

TEACHING ASSOCIATES' AND STUDENTS' PERSPECTIVES OF ONLINE LEARNING IN A SCIENCE DEGREE

Sarah Yang^a, Elizabeth Yuriev^a, Jennifer Short^a

Presenting Author: Sarah Yang (sarah.yang@monash.edu)

^aFaculty of Pharmacy and Pharmaceutical Sciences, Monash University, Parkville VIC 3052, Australia

KEYWORDS: online learning, COVID-19, blended learning, teaching associates, students

BACKGROUND

COVID-19 restrictions have caused instructors and students to quickly adapt to the online environment, familiarising themselves with internet-based technologies and online education tools (Huang, 2020).

AIMS

To delineate approaches to synchronous online classroom facilitation and analyse students' and teaching associates' (TA) perspectives of online learning.

DESIGN AND METHODS

Seven semi-structured interviews with TAs and surveys of 118 students from the Bachelor of Pharmaceutical Science (Monash University) degree were analysed quantitatively and qualitatively, following Braun and Clarke's (2006) thematic analysis guidelines.

RESULTS

While discussion forum and untimetabled pre-recorded lectures were perceived as ineffective, a well-outlined course structure and a regular two-way communication between students and instructors, as observed in Zoom sessions and weekly activity tables, successfully promoted student engagement. TA interviews revealed possible improvement areas, namely, the use of technology solutions to observe students' problem-solving processes, persistent camera use during classes, and resources/support in improving TAs' preparedness to teach online.

CONCLUSION

By keeping the successful online teaching approaches in an online environment while implementing improvement strategies to address the barriers to not-so-effective approaches and/or shifting these approaches to face-to-face classrooms, instructors would be able to create more effective and meaningful learning experiences for students through blending learning.

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Proceedings of the Australian Conference on Science and Mathematics Education, 29 September - 1 October 2021, page 58, ISSN 2653-0481