

Accommodating the Distance Learner in Fully Online Courses

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Participants:

- Tim Neumann (moderator)
- Kim Insley, Richard Freeman, Will Gibson (programme leaders)

Further Information: <https://blogs.ucl.ac.uk/LTU>

(Tim Neumann)

Welcome to today's session under the title *Accommodating the Distance Learner*. We have a panel discussion today on the topic of fully online learning and the purpose of the session is really to talk about how to share experiences, how we accommodate distance learners and what things we can do, where the difficulties lie, and for that reason we have invited three panelists to the session who will introduce themselves in a moment.

Just very quickly, we have next to me Kim Insley and then further along Richard Freeman and Will Gibson. My name is Tim Neumann, I am leading the Learning Technologies Unit at the Institute of Education. We provide academic advice on using technologies in education and I thankfully also have other colleagues in the room, at the back of the room is Jo Stroud, the Distance Learning Facilitator from UCL Digital Education, so we have a number of people who can talk, hopefully competently or provocatively, about the subject and without further ado I would like to get the session started.

But for all of you here in the room and the 20 people that we have online, if you have any questions, online you can use the text chat and in the room you can just raise your hand and ask. Right, without further ado, let's turn to our first panelist Kim Insley who is the programme leader of not just one program, e. but it's mainly the Advanced Educational Practice course and the PGCE by distance, a very new undertaking delivered through the University of London.

(Kim Insley)

Thank you, so welcome to everyone both in the room and online. I've been here for over 21 years and since 2008 passionate about developing online work and learning, partly because when I started I did a lot of work with the Open University the two programmes that Tim mentioned; actually, it makes three because the advanced educational practice program has two awards, two substantive awards: one at level six, the Graduate Diploma, and one at level seven, the MA. In the future, next year, the MA is going to merge into the MA education with an advanced practice route but the graduate diploma will stay as a separate programme. And Tim mentioned the PGCE, it's called PGCE teacher development. It does not have QTS, I have to make that clear all the time,

(Tim Neumann) ...qualified teacher status...

(Kim Insley)

...qualified teacher status, it's a in-service program especially targeting students in other countries who want access to the quality learning PGTs but can't afford it in effect, and we run that one through the University of London in its pilot and it was very productive, the student teachers - they were all teachers and they were all inspected by the Inspectorate and all had increased in their grades by at least two

points having done the PGCE, so it was it's very exciting. Its newly launched from January. Did you want me to say anything more? We'll talk about the programs as we go on, should we listen to introductions?

(Tim Neumann)

We'll talk about details later, so let me move on my laptop to our next panelist which is Richard Freeman. He is leader of a very interesting programme, which is the Online PhD, and there are not many of those around, I think. Richard?

(Richard Freeman)

Okay I'll do my presentation in a few minutes. I think it's worth saying, I started here at the Institute in 2006, so twelve years ago, and my role was to develop researchers, to support researchers in developing their skills. This is actually both PhD and Postdoc, and generally I was doing that by, kind of similar in a way to what we're doing in this room now, about a dozen people in the room doing a workshop, doing a session whatever, and I became aware that, you know, we were doing this as part of quite an extensive research training programme here at the Institute of Education, but there were, you know as it were, a dozen people in the room, you go up at "this session should be interest to all 800 students that we have", where are the 800 students? You know, we should be having problems that the rooms aren't big enough, why is that not happening? And I start kind of exploring this and I'll be touching on it in my talk, and it struck me that although most students were considered to be here, in fact lots of people weren't here for various reasons, and that was one of the reasons that got me interested into increasing the proportion of online material, which ultimately led to the online PhD, but as I say, I'll say more about that in my talk.

(Tim Neumann)

Okay, and then finally we have Will Gibson who has been the programme leader of the Online MRes for - how many years? Ten? Twelve? Fourteen?

(Will Gibson) Since 2007.

(Tim Neumann) So 11 years, that's quite a long time.

(Will Gibson)

Well, I started around the same time as Richard, I was basically employed to develop the Online MRes programme, which in short is an entirely online research methods course and the participants are - it's also run collaboration with the University of London - and the participants are from all over the world, literally, far end of China, the far end of the US and everywhere in between with no real noticeable kind of cohort (people from any particular country). We had, with that when the program was in full flight, we had around 20-25 people each year. It's now, just it doesn't really matter, it's now closing (the course), not because of any problems pedagogically, problems with the online teaching, it's much more about money (laughs) which is a whole story I won't go into.

(Tim Neumann)

Good, thanks, I think it would be prudent to start by discussing your approaches to distance education/online education, and Richard, you have, you are the only person to have a presentation prepared; why don't you do this now?

(Richard Freeman) Time for death by PowerPoint!

(Tim Neumann)

It's not a very long presentation is it

(Richard Freeman)

Is that a challenge? Okay, so these are actually some slides I produced not long after the online MPhil/PhD has started, and I did think about changing them - I thought very deliberately I would keep them the same, so I have learned lessons since I wrote this about three years ago, I think it's worth sharing in its original form.

So the rationale for the launch of the programme first of all, it was just felt it was quite timely. So it was at a time when things like MOOCs were very much in the news, see there, these news have largely disappeared, but tablets smartphones have become ubiquitous. It was at the time the people ready basically everyone had a smartphone, most people had tablets and people are very comfortable using Skype, and I think what's important about that: it wasn't kind of Skype for business purposes, it's Skype to talk to family and things like that, so something that people - and that's both students and staff - seem to be comfortable with.

It was also seen as very positive that bizarrely it's cheaper in that you don't have the living costs of London, which those of us who live here know it's very expensive. We don't have problems with travel, and if people were studying remotely, they'd still be able to work in their own country, and of course this is something that's become ever more difficult given the government's hostile environment. Related to that: no need for visas, no need to worry anymore about meeting requirements for visas, because people could be based where they already live. Also it was seen as valuable for students who need to relocate. Again in my time supporting researchers, you know, I was aware that you'd have people...I can remember quite some years ago now, doing an evening session and a student saying "I'm very sorry, I'm gonna have to leave early 'cause I need to catch the last train back to York."

It used to be like: oh, can we have a meeting, then it's like, oh now I've arranged to have a meeting with my student, they come in from Wales, so, you know, there's not really any flexibility there, or indeed, you know, students collecting data back in Japan, you know, there were lots about this, and sometimes this could be students who had started off here, but particular if you're doing part-time, it's five years, you know, could be their partner had a job elsewhere at the other end of the country, it has indeed happened to me I suppose, you know, my partner now works in Dundee; we do a great long commute, it's six hours, I do it every day, that's for sure...but when things like that happen, it would actually facilitate students to carry on studying, but - and this is the thing - I think is really, really important to appreciate.

So we basically launched this at the end of 2013 and one of the reasons, I think, was PRES. PRES is a postgraduate research experience survey, and one of the questions, you know, there's one about gender or age, sort of stuff like this, are you studying on campus or by distance learning: 41.5% of our respondents have self-identified as distance learners when we had no distance learning doctorate. So that's not that much less than half, and for me that's really revealing, although today the focus is on people being purely distance learning, I think it's really important to recognise that what people's official status might be does not necessarily reflect their lived status, and in fact I'm suddenly reminded saying that the thing that most surprised us is when we launched the online MPhil/PhD, I think more than half

the students popped in to say hello in the first week, and we were kind of: "It was supposed to be the other side of the planet why are you here?" - "Okay, I thought I'd pop in and say hello", and you know, over the years I think I've probably met most of the online PhD students and I'm delighted to do so, you know, so it's really nice to actually get to meet them, but they, you know, we're in in London, this is the kind of place that people tend to be passing through, people like to experience this environment, to actually know where are these people I'm engaging with? I want to kind of walk the same floor as almost, it's that kind of idea. It made us realise that it wasn't actually even so much about the online MPhil/PhD students, as the 'students doing doctorates' who needed to be supported.

What we were able to do is build on Will's work, so obviously Will is going to say more about this later on, but the online MRes he did was a great success, you know. I think will did some really great work there, really honed it into something very well and we learned from that experience. So you know, we tried things - we tried things that didn't work, we were able to anticipate some of the issues and in particular it was, you know, I was lucky enough to teach on the online MRes and I can remember one session where I had one student online who was eight hours behind and one student who was eight hours ahead and realised we were actually at the kind of three points of the globe, but you could still have that session, you know. It was very funny when people are saying, "right I'll have breakfast" and someone else is "right, off to bed" I think it's worth sharing some of the decisions that we made.

The first was about fees, because when we first discussed this there was a genuine debate. Would they'd be higher? Because of the extra costs of developing materials and things like this, the extra requirements, this or various things, or should it be lower? Because people aren't physically here and so on and so on and actually we stated pretty early on they should be identical, because as much as anything, they sent a really important message to everyone about its status: this was not like a MOOC, the cheap option, the second-rate thing; this is - it might be online - it's an MPhil/PhD, and that's the most important thing about it.

Similarly, for supervision: it's an MPhil/PhD so the minimum requirements, the expectations for supervision are absolutely identical. And one of the things that also that mattered was the certificate: although this was being delivered online, the assessment was identical - everything about it was identical, but when we launched this I thought: "oh, I should probably put together an online MPhil/PhD handbook".

So I went through the existing, you know, sixty page handbook, and literally the were about four or five edits I made where it said "in person", and I put "or online", you know, just say things like, you know, an examination, but it was really shocking how I didn't have to make, you know, change it: it's an MPhil/PhD, it happens to be online, so the idea is, as far as possible, we could create an EQUIVALENT experience - we couldn't create an IDENTICAL experience - it would be naive to believe that you could. There is a unique thing about being physically present and, you know, even in a hundred years' time when no doubt we will be using holograms for Skype and things like that, it would not be the same. There is something about being in a physical space together that, you know, can never be duplicated. What we're trying to achieve is one that's 'equivalent'.

In terms of the structure: this was something that there was quite a bit of discussion about. Originally there was a suggestion if we could just take what was done for the face-to-face team to kind of stretch it online, you know, can you not just stick a camera in the back of the room and then the students would

be able to kind of watch that, but we thought that was wrong because you end up stretching it too far. This is where we are very lucky to be able to make use of - with suitable adaptations - Will's online MRes modules. So you have a kind of purely face-to-face one but then a purely online one and the student themselves would be able to put themselves in control of where they wanted to be placed. So for instance, instead: "well, actually I'd like to do the online MPhil/PhD, but there are certain things I'd like to attend in person", that's fine. And indeed those students have registered for face-to-face, they might say, "well actually can I take part in some of the online MPhil/ PhD modules" - that's fine, too.

So it's trying to put the student in control. In terms of the way we did this: so obviously it's gonna be familiar to those people who are using the latest version: our virtual learning environment was Moodle, Blackboard Collaborate - so we've now got Collaborate Ultra, which actually is a lot better, forums, activities, lots of recordings, and some live events. One of the things that I did find interesting was: I thought there'd be a great demand for lots of live events but actually what we found, but this could change, because of people's timetables, MPhil/PhDs are very very busy people, and really everything needs to fit around them. So actually there isn't that great demand for the kind of live teaching experiences. People would rather be able to work in their own time, so work asynchronously rather than synchronously - actually as I expected. So that's something that was a bit of a surprise.

We dealt with a lot of the others. I won't go into too much detail about these, thinking about supervision, the research environment, library and student support etc, and the thing I found interesting was when I had to put in the specification for the online PhD, you know, as part of it, there's a formal process to go through, I had to talk to people, like the library, people like student support, and I was worried that there be kind of "oh no, I don't like the sound of that", but in every single case - this is why we are the Institute of Education - they were delighted, and so people like the Academic Writing Center were like "Brilliant! that will enable us to develop online resources which we wanted to do, but we can say it's specifically for this course." Similarly, in the library, you know, they're almost overexcited, you know, "we want to do more stuff like this", so it actually provided a nice excuse.

Last two bits there and then I'll shut up: research methods and generic skills. So the research methods, we use these online MRes modules, so you can see it's actually quite comprehensive, so these were taken from Will's course, we essentially just stripped out the assessment, because none of these are assessed. And then with the generic skills, what we've done with that is, we've got a number of them, not quite as big as, frankly, we've got an enormous research training programme, but we've tried to have some of the key ones, which are made available online live, but also the subsequent recordings.

We also have access to things like lynda.com and indeed there's some bespoke materials that were produced basically I think it's UCL and Imperial and a few other Russell Group institutions who produced some of these materials, and indeed things like Box of Broadcast, so people have access to a large amount of documentary material and of course, oh what's it called again, there's the online Film Archive, which is very good. I'll look it up and say it later on, but it's basically like having Netflix for free, so nice if you want a break and also it's all the best of world cinema. Somebody online might be able to remind me of the name. That would be my kind of focus on the kind of background to the online PhD.

The last thing to say is, I'm delighted that we've already had a couple of completions. Indeed you can read on our CDE blog the experience of one of them. I would just kind of finish off by saying for a PhD, I would not say to people, you know, this is DEFINITELY what you should do in the future, you know,

when you're flying your jet pack, you'll be doing your PhD online, I don't think that is right. I think it's an opportunity, it's an option for people to fit it into their requirements. So somebody say has mobility problems, I think the online PhD can help with that, say if they've got childcare that makes a difficult route to travel in, it helps them with that, or indeed people who are based abroad and the idea of relocating for at least three years to an expensive London, that just isn't going to work out, particularly when they're almost certainly not going to be able to work. So I think it's something that's a useful option, but I wouldn't say, you know, this is I think people must do. That's it.

(Tim Neumann)

Thanks Richard, that's quite a useful overview and actually you've mentioned the OMRs the online Masters of Research, and that leads me actually to a question for Will, so Richard, effectively we are seeing the list of modules that are effectively taken from the online MRs. So this is your programme, Will, can you perhaps tell us a little bit about how you were involved in the development of the modules, how...what your approach was in order to work with students, the pedagogy around it, is it a more active process or a more acquisition driven process? Can you tell us about that?

(Will Gibson)

Basically, the development was really about writing lectures, writing materials, finding one of the readings and then designing activities. So to give you an example, the typical module, so the first is Approaches to Educational Research, is divided into I think it's six activities over a 12 week period, and for each activity, the students have a written lecture by someone on some given topic and a set of assigned readings and that's their main resources. And then there'll be some kind of collaborative and some individual activities.

So to give you an example: the first activity is, if I remember correctly, they have to go and find an article that interests them, related to their research topic, bring it back, and that involves I think 'action research' - they have to find an example about something, bring it back, and then they have to decide which one best fits the criteria of action research, and then discuss it in a group, and then we meet. So that's asynchronous, they discuss that asynchronously, and then we meet through Collaborate to talk about their articles. Something like that. So all of the activities have that kind of characteristic in that there's kind of group work between the people online asynchronously and nearly always there's some synchronous component where we discuss together what they've been doing, sometimes it's what they're gonna do. Does that answer your question?

(Tim Neumann)

I think it does. You said that you have synchronous activities in there are so given that the title of the session is 'accommodating the distance learner' this might be quite a challenge especially as you, Richard, you said that you've people from different points on the globe. So how do you work with this, how do you mitigate this? Are these sessions mandatory?

(Will Gibson)

Okay, so what we've said in terms of the mandatory thing, we said we want you to participate in, I think, so there's six modules and we want you to participate in at least four, something like 80% of them, we say. That's hard to police, but that's the idea. We have exactly the problem that Richard indicated, that you're dealing with very many time zones. What we do is not a perfect solution, but we have a poll to - just a vote for the times that they can best do, and then we select from that poll the time for scheduling

a session. It means for everyone, tutors and students alike, you have to be pretty flexible. So I've done classes really early the morning, really late in the night, at weekends often, and the students as well, from early in the morning or at some inconvenient time, and it's not perfect, but that's often the only way to do the scheduling.

(Tim Neumann)

Okay, yes, we will probably pick up on the flexibility point later on. I would like to turn to you, Kim, now because we've heard about the approach from the OMRs and also the MPhil/PhD. I believe you have a quite different approach to distance education as a whole.

(Kim Insley)

Yes, so thinking about the Advanced Educational Practice programme: the approach there, all the same challenges are there. Ours is a taught programme, so it's not a research programme and the (inaudible) we have is that the main students who are on our programme are teachers, frequently working full-time, and again across the globe. So we wanted to look at ways of accommodating them, not so much through synchronous teaching.

So we actually went for a more flexible approach and the asynchronous approach. and there isn't dissimilarity, it's just a different approach and it's not necessarily better either, but I was interested hearing we'll talk about the six activities: we actually, on our advanced educational practice programme, were challenged when we went for validation and how because in the IOE at that time we had a very clear eighty...you have to attend 80% of your lectures - how do we make sure our students are attending, or what's the equivalence of attending?

So we developed what we call K.I.T. activities - keep in touch - and those keep in touch activities we have, we have five of them plus an introductory one, and again everyone has to do four out of the five to get the 80% and they respond to those activities by uploading them and sharing them with everybody on the same module. So each module has a set of keep in touch activities, but you can do them when you'll need to, which is what makes it more flexible for our teachers. Increasingly though, we're attracting people from other professions.

So for example this year, on our programme we have a GP, because one of our modules is called "developing mentoring practices" and many other practices, erm, professions now have mentoring activities. We thought it was all for teachers and suddenly we've got lots of other people asking for it: we've got a dentist who applied for this year, and they are really enjoying the flexibility of the programme and the way that that allows it.

Forum is quite important in ours. The forums, and one of our challenges is getting those started; once they started they seem to work, but getting people on who tend, who choose not to or they feel uncomfortable engaging. We do monitor: now, Moodle has an opportunity where you can see what they've been doing, but it's a bit of a...you can also overcome that by just clicking on things, and all it shows is the number of clicks, it doesn't show the engagement with it, but what we've found slowly as the programme has developed, that actually all of our students are engaging and we are getting to know them not through faces, in fact if I met - I got over fifty students on the programme - if I met them face to face I wouldn't know who they were, unless I put up...many of them use cartoons as their profile picture rather than themselves and I wouldn't, I wouldn't recognise them!

But I recognise their writing, because that becomes very signature to them and I know one of the challenges we're often asked about is plagiarism: how do you know? Interestingly, I think we pick up plagiarism - accidental plagiarism, I'd say. If someone's really out to catch us, that's a challenge, because I mean, you know, you could sign up for the course and get your father or your brother to do it and not know who that person was actually doing, but if you...we pick up accidental plagiarism a lot and can then support students in not meeting it, so I think for us the biggest thing is the formative assessment through those keep in touch activities which everyone responds to, then the very important thing is formative feedback on a draft, so the assignment whatever it is, we do have different ways of assessing, including presentation, but that's only for the blended learning approach at the moment.

We have portfolio assessment and we have essay assessment. My learning from the Open University in particular was that formative feedback has got to develop a dialogue with the student and that's what we've really increased. So for example at the dissertation stage when we have supervision, it's very much online but we've developed engaging formatively in sending questions, and you can't just say alright yes I've responded to that, I've responded to that, because it won't work if you give a very poor response, because we will give alternative viewpoints: you might also try this where you might contradict ourselves, but it's an engagement in writing.

(Tim Neumann)

Thanks Kim. Interestingly you've answered a question that was brought up the online chat, which was how do you avoid plagiarism. So you said it's effectively getting to know the learner and identifying their voice and also by the means of formative assessment and so on. Can I throw the question to you, Richard and/or Will about plagiarism: is that an issue of concern, is that something that you need to actively manage?

(Richard Freeman)

I don't see it as, well, in terms of an online PhD, I don't see it as any different to a face-to-face one, so you know the assessment of the PhD is still a thesis so exactly the same issues with the modules that they take online, it would almost be a bit perverse to plagiarise for that. I just I don't see the benefit (inaudible) assessed, and it's kind of the thing that Will has implied: you don't get a hundred percent engagement with anything so to be blunt, I think a lot of plagiarism tends to happen when students run out of time, and this is undergraduate level, you know, let alone in the PGT/PGR; they run out of time, they kind of panic and it's like, oh well I can grab these, these, put them together and this gets me through. So given that the only time you have that with a PhD is the eighty thousand word thesis I think that's that's generally less of an issue.

(Will Gibson)

Just quickly, I could reiterate all of that; the thing is that I find there's such depth of engagement with students, just continually talking to them and they are continually talking, that, yeah, absolutely, you get such a sense of their voice, which means their interests, how they talk about stuff, the kind of things they bring up, you get to know them. And so, on a kind of micro interactional level, plagiarism doesn't feel like an issue at all, just talking to someone. Where it becomes an issue is obviously in assessment - I can think of two or three cases over ten years with plagiarism. I think it's, yeah, in my experience, anyway, it hasn't been a big deal and it's picked up by Turnitin where it is an issue.

(Tim Neumann)

Thank you. What's emerging here is effectively a picture that this is education that is very active, with lots of participation, where students are not just being sent material to read and then do a send-in assignment, which was a model not that long ago, we need to only think back 15 years. And I can perhaps even share my own experience as a distance student, because a certain component, like 30,20 percent of my undergraduate degree was by traditional distance education: getting a reading pack and then hand in the written assignments at the end with no tutor interaction at all, whereas my online masters that I did 15 years ago, quite a while, when print base distance education was still the norm, that was highly interactive and even to this day one of the best educational experiences I had, and I got, really got to know the tutors a lot, so when I then went there to meet them it was like meeting old colleagues. So do you get the same connection with your students then?

(Kim Insley) Very much so.

(Will Gibson)

Yeah, I feel like I know my distance learning students much better than I know face-to-face students. I think of it, like, when you say you're accommodating online students, I think of it the other way around, with face-to-face students, in the sense that I find that now, I kind of, much harder to get done what I want to get done educationally. I think online the way you can stretch time with conversations over time and in detail and get people to go away and think about something, find something and they talk about it you can't do that easily face-to-face.

(Richard Freeman)

I'm really reminded of when I used flipped classrooms, I was teaching 'methodology and statistics' for the psychology programmes and I felt those worked really well, and indeed, you know, the students said they liked it and partly it was this thing about something like statistics that people do find difficult, they were able to have time to think. They could listen to me and basically go: "shut up, let me ever think about that - actually tell me that again", just by rewinding, me and you know it's tricky... Yes, so, they, when I asked for feedback, there were students who said English is not my first language, so I found that invaluable, and indeed students with dyslexia said they found it was invaluable.

Now that was a flipped classroom and I think the same things apply when you're doing things online, particularly when you're using this asynchronous, because I think it's easy to say asynchronous is second best, you know, this immediacy is great, but actually, when you're doing stuff that's hard, some of the stuff we do is hard, you need to think! I mean, I was in a seminar Wednesday night and I kind of wanted to ask a question, but it's almost kind of, I would have done that thing 'this is more of a statement than a question' because I wanted to kind of explore the issues, but I really did need, it was one of those, I need to go and have a really good think about this, so I can ask a good question. And indeed there was a some stuff I wanted to look up, or I asked that question, but you can't in a seminar. Although it seems better, it's kind of "but I'd rather get back to you later on when I've had a chance to think, had a chance to read around", and funnily enough, I think that's what this gives you.

(Tim Neumann)

I want to probe a little bit deeper, because you've just mentioned students with dyslexia as an example, and there was a question in the text chat for Kim: do you find that older students engage better than younger ones so my...let's construct a question out of that and ask you about your student body. Now

originally in your presentation you have identified a kind of certain people who do this. Kim. you also said you expected professional full-time teachers to take your course, but then things changed a little bit, and once we have those people as students on board, well we need to work with them and and deal with them and they have all sorts of different characteristics so maybe let's start with the question from the text/chat: Kim do you find a difference between older and younger students in distance education?

(Kim Insley)

I might have said that yes when I first started developing this, but I'm finding that younger students have a far better engagement with the technology, so they're much happier about engaging online. They will use social media much more happily, they'll even introduce us to other... "have you tried doing this" and one of them is, like I can't remember what it is now but it's a classroom tool, where it's used in classrooms, and you know "have you thought about using that online to support", and older students actually love that opportunity to think, which in the the face-to-face classroom, I so agree with you, Richard, you don't have time to do.

I also think that I am aware of the limitations of using text and that's one of the challenges with the asynchronous and the forums. It's a lot of text, so we're trying slowly to introduce other formats, but I have dyslexia myself, so I understand the challenges. I have I've always thought to myself, would I be able to do a fully online programme, but it is that time to think opportunity that makes it much easier, that time to even look up the words that you don't understand, which when you're an adult or supposedly, you know, the expert, you don't have time to do that in a face-to-face setting, so I think that - and I'm seeing more and more from my student body - that I...it's different for younger students and for older students, but all of them enjoy the different reasons that flexibility that online learning is.

(Tim Neumann)

Following up from that and getting back to the point, Richard, you mentioned: people with specific difficulties or needs that need to be addressed, and running an online course and online programme and teaching online modules, you know, it's not just about you as the main person who does the main student contact, but there are there's a whole other thing around it, you know: universities offer student support, disability and welfare support, and so on so. In order to accommodate all types of learners properly, these support systems from library - we have representatives in the room - to well-being and so on, do you think... what's your take on this, is this a challenge for particularly this university, has this university, is this university on a good path towards addressing the needs of diverse learners with special needs?

(Richard Freeman)

I think the library is an interesting case: so the head of the library, Paul Ayriss, Dr Paul Ayriss, is actually one of the people who's leading on open science, and he of course it's worth noting, you see, UCL press that launched a few years ago, is an online University Press I think the first in the world. They've recently celebrated 1 million downloads, which is kind of quite incredible, but you can still buy a physical copy of the book, I think that's important too. I really do think it's the kind of thing people overlook, so the library I think is good.

One of the reasons it's good is: we are in central London - trying to find space is difficult, even if you have lots of money as in tens of millions of pounds to buy buildings - they aren't available, you know, buying them is not easy. So I think that's actually what, I think, 'forced' is the word, UCL library to put its

energies into making stuff available online. So things like, people often miss this: the number of books you can access through UCL library online now, download whole chapters as PDFs and then print them out, frankly it's much better than having the physical book on the shelf, you know, if you think of all those struggles trying to photocopy pages of books, it's much nicer if you can get them as PDFs, so I think the library is good, and I think the library staff, certainly the ones I've encountered, I think they're very enthusiastic about supporting all students and that includes the online ones.

I don't think though it's perfect across the board, and I think that is a problem, however I actually think that's more to do with, I think, people do have this idea of the kind of typical student. So I think some people at UCL think of a typical student was probably being an 18 to 21 year old young man who's white, probably from the Home Counties, probably went to a private school, you know, kind of this kind of caricature. Now, checking the figures, certainly the typical undergraduate student is a woman probably about that sort of age, but if you look at UCL, there are actually more postgraduate students than undergraduate students.

If you think about where UCL is, I would love to live around here - I live out in zone 3, I bought my flat in the nineties; if I was buying right now I'd be outside zone 6, probably be in Birmingham, you know, further away but you know, certainly with the students the notion that they're living near campus, for the majority of them that's not true, so I think there's kind of ongoing work to get all of the parts of UCL to recognise who the UCL students are, and actually, I don't think online has anything to do with it, because I think you...it is that thing of PRES that I gave you: 41 and a half percent of our research students self identify as distance learners, and I think, you know, that actually should be the focus.

It's not about the people who are doing distance learning courses it's the students who need to access resources in the way that best suits them. That can be dictated by their geographical location, it can be dictated by issues like disabilities, it can be dictated by things like they're carrying responsibilities, I think it's this important thing that we have to think about how can we make all of our resources as accessible as possible to as many people as possible.

(Tim Neumann)

And one argument of the philosophy of universal access our Universal Design is effectively if you prepare your resources in the way that they are accessible for those with special needs and those without these special needs will benefit as well because the resources are just better when they are more accessible. I want to pick up, you mentioned UCL has, it is a primarily post-graduate University now. This hasn't always been the case, and I think sitting here in the Institute of Education, we must take our share of the blame for that

(Richard Freeman)

We are entirely responsible for that, because when our merger was announced I used to take great delight in talking to senior people at UCL and say "you realise this will make you a predominately postgraduate institution" and I think pretty much without exception they like, "what?" And they just haven't appreciated this, but I think anyway this is the point that people just thought "oh it's just taking more people on" but fail to appreciate that we had, well, a handful of undergraduates but what would it be, four or five thousand postgraduate taught students.

(Kim Insley)

And that's political as well, I mean, not just in UCL, but I'm widening participation champion for IOE and sit on the widening access committee at UCL, and one of the challenges is thinking about widening access not just for undergraduates, which is what government will pay us for, but also for postgraduate, which is why I set up the Graduate Diploma in Advanced Educational Practice, because there are many people, certainly coming from other countries, whose first degree, when it is measured against NARIC or whatever system is used, is not perceived or identified as being equivalent, so they're refused access to postgraduate, because oh it's not a 2.2/2.1. The graduate diploma allows those people to do an honours qualification for 120 credits at honours, which then gives them access into postgraduate activity here, but that's not supported politically by government, because, well, they've already got a degree, that's not what we're looking for, so there is changing everyone's opinions about how that moves on I think.

(Tim Neumann)

Yeah so it's not just postgraduates at the IOE brought to UCL, but also a number of distance education programmes. So the distance education profile of UCL has changed thanks to the IOE merger, and there was a question submitted before the session about how many percent of all courses at the IOE are actually distance education courses.

Now unfortunately I do not have an answer to that; I tried looking it up quickly and couldn't find the numbers, but then I faced a challenge: how do you actually count and the question is actually not as easy as it sounds. But we do have Jo at the back of the room as a distance learning facilitator, you have some numbers for UCL as a whole?

(Jo Stroud)

I can give an answer, yes. Tim makes a perfectly valid point as to what the IOE brought to UCL as a wider institution. I think we have in total 41 or 42 distance learning programmes across UCL. More than half of them are IOE's, I think it actually includes the research degrees. What is complicated in assessing whether these courses are quote-unquote "distance learning" or not is that we have fully online courses as part of that provision, we have courses with residential components, we have multimode modal delivery type courses and those modes of delivery are not always directly communicated, so it's quite hard to assess.

We also have programmes here that have some modules which are delivered online and others across campus, they might not have a host or home programme, so it's a really complex question but I think it's reflective of the kinds of flexibility and diversity that we're offering in order to try and meet the needs of similarly diverse learners in whatever discipline it is that we are referring to.

(Kim Insley)

I think that's a very good point to make, because many of our students, they're teachers so if they want online in in the autumn term and spring term but actually they'd like some face-to-face at the end of when school's finished in the summer term or when they're not as busy and they say can I do another face-to-face module which we've allowed in our program to allow that sort of flexibility.

(Tim Neumann)

Thank you so we have about half an hour left and I just want to remind people in this room it's okay to ask questions, online people are having a really good chat in the meantime and actually a really good discussion and I'm occasionally trying to keep an eye on that, but what I would like to do now is to move

our attention a little bit more to the practical how-tos, of how we deal with students, and Kim for example, you you actually have your course open in the browser. I think it would be a good opportunity, would you like to get set go through that? You can work on this machine and I'll make it happen.

(Kim Insley) Isn't it wonderful technology!

(Richard Freeman)

Just while you're doing that, so the kind of, I suppose it's sort of movie streaming service it's called Kanopy, not can I pay, but Kanopy so K A N O P Y. If you put in UCL and Kanopy, it's a genuinely quite amazing selection of films, it is almost you know kind of Netflix for the educated middle class to be honest, so it's if you haven't looked at it, seriously, yeah you just go "oh I wouldn't mind paying to watch these" It's not like you know, an obscure film that you think "I'm sure someone really wants to watch but that somebody is not me." I could almost guarantee those at least half a dozen films you see and think: "that's the weekend solved!"

So it's an amazing resource and it's worth saying that, it really is for me, it's the kind of 'best of international cinema', so it has some of those kind, you know, it's got Kurosawa for example from Japan, he's got the kind of the obvious names, as well as some more obscure stuff, but it's really an impressive selection of stuff and it is you know the kind of films that you might even want to watch and just stressing again that Box of Broadcast think, it's actually geo locked I think, that limits it's use. But of course with the UCL desktop, you can use a virtual private network to access these things and the selection of documentaries is basically all the best documentaries from television and radio, well certainly since the early 70s, and my favourite documentary I think (inaudible) is probably Ways of Seeing, so the famous documentary which you actually cannot legally see outside, you know, they take it off YouTube when it's put up, the BBC can't show, but for whatever reason it's available on this Box of Broadcasts so it's actually a fantastic teaching resource, let alone just a kind of brilliant study resource, you know type in say John Berger it comes up with about 35 different references when he's being interviewed, various documentaries he's done but really fantastic, and the prob...but the problem is I think, why we're saying this: people aren't aware of all this stuff that's available, you know, tends to be, you know, it's not literally in your face, you aren't aware of things like this.

(Kim Insley)

It's one of the challenges of online, isn't it, it's so big, there is so much there, which do you follow, and that's actually an important aspect I think of the teaching on the modules, and certainly in ours. The access to so much is overwhelming if you're not careful so part of our role as teachers is to direct people to some of these things on the advanced educational practice programme.

Here I've got the programme page up. All...anyone who's enrolled on the programme has immediate access to to this. We start even before they're fully enrolled because as soon as someone has accepted their offer, we send out a pre-course Handbook which has distant sort of examples of the sorts of activities, which are actually freely available, so you're using readings that are...not through the library, you would need username and password for that, and we get people started on thinking about what they're going to be doing, which actually when you have got a, say you're a teacher and you've applied, and you want to start looking before September term comes on, it helps people access the programme and access our (inaudible) of teaching much earlier before the programme actually starts, and you can...so on the programme area, what we've done is kept that for the pre coursework which we're

calling 'induction to the programme' because again that's another aspect that is difficult if you're on an online, how do you do an induction? And in it, in the pre-course handbook are activities that get them to read some things like the programme and answer questions who is my personal tutor, who is this, so that they hopefully know. It doesn't mean everyone does it, but that's in lieu of induction.

But we've made the programme area focus on study skills, and you mentioned the academic writing centre: Well the online academic writing centre is fantastic for supporting students. Again, it's full, it's so big that you can spend hours on it and then realise you haven't done anything else that you were supposed to do so we direct people to different activities on that, we've actually... because it's freely available online you don't need your, not for everything, but things you don't need your username, we've actually got that started in our pre course handbook and we introduce for example, through study skills, doing writing, how to read an article, for example an academic article, there's a wonderful podcast on the online writing about that, and it's those sorts of tools that support the rest of the modules going on, we used to have them in each module but then it got boring: because if you're doing that module and there they are, and they're on there, and they're on there, so we've grouped them all together on the programme area, so our program area is almost a module in its own right and in terms of a lot of the information on it.

If I, obviously it's got program details, the other challenge I think for online learning is: how do you have program representation and course representation? How do people do it? So we set up a programme committee area where we even on there have a feedback for the upcoming programme (meeting), which can be submitted anonymously as well. There's a lot of work of course that goes into educating our students, this isn't a place for making complaints, which can happen if you're not careful, and if this is to feed into the programme and what we try and then show is, where we change something because of what students have been telling us they liked or didn't like.

Now some things, for example assessment deadlines, you can't change them, I know some students don't like them but they are set. The only extenuating circumstances is set. Those are against the specification. Just because we're inviting engagement into our modules and programme doesn't mean we're going to change it all, and it can be making that very clear as well. So I have to say I know that we haven't had, well, last time I looked we didn't have any comments from anyone, yep no new discussion topic, even though I've been writing to them all and reminding them, no one's come up with anything.

What we have got this year, which were delighted about is, we have a programme rep, so one of the students has agreed to act as programme rep, and there is online support from the Union to help her identify different ways, which we're going to link to, but we do put up our agenda and we of course share our external examination examiner comments so that they're, it's more, it feels more accessible. Now, my argument is that this is also accessible on any programme, because all of our programmes, whether they're face to face or online or blended have a Moodle space. that's the right of the students, so we can help lots of people access this.

The programmes themselves, sorry, the modules themselves are then, so this one is an interesting one. This has a, this is the independent study module. Now how can that be a taught module, one might ask, because it's independent! We've done this through, more like it's taking the Open University idea of a study guide, which tracks someone through choosing an area that they're interested in that links to their

practice, whatever they're doing, and supports them in finding readings that focus on that. So it's a bit like study skills, but it's not, it's really focusing them down.

It is assessed both through an essay, and there's guidance there, or a portfolio, and what we've done with the portfolio is produced a pro forma for people to actually put in. We had, we've had X, well you can see one student's written there "the portfolio you created is brilliant I would suggest to you as a learner that you use this writing frame from the beginning of anyone's MA experience, especially if they've never written academically it's a great tool!" She said she felt it worked for her and it did, and interestingly it enhanced her access into other modules, because it does for a lot of people, because it becomes a writing frame for them, but it's not necessarily true for everybody. And I think that's one of the opportunities in the programme, that we can change things as long as we don't change the learning outcomes or the assessment or the name of the module. Within the validation, we can adapt to the needs of the students in that (inaudible) the group that are there, but they're a very diverse group as I say.

(Tim Neumann)

On that point I would like to bring in Will, you have been sitting silently at the end of the table for a while, but this is actually a good opportunity in terms of adjusting student...to student needs during the programme: Do you... you have a programme that is really close to students in terms of communication. Do your students have opportunities to have an influence on how the, how a module is taught for example, to do they have a sort of an ownership there, or is it pretty much a fixed pathway?

(Will Gibson)

They have...so it's pretty fixed in the sense of: the activities come one after the other typically, and in a fixed order, and with a fixed design. They can input obviously through feedback, to the module feedback to the course and many other ways. What is flexible though, change...it changes a lot, is the nature of the resources we give and the nature of the interaction itself. So for example, and it's just the thing that I'm doing more and more in recent years, is on the basis of an activity you may find that there's a particular thing that students struggle with understanding, or you may...yeah look I say that, I'll find that a quick way to deal with that is to do a really quick video: so videos are much...not better than writing, but they're a really useful addition to writing, so, or giving feedback to a group, instead of spending three hours writing feedback and relating it, that can take a long time, whereas to do a video, you can do it in 20 minutes.

I'll just quickly produce something and it's very, kind of, 'quick and messy', if it doesn't look great and sound brilliant, but it's fine, you can hear it and see, so that kind of flexibility, so maybe that kind of flexibility, or in finding a different resource, as I've been saying earlier, that you're a sort of a gateway to stuff. So I think also a lot of my job is "okay you're struggling with understanding this, okay read this thing then, this is a nicer way of saying it" So, that kind of flexibility rather than in terms of changing the structure of what you're doing, more in terms of finding ways to help people understand things or in synthesising that can be done online, more like that.

(Tim Neumann)

Thanks and also thanks for interpreting my rather woolly question in the exactly the way that I was hoping to aim at. Yeah, so what you've described there is effectively the teacher as facilitator as we've read in the literature so often, moving away from teacher taking centre stage and being the sage on the

stage, or the wise person. Rather, your role is, you seem to see your role as someone who helps students learn, is that a fair assessment?

(Will Gibson) I do, absolutely.

(Tim Neumann) Great, so...

(Participant)

(inaudible) ...for a while, I thought this is a great moment. I'm very interested in how you motivate pastoral, how you do pastoral care in your course, student's lives around the learning. I should confess that I work mostly in MOOCs, and so we take no responsibility for that sort of thing, so I'd be very interested to hear how you organise that.

(Kim Insley)

On the masters programmes pastoral care is always the programme leader, because it's a small master's programme, we're going to have to look at this next year when we go into the big MA Education with over 300 students, but I suspect it will be the programme leader on the route. I can pastorally care for 50 students, I have not, never had a problem with that until it comes to the dissertation year, full-time. And then we make it very clear that switches to your supervisor, because in the dissertation you're very much making a connection with that person, so that's how we manage it.

Some things go wrong. And for busy teachers in particular, busy professionals, there will be times when they can't cope but the systems are actually very good here: There are some very good systems to support that, and I've always found someone somewhere who can help me, even with online. I mean, ok, sometimes people get asked to come enrol on a Saturday morning, or on Monday from 9:00 or 10:00 to 4:00pm, and they cannot do it. Those mistakes happen, but that's because UCL has, I don't know the number of students but it's massive isn't it, it's got 40,000 I think is the number, something, ok, yeah, it's there's so many students - yes, it matters to each individual, and I think that's also part of our role in helping, certainly a programme leader role, in helping make connections for individuals within the programme.

(Tim Neumann)

I can add something to that as well, because in the program that I teach on, which is the MA education and technology, well I also teach on Richard's Online PhD actually and I used to teach on Will's Online MRes...

(Kim Insley) ...and mine!

(Tim Neumann)

...ah, and on yours, too (laughs) but in the programme that I'm doing most of my teaching at this time we just had a discussion, a short discussion around pastoral care because IOE has recently adopted the UCL system of personal tutors. I think 2 or 3 years ago, we started adopting that and Kim has just said that actually at IOE we do have an excellent system of pastoral care through programme leaders and supervisors.

Now we have personal tutors, where an academic staff member is assigned to each individual student as a personal tutor to manage all aspects of pastoral care. Well, just yesterday as I said we had a big

discussion on this, because sometimes we feel that we are either over delivering on care or that the boundaries are not as well defined anymore, so we really need to see how these new models, changing models work out in the future but yeah, I just want to bring in that in the programme I teach on we operate this personal tutor model which seems to work pretty okay actually because students they are assigned one person throughout their career at UCL and whenever there's anything about life, about being thrown out of their flat or whatever, then the personal tutor is the person to contact - it doesn't mean that the personal tutor has to resolve everything but the personal tutor can point to the other resources in order to help resolve things.

(Richard Freeman)

I'd like to say, I think it's a group that gets overlooked, some of the biggest help to students who are doing doctorates is actually from the administrators, and I think, so they're easy to overlook, but I think they play quite unique role because the problem is you know if you're called professor or doctor it makes you seem, you know, kind of distant, whereas the administrator I think is seen as more neutral, so they aren't making academic judgments of people, and I think the administrative team we've got at the Centre for Doctoral Education generally and indeed particularly with the Online MPhil/PhD, where it's Gary Ford, you know, do a fantastic job of supporting the students, and I think that they are really a key part of that pastoral support.

(Tim Neumann)

Absolutely, yes. We are closing in on the end of the session we still have over ten minutes left

(Participant)

A lot of you have identified the drivers against fully online as, rather than positive choose the pedagogic reasons for doing it more. It's students not being able to live in London (inaudible) Will touched on a couple of advantages of fully online, say the idea of the stretched conversations over time you were saying that flexibility and fluidity of arranging teaching materials. Just wondering if you can identify any other kind of advantages where fully online you found that actually is to be preferable to face-to-face or a mixed mode?

(Will Gibson)

I might just be repeating what I said before that, so the way I, in a sense is, like if you think, with the analogy of a relationship with people, like, used to be 15 years ago, its senior partner or whatever you see them, you don't see them again until you come back, the students in the classroom, I see them in the classroom, I don't see them again until then. In the learning it's just I feel like it's continuous kind of conversation going on, which is really being what I said before it's like, and I do see that as a huge advantage to online learning that the kind of learning, it's such a cliché, but the learning and the thinking that is good, and for me as much as the students, as a tutor online, I find it so much richer because I'm always thinking about it, it's always kind of with me.

It brings up an issue which I think we haven't really talked about, which is the impact on teaching and teaching time of what it means to tutor online, which is the flip side for all of us, which I'd love other people's feedback. My sense is that I don't think I do more, I don't think it takes more time, but it's...maybe sometimes, depends on what you're doing. But I'd love to hear other people's thoughts on that, too, but we seem to steer away from the question before answered.

(Kim Insley)

One thing I feel quite strongly is that I am, I've been, I was a teacher in school before I worked here. I can be teaching face-to-face, but I don't necessarily know what's going on inside the heads of all the the 20-30 people in the room. I do know what's going on inside the heads of the 30 people online 'cause they're telling me - even if it's in that stretch conversation. And I know the next session is on blended learning, I actually think that probably blended learning is one of the most powerful. Oh, you could have opportunity for fully online if necessary, which is what we've done on ours, or just all blended learning and having the best of both worlds.

I feel I haven't talked much about the PGCE teacher development, because it's still being uploaded on on the intranet at UoL, but there, there's even less tutor input, where it's really to try and reduce cost, because it is as full-on, as if you're every week, to try and reduce cost, where we've tried to create it in the materials, so the taught materials will be the facilitator and that - it's going to need some research alongside, i think, to see how it goes. But the students on that will self- identify a critical friend in their school - it's very much for teachers of course - in their school, who will become, we use the word 'mentor', but it doesn't have the same meaning or no meaning in many other countries, so that's the term 'critical friend' not 'mentor'. So it'll be interesting to see how that goes.

(Richard Freeman)

Picking up on that, for me, because I think the PhD is different, because although there are those modules, they're really just to support it, I think some of the benefits you get, most strangely enough it's because you don't have the distractions that you can have. So I think I had spells during my PhD, where I really didn't do much of my PhD. I kept myself very busy; here we have a problem that there is so much training, so particular if you hear the Bloomsbury Post Graduate Skills Network, where we have meetings of the people who run it, so we talk about we've got BPSN (inaudible), and they're attending, you know, it's like they've reached over a hundred courses over a year, and you know they're not doing well on their PhD; it's just, you know, you kind of feel that.

And I think if you don't have those kind of distractions, it really forces a focus, so one of the things that struck me in the interactions is: people want to get everything out of that particular time, and I think it's similar to something I've seen with some of the EdD students, who, they are so busy, you know, got a full-time job and they typically got a family, and then they're squeezing in the gaps doing the doctorate, but in a weird way that they know they've got no time to waste. "If I'm going to spend, I've got one hour a day to work, I'm gonna work". It's not going to be a waste, oh just check if there's anything on Twitter and maybe Facebook and well, there's always emails; it's like you do not have that luxury, you have to focus.

And then also, I think is that reality of 'you don't have to waste time', you know, for everyone here you'll have almost certainly commuted in, so you know you're getting washed and dressed, if you man probably having a shave, unless you're Will or indeed Tim, you know, you have to do these things and it actually takes quite a bit of time. Well if you're just at home, and let's face if you're having a Skype and you're not using the camera you don't even have to worry about taking off your...well, putting on clothes, I was going to say taking off your pyjamas, but it might be putting on some clothes, you know, and I think that does save time.

Me even here, you know, I had to leave my office well in advance of this session to make sure I was here on time, if I was accessing remotely you can imagine me sat in front the computer, set the timer to go off five minutes in advance and just click on the link and run - there, I don't have to do anything. So I think, I think there are advantages even there, and I think particularly this one about because you don't have everything else that's going on, I think it really does help to focus because I, certainly if I think of my PhD, I think of quite a few other people, there's a lot of displacement activities going on, and when those aren't as easily available, I think in a weird way almost it's easier to focus.

(Kim Insley)

Can I say one thing? I'll be very quick, this does presume that everyone has good access to the Internet. So my challenge: I live in I live in zone 6 and we don't even have 2G nevermind 4G! We have two internet providers and neither a very strong: if it's windy, forget it. And of course internationally that is a challenge as well: African students don't always have that access, so we do have to be aware that it's not the answer for everything.

(Tim Neumann)

Access problems, yeah, but you could make the same argument for face to face, actually. We seamlessly moved over to question time, if you have any questions then do raise your hand in the room. There was a question in the text chat, maybe a quick one: does anyone have any experience of alumni peer mentoring or peer mentoring schemes for supporting online learning? Ever come across, or do you make an effort to include alumni? Do you happen to keep in touch?

(Richard Freeman)

It's a nice idea, I think that, to be blunt, the problem is everyone's just too busy, so I think it would be, in an ideal world, when Labour get elected and we have a four day working week, maybe then people can ride in on their unicorns.

(Tim Neumann)

And this is probably also an issue that students might want to pick up, because from the experience in the MA in Education and Technology, which also has a distance component, you can study either face-to-face or distance, students actually from three years ago I think set up their own post-MA network, and if you go to the Twitter handle @BeyondtheMA then you can see them, and they're doing amazing work and they are activating all the other students who graduate from this programme

(Jo Stroud) We do have one example of a Paediatric Dentistry course at UCL actually, where we have direct links between UCL Moodle and UCL Extend (inaudible) and the alumni sit on UCL Extend. And they interact with current students around cases that they're currently exploring, so those people are obviously qualified dentists, and they've done the digital course will look at what current students are doing and give them advice - that's an actual learning activity where we have interaction between these two groups.

(Kim Insley)

It's an advantage of flexible learning, so most of ours/my students take five years to do their MA, they do a module a year basically and actually they become peer mentors of and give advice to others, so they'll, they can choose when they do the modules, you see.

(Tim Neumann)

All right, that question by the way came from LSHTM, so thank you. So there's actually quite a lot that UCL does to support these things or UCL can do to support these things, so for us as tutors and programme leaders, well we need to encourage the students in order to work with that, but ultimately it also depends on the goodwill of students. With an eye on the time I think I would now like to have a final statement from you; if you could perhaps think of tips or tricks, if you were to advise others what a really good method or task or tool to accommodate distance learners is, then here's your chance: so what is your number one or spontaneous one issue that you would tell others? Will is nodding...

(Will Gibson)

Well the one that springs to mind is, it's a really, really simple thing, but I do a weekly bulletin. So on every front page it says, okay, this is the stuff that's happened in the module and I'll try and name people like "look at Carola's contribution here, look at this really interesting thing that's on there"; not a huge list, like five things, "remember to do this, check out this external resource, have great weekends". And to have a very, it's a stylistic thing maybe, but a very sort of chatty informal tone, and just to remind people of things and give them assistance.

(Tim Neumann) Thank you. Richard or Kim?

(Richard Freeman)

I'm reminded of when I did the flipped classrooms and I was frankly amazed how successful they were and I did a couple of presentations on them and, you know, I pointed out at the end I don't think it's a panacea, I don't think it's a universal solution, so the particular case of teaching statistics to Masters level students, I think I would say at least consider it, you know it's a good thing to do, but I think it's important if you were thinking about doing an online programme to think about what's required in that programme. So I could imagine some of the stuff that's been done across UCL, you know, particularly say some of the medical stuff you've, you've literally got to get your hands dirty, literally, and you know you, okay, you can start thinking, oh we could kind of do it like this project, like that, but you know I think some of these things you have to take a step I say: "but it's not really going to work". So it's really your kind of issue about blended learning, but you might say we actually cannot do this fully online and indeed it would be a mistake to try, so we can do lots of it online, but actually it's gonna require people to come over for a week, two weeks or you know three lots of one week per term, but the I think it's got to be that. It's not about how to make the best online course, it's the best course. That's what matters.

(Tim Neumann) Thank you. Kim?

(Kim Insley)

So for me, I would argue that the pre-course handbook has been the best thing we've introduced and I'm...I've introduced it to a number of other people who were getting excited about it, because it starts you thinking about how am I going to do this learning, long before you actually are doing it, so you're not halfway through a module and you think "this isn't for me" you've realised.

(Tim Neumann)

Thank you. So with that we are at the end of today's session. Thanks for all your contributions I just want to end up with a kind of advertisement that on Wednesday next week we are running another panel discussion which is on mixed delivery so blend...the proper blended learning, teaching face to face

and distance students maybe simultaneously, or semi simultaneously, how do we do this and what issues are there.

And then on Monday the 26th of November, this will not be available online, we have a hands-on techniques and experience exchange session. So for all the people in the room thanks very much for coming and for all the online people also thanks for attending and for chatting quite, well quite a lot actually, so there was a really good exchange going on and of course thanks to you three panelists for sharing your experience. And maybe let's end with one statement from one of the online participants just at the end which was: "do you think the face to face people here have missed out?" Thanks very much for coming.

(Applause)