to those of the students, with a fairly even spread from very positive, to neutral, to very negative. Also present is a significant number of participants who were surprised by their positive or successful experience with online teaching: it exceeded their expectations.

Two-thirds of participants identified at least one new-to-their-teaching practice that they would like to continue or explore further in 2021/22; flexibility, improved communication and positive student feedback were common reasons given. Concerns around the value of online teaching, and whether it had any place in the institution at all, were stated firmly on a few occasions; almost as many academics reported the opposite sense, that it had enhanced their teaching and improved student learning in a direction they felt was appropriate for the modern university.

The perception of what online teaching in itself *is* appeared to vary, with many academics addressing the topic as if it referred directly to the online replacement of any activity taking place face-to-face, and not necessarily considering elements such as asynchronous content, flipped classroom models, Moodle design and use, digital assessment and other elements specific to online and blended teaching.

Many academics, unprompted, referred to online teaching as time-consuming, particularly with reference to creating pre-recorded video or recording lectures. Some participants felt that it would not be so difficult to create online teaching resources and design and run activities in future, as they had either created things that could easily be re-used, or had reached an understanding about what they actively needed to do to effectively teach their courses. Others felt that they had been misguided, or let down, by local and institutional guidance – that their efforts to embed Connected Learning were not rewarded, or were not successful,

[1] Students' Experiences of Online Learning in Arts and Humanities (Full Report)

and that the time they had spent attempting various elements was not well spent.

In situations where both academic and student are present and engaged in individual or very small-group two-way conversation, online teaching was regularly praised for its flexibility, which was often felt to result in a more efficient use of time. Elements perceived as time-efficient were the most likely to be those academics wished to continue, whilst elements considered time-consuming were perceived very negatively. Some time-consuming practices were appraised conditionally either in terms of their re-use value, or as skills the academic had now developed, and could therefore complete more efficiently themselves.

The complexity of parsing the effectiveness of online teaching was a common theme, with many academics citing their inability to perceive or generate online student engagement as negative, confusing or stressful elements of their online teaching experience.

It is clear from our data that academics' experience of online teaching exists as part of their broader experience of policy, and of trust in the institution itself – a sense of threat to established ways of teaching is expressed in terms of wider institutional concerns, including intellectual property, re-use policy, and fear of being pushed to deliver teaching in one format or another outside the constraints of the pandemic.

Our data answers a number of questions whilst raising almost as many. It will help steer the work of the Faculty Learning Technology Lead (FLTL, Abbi Shaw) and Arena Liaison (Jesper Hansen) for the start of Term One, and illustrate the importance of creating future opportunities for academic feedback around their teaching experience.

2. Context

Given that the online pivot of March 2020 was sudden, total and contextualised by a period of global pandemic, this report and its responses should be understood as a product of these origins. It forms the second part in an ongoing evaluative process of both staff and student experiences in UCL Arts & Humanities.

A key characteristic of these academic experiences in 2020/21 is the unique nature of the situation. Online education has, for the most part, historically

involved both staff and students who have actively chosen to conduct their teaching or studies in that environment, with the programme having been designed specifically for the modality. Further, the broader emotional, logistical and situational landscapes of 2020/21 were prone to rapid and destabilising change. Lockdowns, isolation, testing, contracting Covid-19, financial effects, caring responsibilities, travel restrictions, and more meant that the majority of both academics and students were navigating their courses on shifting sands throughout the year.

Consequentially, whilst the authors and the participants in this research often refer to "online teaching", an enduring thread of the findings is that we might best understand the specific state of academic experience in 2020/21 as Emergency Remote Teaching (Hodges et al, 2020), rather than as reflective of "online teaching" in and of itself. In this report, therefore, unless otherwise stated, "online teaching" should be understood as referring to emergency remote teaching.

3. Method

This evaluative research is based on one quantitative and four qualitative questions. Participants are self-selected academics based in UCL Arts & Humanities, invited to complete a survey via a Mentimeter link shared with them either by their departmental Connected Learning Lead (CLL), their Departmental Manager, their Head of Department, or the Vice-Dean of Education. The survey was open for responses between 24th March 2021 and 21st April 2021.

The quantitative question aimed to gather information around digital platform use (which we do not report on here), while the four qualitative questions consisted of free text entry (max. response 250 characters). Expected completion time was 5-8 minutes. Using Mentimeter ensured responses were anonymous.

Questions asked:

1. Which platforms have you used for teaching during the academic year?
2. What would you like to continue doing when you are back at campus that you did not do before the lockdown?
3. What are your experiences of or feelings around pre-recorded video and/or recording lectures?
4. Tell us one thing that has worked well and one thing that could be better regarding communication with students?

5. Thinking about your experience of teaching online, is there anything else you would like to add for further discussion?

134 academics responded – 30% of 454 Arts & Humanities academic staff[2].

Thematic analysis was used to analyse the data from questions 2-5. The two researchers independently familiarised themselves with the data and coded it, after which we met online to decide on final codes. One researcher then re-read and coded all data, identifying three overarching themes:

- Perception of online teaching
- Online teaching as a threat
- Online teaching as enhancement

4. Thematic Analysis

In the following, we will present the three overarching themes we identified. After each analysis, we will briefly contextualise our findings and discuss implications for the Faculty.

4.1 Perception of Online Teaching

4.1.1 "To my surprise, I've really enjoyed it."

A number of participants stated their surprise at their positive experience of online learning, suggesting they had previously had a negative perception of the modality, which had changed as a result of having to engage with it: "I have had a positive experience teaching online this year, and wanted to emphasise that because I think that the expectation was that it would be much more difficult/inadequate than it was." [11] Another participant found that "[t]o my surprise, I've really enjoyed it, and I think that overall it has advantages over the real classroom." [23]

For some participants, however, even where elements had worked particularly well, this still could not compensate for the overall sense of effort they associated

[2] UCL 2020 Annual Review, https://www.ucl.ac.uk/2034/previous-progress-reports/ucl-2020 (headcount reported 1st October 2019, includes research staff).

with online teaching: "Seminars via Zoom worked surprisingly well; students were usually talkative, breakout rooms lively. But you can't cover as much in classes, and students are slower to get through material - plus teaching online is a LOT more draining." [3]

Some participants detailed more complex instances where their academic perception was necessarily shaped by their students' perception and feedback. One participant explains that they found elements "difficult and stressful [...] but the feedback from students has been very positive so my feelings are negative my experience is positive." [16] whilst another experienced the complete opposite from their students, where "many seemed to think only live sessions counted as 'real' teaching, and this was very disheartening" [15].

4.1.2 "How much I hate it!"

Strong, broad, negative perceptions of online teaching often referenced concerns around its validity in and of itself, which led this group of academics to characterise online teaching as inherently substandard or untested: "Online teaching will never allow us to provide sufficient levels of quality and care to students" [113]; "Online learning is expensive and with dubious or unknown outcomes." [109]

One participant described an experience so poor that it had led them to conclude that online teaching explicitly did not work for their discipline: "Awful. It is inefficient in teaching [subject]. Nothing worked well. I have very negative experiences in online teaching." [76]

In a small number of cases academic perception of online teaching was sufficiently negative for participants to state that they might leave the profession altogether if they were required to continue: "How much I hate it! If it becomes a significant / routine part of my job, I will find a different job. It is much more work for much less satisfaction (for me or them) or efficacy (for them)." [30]

Others describe how specific parts of teaching online were sufficiently unpleasant to generate such feelings: "if I am ever forced to do pre-recorded lectures again (as I was in my other dept), I think I will quit UCL" [132].

4.1.3 "We still can't wait to get back to in person teaching."

Participants regularly described their perception of online learning during

2020/21 by way of comparison with F2F learning, most often suggesting that “[t]here is no replacing F2F teaching and learning but under the circumstances all the hard work and extensive preparation paid off and students still had a positive learning experience.” [92]

Some found specific online setups to be equitable with face-to-face: "In general online seminars are as good as f2f ones.” [7] while others appeal to the emergency remote teaching element of their experience by suggesting that it was “[n]ot as good as live, but acceptable if necessary." [83] One participant sums up these mixed experiences, saying that "[t]he good thing is probably that it wasn't as bad as I had feared, we somehow made do, but nothing can replace face-to-face communication" [99].

Many participants, even those largely positive about their experience, expressed a strong desire to return to the physical campus: "It has gone well, in that it has largely replicated the live experience, but I could feel the students' enthusiasm lapsing as the year went on and am very keen to get back to f2f teaching. [20] Several suggest that this has been the general experience: "Like everyone else I know, zoom teaching has gone much better than expected, and the students seem to have responded well to it. But we still can't wait to get back to in person teaching." [26]

Finally, the academic idea of what online teaching is appears to vary, with many discussing it only in terms of its relation to synchronous F2F equivalents, or perceived replacements. One academic who hopes to “[e]nd all teaching online, as soon as this is legally permitted" also states that they would “[c]ontinue developing content on Moodle to supplement teaching” [113]. One participant suggests that this perception extended further, and that, accordingly, the wider requirements of online teaching were not well-supported: “Effective online teaching requires more than recording lectures. It needs to be carefully planned and executed. This requires time and resources that were not adequately provided” [54].

4.1.4 “Recording videos - time-consuming!”

The phrase “time-consuming” appears more than almost any other, in terms of the perception of online teaching. Most comments around this relate to efforts with pre-recorded video: “Video editing of pre-recorded lectures is very, very time-consuming." [77]; "Recording videos - time-consuming! The pressure to be visually engaging - to mediate the lecture material, to look like a screen product -

is intense." [131]

Several participants expressed concerns around the quality of recorded resources, and whether they were suitably equipped to create them: "[I]n the long run, our videos will need to be better produced to meet student expectation" [85]; "People (staff and students) have high expectations of the presentation quality of pre-recorded video" [38].

A key contrast with the critical reflections on pre-recorded video is that numerous participants indicated a preference for "recording live", often specifically noting the time-based distinction between the two: "Pre-recorded videos ask quite a lot of extra preparation and time. Recording live lectures can be helpful." [101]

However, even with live sessions, the time and work required to transform the recording into a complete resource was also noted: "It takes considerably more time than conventional teaching. Recording live sessions, the uploading waiting time, then configuring them on Echo360, and then sharing on Moodle. Video editing of pre-recorded lectures is very, very time-consuming." [77]

Some participants balanced their investment of time into creating videos with evidence of students' engagement: "Certainly they were visited again and again by the students more engaged. It saves time that can be used in communication" [29]. Another participant felt it would be beneficial to continue to "[u]se recordings for core concepts that students can revisit during their studies." [75]

One participant suggested the videos made space for more effective use of F2F time: "I think pre-recorded lectures will be a useful addition to any future module, perhaps freeing time in the classroom to give students more feedback on their writing." [87] This echoes a spirit we will discuss later as part of the Enhancement theme (4.3) where several participants expressed an interest in continuing with the "flipped classroom".

Discussion

Our participants' spectrum of perception of the nature and effectiveness of online teaching shows that no single clear, or even dominant, view of online teaching exists in the Faculty, save, perhaps, that it is "time-consuming".

The number of participants that expressed positive surprise about the

effectiveness of online teaching, either as a whole or in part, shows that, to some extent, the experience of having to engage with online teaching has transformed the perception of its functionality. However, those who found negative expectations reinforced, or the few who had the disappointing experience of having positive expectations upturned, also demonstrate the inconsistency of these experiences. Few responses suggest that academics see a distinction between their experience with Emergency Remote Teaching in 2020/21, and online teaching as a whole.

The sweeping statements against the modality of online teaching in and of itself demonstrate that academics are not aware of, or may be disinterested in implementing the learning from the extensive existing scholarship that underpins decades of digital education. This may be an area the Faculty could focus on in the next years: what do we want blended and flipped education to look like? What theoretical and practical understanding and skills should we focus on? And how do we ensure this happens within the already existing communities of practice, which seem to have worked so well in ensuring staff are confident and knowledgeable when teaching on campus?

It is clear that most academics found it time-consuming to produce pre-recorded video resources, although some felt that where the content was suitable for re-use, whether by themselves or by students across the course of a module, they tended to feel that the time invested was well-spent. This is further complicated by concerns discussed in section 4.2 of this report around re-use policy.

Academics were, on the whole, less skeptical of recording their synchronous teaching. This is a key finding, which complements our student survey finding, in which the practice of recording synchronous lectures was the one thing A&H students really hoped would continue. Again, concerns relating to this will be discussed in section 4.2.

With regard to the comments on expectations and perceived insufficiencies around the quality of recorded content academics are able to create, one change for 2021/22 is that UCL Digital Education has expanded to include a new Educational Media team, who will be able to undertake a certain amount of content creation and production for teaching. Any option to bid for academic content development work from this team should be clearly communicated to academics, with such bids supported by the FLTL as required.

It is hardly surprising that staff want to return to the learning environment that

they are familiar with. Two things are, however, worth bearing in mind in the next academic year(s): first, that many academics did learn new skills and ways of thinking about student learning as a result of having to teach online; second, that online education is more than synchronous teaching and video recordings.

The breadth of the responses provides a firm reminder that participants who express discontent with one element of "online teaching" are not necessarily unwilling to engage with *all* digital university platforms, or with blended design as a whole. This research highlights the importance of not conflating dissatisfaction with 'Zoom teaching' with a general reluctance to offer a blended experience.

4.2 Online Teaching as a Threat

4.2.1 "Like being a hamster on a wheel."

Multiple participants detailed the impact of online teaching as having dramatically shifted the nature of academia in ways which they perceived to be lesser, damaging, or unnecessarily transformative. Concerns about damage to the academic occupation were expressed by some, with one participant suggesting that implementing online learning has left them feeling like "a hamster on a wheel, producing content" [33], and another "concerned that we are being asked to become content creators" [37].

Comparing comments displays the extent to which available training or understanding may have influenced academic experience in 2020/21. One participant found "[p]re-recorded: a very bad way of teaching. I will never know who watched the videos, and what students took in from them." [88] This is directly opposed to a respondent who "relied on the analytics in LectureCast" [71], which can help academics understand how students have engaged with recordings. However, the appetite for further training is clearly low in certain areas: "Don't waste our time with pedagogy seminars, teaching guides, training sessions etc. for teaching online. We are OK with what we know about teaching online and know how to do it now certainly. There's no need for further training sessions." [89]

4.2.2 "A total disaster."

Strong conclusions have been reached by those who experienced online teaching as a threat to their ability to teach effectively, in particular with regard to student attendance and engagement. Fears that online teaching could leave students to

“access asynchronous content and not attend live seminars at all” [56] are expressed, as is the concern that the modality leaves students feeling that online teaching is optional: “all take it or leave it now, which is very disruptive.” [22] Another simply wanted to write off the modality altogether: I want to go back fully to what we did before. This year has been a disaster.” [55] One participant brings this together to conclude: “Between UCL cancelling attendance requirements and going online, it’s been a total disaster” [74].

Some participants expressed concern for the student experience of online teaching, suggesting that “[t]ransmission of contents is good, even better [online], but this is not what University is about” [4]. Another participant suggested that elements of online teaching, here referring to pre-recorded and recorded video, had, in their experience, adversely shifted the nature of student interaction: “Lecturing and seminars are meant for spontaneous interactions and creativity. Students need to learn to take notes AND to participate. Recording makes them passive learners, which hurts them in the long run.” [55]

4.2.3 “I hope the covid crisis won’t be used as an excuse for forcibly introducing online teaching.”

Academics’ experience of online teaching and learning exists as part of the broader experience of being a part of the institution, and the sense of threat felt both to established ways of teaching, and around the ways in which new technology is used and governed, are frequently expressed in the context of wider institutional concerns.

The fear that Emergency Remote Teaching could be a slippery slope to a wider introduction of this mode is prevalent in some comments: “I hope the covid crisis won’t be used as an excuse for forcibly introducing online teaching in order to relieve the estate pressure caused by UCL’s reckless over-expansion.” [66] One academic felt that this push might be so significant that they may “need to fight to retain what is particular to university teaching: transformative presence.” [27]

Other concerns were raised in relation to intellectual property (IP) and institutional use policies: “I have deep concerns about how universities could exploit workers through appropriating their recorded materials. There are pledges in place regarding this, but I still worry that universities unintentionally (?) drift towards exploitation over time.” [60, (?) in original]; “I am concerned […] about labour issues if these lectures are being re-used when the original creators are no longer being paid.” [37]

The issue of IP policy with regard to recorded video was not new to the Faculty for 2020/21, and whilst many academics have commented positively on the use of video for teaching now that they have had experience of it, some participants are already mindful of the complexity of the issues ahead of its continued use: “We need a proper debate in UCL about the future for this kind of technology. Unfortunately management wants to control IP, and staff will want to retain control, so the debate becomes unnecessarily polarised.” [38]

4.2.4 “A lack of clarity on workload models.”

One respondent summed up a disjunct between the way in which academic time is not necessarily associated with the creation of the resources, courses and content of online teaching thus: "There is a lack of clarity on workload models - if some teaching options are recognised less well in the workload model and I am punished for moving away from the 10 lectures + 10 seminars by getting less workload points, then I won't do it." [111]

This reflects a common issue with the rapid pivot to online. Lomer and Palmer (2021) argue that “what has previously been easy to quantify in terms of staff contact hours and planning (albeit often inadequate), transmutes into a significant burden on the up-front learning design and development”. The consequence of this shift in time-allocation for some is clear in one participant’s perception: “It has been widely acknowledged that online teaching requires far more time than conventional teaching. And yet our workload has not been adjusted.” [77], with another backing this up and suggesting that “we should have a conversation about how workloads have increased with online teaching.” [132]

Discussion

Whilst neither academics nor students were in a situation that can be said to be representative of the pre-pandemic definition of online teaching and learning, this does not change the fact that the idea that this modality “does not work” is, for some, an impression that will outlast any such contextual specifics. As stated in 4.1, this does not necessarily mean that these academics are unwilling to engage with digital platforms altogether, but it contributes to the idea that blended learning needs to be thoughtfully implemented, with consistency and quality of student experience balanced with academic ask and disciplinary requirement.

Although many so firmly assert that their teaching is best face-to-face, and that online teaching and learning cannot in and of itself replicate or compensate for this, it is hard to find, either in our data or in wider research, any examples as to why this might be. Conducting such research may serve as future-proofing for A&H disciplines. Where decisions need to be made about how campus space is used and support resources are allocated during any future complex scenarios, courses which have "obvious" in-person requirements (studios, labs etc.) are able to state cases quickly and clearly, whereas academics who feel they know their students would benefit significantly from some in-person provision do not necessarily have the resources to draw on to illustrate such benefit, as a result of F2F having previously been, and, indeed, continuing to be, UCL's default modality.

With regard to the threats and concerns around IP, ownership, and exploitation, this research points to the importance of considering how anxieties and issues of trust around institutional policy and direction directly affect academic experience and perception of the use of technology, including the extent to which it is used at all. We suggest that the Faculty continues to acknowledge and address these fears and concerns in conversations with colleagues, and work on influencing and contributing to institutional policies. This work can be supported by the FLTL, Arena Liaison, departmental CLLs and other interested academics, so a range of voices are heard in what can otherwise become a legalistic conversation without connection to concrete and perceived needs.

While it is beyond the scope of this report to recommend any policy decisions with regard to workload models, it seems clear that academics would like a clear and transparent model which recognises extra work that they are asked to undertake, for instance around the constraints and benefits of workload bulges which may be caused by creating flipped and asynchronous content.

4.3 Online Teaching as Enhancement

A significant number of participants identified at least one element of online teaching and learning which they had not used prior to 2020/21 that they would like to continue with, and numerous participants listed multiple elements they wished to take forwards. A small number of participants stated that they wished to continue nothing newly-acquired in 2020/21.

4.3.1 “More convenient than face-to-face for many purposes.”

The aspect most participants wanted to continue was online one-to-one or small group meetings. The reasons given were linked to practicality: “Working at home has meant that I could talk with students more often and easily, because I did not have to waste time going to college to meet them in my office” [5]; flexibility: “Retain online 1-2-1 tutorials - increasing flexible, distributed learning.” [75]; and convenience: “One-to-ones are generally fine on zoom/teams etc., and might sometimes be more convenient for some students even when classes are back on campus.” [2]

Some suggested this flexibility gave online student meetings significant advantages over face-to-face ones: "1-to-1 zoom consultations more convenient than face-to-face for many purposes.” [104], and that the format offered an improved experience for some students: “In one-to-one meetings, e.g. personal tutoring, office hours, many students seemed more relaxed and open than I found them to be face-to-face the previous year.” [60]

Several participants referred to teaching online as a positive for communication in general: “I found online platforms reached a broader audience and thus it was a positive experience overall” [102]. Others found particular features of online platforms beneficial for student communication, with Moodle most commonly mentioned: "Ability to send messages to all students on a course in a group on a course via Moodle has been really helpful” [31]; “Positive: using Moodle for all communication” [14], and "Moodle worked well in teacher-to-student communication, one place to put everything.” [30]

Some participants expressed the hope that their academic and administrative meetings, whether departmental, Faculty or programme-based, would continue to be available online: “Meetings of Management Team, Teaching Committee, all staff, SSCC and working parties should continue online via Zoom.” [5] The reasons given are the benefits of “[t]he flexibility that online meetings afford” [127], as well as the potential to save time: “For anyone who commutes, you can lose a lot of valuable time travelling to and from London for just a one-hour meeting (or less) on a given day.” [13]

The ways in which academics were able to manage their time led to some positive takes on teaching online, including “[e]xercising during the day.” [60], and several others hoped that it would continue, at times, to be “possible to

work from home” [2], or to manage their time so that “I can mainly work from home/off campus - previously I was always on campus.” [38]. There were some suggestions for integrating “[o]nline teaching two days a week” [69], and “[m]ore WFH but not all the time!” [61] suggesting overall that working from home and being on campus offer some participants elements which cannot be fully contained by one or the other.

4.3.2 “Possibly recorded lectures, as students have praised them, although I am torn.”

The second most popular element participants intended to continue with was some form of pre-recorded lecture, or other pre-recorded video content, with examples including "short ‘intro’ videos to a course or a topic" [30] to using “recorded lecture segments" [34]; from using "short recordings (5-15m)" [79] to “[s]ome prerecorded lectures, online videos” [85].

Some acknowledged that whilst they had found recorded, and in particular pre-recorded, content difficult and time-consuming to create, students had been very positive about these recordings, and therefore they would continue to explore their use in 2021/22: "Possibly recorded lectures, as students have praised them, although I am torn as I think the human interactivity elements bring something extra.” [3] Concern around recording lectures eventually leading to the end of face-to-face lecturing is clearly expressed by another participant: “Happy to have my lectures recorded and posted on Moodle although I do not want to see the live face-to-face replaced by online lectures in the long term.” [20]

One participant suggested these wider conversations around pre-recorded and recorded video loomed too large over the idea of online teaching as a whole: “I think there has been too much emphasis on video lectures and not enough on all the great, creative things that you can do online that are more interactive.” [8] While only mentioned by one participant, we bring it up here as it highlights the importance of understanding our findings in light of the pandemic and as a response to emergency remote teaching rather than a reflection of what is possible if online teaching and learning are considered more strategically.

4.3.3 “A more "flipped" delivery.”

Flipped learning is a term whose meaning continues to evolve, but it refers essentially to a model of teaching where course content is delivered to students prior to live sessions (whether these sessions are in-person or online) so live time can be used for active and interactive teaching, activities and discussion. A

significant number of participants mentioned that this “[e]xperimenting with “flipped learning”” [19] was a new way of thinking to them, and something they would like to continue.

Some defined the specific nature of their ‘flip’ very clearly: “Pre-recorded lectures for flipped learning” [80], “Use prerecorded lectures, so I can use class time for other activities." [84], “Flipped model: really surprised by how well the combination of pre-recorded material/live Q&A has worked” [111]. One participant, having “taught a Masters module through flipped learning", was keen to continue with “[f]lipped learning with asynchronous lectures and online peer learning forums.” [6]

The idea that live time would be given to active learning rather than more passive knowledge transmission was specifically highlighted by several participants: “I would like to have students digest the class handout, readings, and weekly exercise before they come to class, so that the class is completely dedicated to their questions and to hands-on practice exercises.” [123]. One participant neatly encapsulated their thoughts and what they see as clear benefits of a flipped model of teaching: “I would continue with pre-recorded lectures to be seen by students in advance of live seminars and their preparation of pre-set questions for discussion in live teaching events…I can't see the point of wasting time f2f delivering content that can be accessed independently by students.” [56]

4.3.4 “Using Moodle to its full potential.”

From an institutional perspective, a lot of energy and money was put into ensuring that Moodle would be able to deal with extra pressure as a result of the pivot to online learning. From a pedagogic viewpoint, there was a clear message about how Moodle could and should be used effectively to facilitate communication between staff and students. It was recognised early on that Moodle had the potential to both support learning and minimise the cognitive load for students.

Many participants suggested that they had found value in using Moodle in this way and that they would continue with this in the future. The characterisation by a participant that “[a]ll staff and students have become much better at using Moodle to its full potential” [42] can be seen as representative and it is supported by a variety of other responses that mention the productive exploration of its use. These include the resolution to “[keep] Moodle pages neat

and tidy so it's easy to find specific resources" [63] and noting that "students have been able to find links and files on Moodle relatively easily" [68].

Participants add that they will, variously, "definitely keep welcome videos on Moodle" [3], "continue to use an augmented Moodle experience." [20], "provide more information on Moodle" [49], "{u[se quizzes in Moodle" [14] and continue "[p]utting pre-recorded short lectures on Moodle as springboard for seminars" [82].

Discussion

A sector-wide survey of Higher Education academics engaging with online teaching during Covid-19 found "a minority" for whom "online migration represented far more than just a pedagogical sticking plaster, and instead an unparalleled opportunity for pedagogical reinvention" (Watermeyer et al., 2021). Whilst we cannot make this type of claim about participants in this research, it is telling that a significant number of academics were able to pick out elements from their experience for future practice. This shows that there is plenty of experience and good practice to build on in the Faculty, and the challenge will be one of finding ways to share these widely and support colleagues to learn from and with each other.

Whilst evidence for the overall benefit to student experience conferred by a flipped classroom has, in pre-pandemic times been slight, some does nonetheless exist, particularly where the academic sees benefit in the model (Låg & Grøm Sæle, 2019). It will be interesting to see how the "flipped classroom" evolves in Arts & Humanities as academics have the opportunity to explore and develop it further. Moreover, student cohorts who have had to establish themselves as independent and online learners may well respond differently to the ones researched in previous studies of the format. We suggest that the Faculty consider how it can support academics who are interested in flipped learning (training, sharing experiences and good practice, peer support).

The varied nature of the elements academics wish to continue, along with those they wish to further explore and develop, shows a broad engagement with the different opportunities, platforms and structures available when teaching online. The continued support, iteration and evaluation of these elements will be an ongoing interest for the Faculty. We suggest that the Vice Dean Education, the Faculty Learning Technology Lead, the Arena Liaison and the Connected Learning Leads explore ways to do this effectively in the coming year(s).

Where academic interest exists, facilitating case studies around these identified elements, continuing to support and evaluate their success, and providing skill recognition opportunities to practitioners could help to return the investment academics have made into their understanding and practice of digital education. UCL supports academic staff in the pursuit of the sector-wide CMALT accreditation (peer-assessed reflective portfolio of personal practice in digital education) and this may be of interest to academics who have rapidly expanded their portfolio of experience in digital education and are looking to qualify, and reflect on, this process.

5. Looking Ahead

The F2F teaching may, or may not, in the first instance, feel as peculiar to some staff and students as the remote one. Many students will not have had any experience of the F2F HE teaching so valued by the majority of our participants (indeed, most first-year UG students will have taken much of their FE education online). As a result they may have differing expectations and abilities when compared with previous cohorts. Ensuring sufficient flexibility and resources to support and develop in-person student practice may be a core part of 2021/22.

It is likely that a number of academics consulted would not have chosen any of the digital options they worked with over the past year for themselves given the chance, and, for better or worse, their experiences during this time have firmly coloured their judgment around what it is to teach online. A key consequence of recording this spectrum of experiences, including the extremely positive and extremely negative, must be to accept their impact on future digital initiatives and practices. It is important to keep the door open for those who have had difficult experiences, and, equally, not to over-extrapolate individual or localised successes as imitable by, or ideal for, all.

As this research has demonstrated a significant level of interest in continued use of UCL's digital platforms, it is key that where cross-Faculty and cross-institutional research into Digital Education takes place, the valuable and specific experiences of Arts & Humanities academics should be present.

Overall, this research has shown that academic experiences were as varied as the student experiences captured in our Student Experience survey. It illustrates that academics' key concern is their ability to deliver teaching in a way that they perceive as, ultimately, of the greatest benefit to their students. In some

circumstances this delivery has been felt to have been enhanced or improved by being online, in others to have been damaged or only just about achieved. A strong sense of exhaustion, and of the time-consuming nature of teaching online, was conveyed, but in some circumstances this was buoyed by a sense of having learnt something new, or by having created content which can, in future, be built upon. These are elements that further evaluation will allow us to better appreciate once the consequences of the 2020/21 experience for the longer-term teaching landscape of Arts and Humanities at UCL become clearer.

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