
A BLENDED NEW WORLD: SCIENCE SKILLS SUPPORT AND COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT IN A PANDEMIC

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Laboratory practicals are some of the most important learning experiences for science undergraduates. They are an opportunity to consolidate theoretical learnings, as well as develop critical thinking and technical skills. In 2020 the COVID-19 pandemic dramatically changed the way that laboratory-based teaching had to be conducted. Our survey of 35 academics from Australia and North America indicated that in the short term, teaching staff adopted two approaches: 1) moved fully online and to a video based teaching and giving students data, or 2) altered the way that hands on teaching was conducted either via at-home kits or changing the student ratios in practical activities to allow for physical distancing. But what happened when the students came back to campus? How do we address the potential gap in learning of technical skills for the last year? How do we adapt to a more dynamic learning environment where students are in a physical and virtual hybrid? Here we will present one possible approach to manage the new, more dynamic learning environment. Our model works in partnership with unit coordinators and provides a network of support in both on-campus and online workshops to develop confidence in skills and security in relationships.

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