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The impact of Covid-19 on the UK EAP sector: An examination of how organisations delivering EAP were affected and responded in terms of academic delivery and operational procedures.



April 2021

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1. Executive Summary

In March 2020 when it became clear that the Covid-19 pandemic was going to put a temporary halt to the provision of UK face-to-face EAP programmes, EAP providers in both the public and private sector were tasked with the huge challenge of moving to remote provision. For some, this shift occurred literally over a weekend, with an attempt to replicate traditional face-to-face delivery through synchronous online teaching and the provision of materials for autonomous learning. Others beginning programmes later in the March to September period of 2020 (the six-month period under investigation in this study) had limited time to consider more carefully how they could best build on the opportunities afforded by online delivery as well as how to mitigate the challenges. This shift to online EAP programmes involved many different individuals in various roles, including administrators, managers, coordinators, teachers, curriculum designers and others. In order to better understand the relative challenges and opportunities that resulted for these key stakeholders in UK EAP provision during March to September 2020, BALEAP put out a call for research proposals in October 2020, and this report provides the results of the research conducted in response to that call.

Overall, what was found was a narrative of panic and pitfalls, as might have been expected, but also one of success and strategy amongst a community of resilient and extremely hard-working practitioners and leaders who did not simply cease their provision in light of the closure of their physical spaces. Instead, they rose to the challenge, sought suggestions and support from each other, and together, they ensured that EAP provision in the UK continued, by and large uninterrupted, during the initial period of the Covid-19 pandemic. This incredible achievement on the part of the UK EAP community did not, however, come without its costs, and the impact on health and wellbeing may be felt for a while to come. On the other hand, a large number of opportunities arose from the various strategies adopted in terms of provision and administrative and operational procedures, and it is expected that many of these opportunities will be harnessed for the future, even in the return to face-to-face programmes.

A synopsis of the key findings generated from this mixed methods research involving questionnaire and interview data is provided here, although all findings are developed in full in the main body of the report.

- Around three quarters of participants reported adopting flipped learning and just over this number felt satisfied with their institution's online delivery, despite the many challenges.
- The move to remote delivery prompted an increase in workload and stress levels, and a need to rethink roles and reporting structures.
- Participants were positive about the opportunity to reflect on and improve current practices and also to upskill.
- Ensuring the integrity of online exams and assessments was a major concern, and there was a low uptake of technology-driven proctoring solutions. However, innovative contingency measures endeavouring to deter misconduct often resulted in more meaningful and authentic assessment processes.
- Although 90% of participants reported receiving some form of training, this tended to be related to technology, such as use of the VLE or communication tools. Participants would have

liked more training in online pedagogy, encouraging online engagement and collaboration and adapting materials for online use.

- Informal support and advice from colleagues and sharing good practice was invaluable.
- Connectivity and technical issues were a major challenge for communication and delivery, but also provided a wealth of opportunities, such as frequency and ease of meetings, shared practice and informal social gatherings. The use of so many different platforms for different kinds of communication was challenging.
- Student engagement was an issue, yet as colleagues became more familiar and confident with the technology, they experimented with strategies for boosting interaction and engagement. Spaces and opportunities for informal communication were greatly appreciated and need to be facilitated to enhance socialisation and engagement.
- Almost 75% of participants reported a drop in admissions.
- Although more than 60% felt their health and wellbeing was adequately considered, there was a feeling that more needs to be done.
- There was a sense of a missing human element in both EAP delivery and collaboration with colleagues.
- There is trepidation around hybrid teaching although blended learning is regarded positively.

It is hoped that this report will provide support and reassurance to the UK EAP sector, and perhaps also further afield, in acknowledging the challenges that a purely online approach to EAP can bring as well as the aspects which can be captured for enhancing future delivery. From the research, it can be concluded that a much more blended approach to both delivery and operations is likely to emerge, and in many ways, already has. What is also evident from this study is that whatever the future holds for EAP programmes, the individuals working in the UK EAP sector will band together as a community to overcome obstacles and share good practice. We hope that this report will be seen as testament to the incredible resilience and community spirit shown and that it will prove useful as decisions are made about the future of UK EAP provision in the post Covid-19 era.

Acknowledgements

We would like to extend our appreciation to the survey participants and interviewees who shared their experiences with us. This research would not have been possible without these valuable insights into the responses to Covid-19 of so many UK EAP providers and we are extremely grateful. We would also like to thank the BALEAP Executive Committee for providing us with this opportunity to conduct this timely research and for the ongoing support in the preparation of this report.

2. Introduction

According to [UNESCO](#) (2020), in April 2020, 90% of learners around the world were affected by school, college and university closures, and this includes UK EAP providers and their students. The Covid-19 pandemic prompted an emergency response from EAP providers with many having to move their provision online within a short space of time, sometimes even over a weekend. As a consequence, BALEAP witnessed a flurry of activity in their listserv with managers and practitioners seeking advice, and sharing solutions on how to maintain the provision that in many cases was already in process at the time of the UK lockdown, particularly in the case of in-session programmes. As all educational buildings closed their doors and fell silent, staff and students retreated inside their homes, and in many cases back to their own countries. However, the level of noise on UK EAP programmes certainly did not diminish, and some might argue that in fact, activity increased. Staff worked long and tiring hours to ensure programmes continued and student learning continued. BALEAP, in recognising the learning and teaching revolution that was underway, put out a call for proposals to conduct research into this pivotal moment for the UK EAP sector. This report is the product of that research and provides reflections on the data gathered from an online questionnaire disseminated in December 2020 and semi-structured interviews conducted from December 2020 to January 2021. Participants included EAP administrators, managers, coordinators, teachers and materials developers. The findings inform readers of the impact of Covid-19 on the UK EAP sector in the initial six months of the pandemic as well as the changes which were made to academic delivery and operations. The results reveal a number of common challenges in addition to many opportunities which the shift to online delivery and operations brought for key stakeholders. It is hoped this report will be useful for informing future decision-making, planning and strategy post Covid-19 and beyond.

The research aimed to answer the following questions:

- 1. What changes were made to the delivery of EAP provision to enable the programmes to proceed?**
- 2. How did key operations such as administration, admissions and progression change or adjust during this period?**
- 3. Were the changes considered successful? What key challenges and opportunities emerged?**

We will first report on the methodology employed by the two researchers and the approach taken to data analysis. Then, the results and discussion are presented, divided into the sections of: EAP Design and Delivery; Assessment and Feedback; Online Communication; Preparation and Support; and Operational and Administrative Processes. Finally, we discuss the implications for the future of EAP delivery and provide a conclusion, in addition to recommendations, limitations and suggestions for further research. The appendices contain key documents, such as the questionnaire, the ethics documentation as well as the results from certain analyses which serve to support the data in the main body of the report.

3. Using this Document

This research study has been conducted for the benefit of the BALEAP membership and the wider EAP community, and we have endeavoured to make it as practical, useful and informative as possible. Since one of the key opportunities identified in this study is the potential for increased communication in an online environment, we hope this digital document providing clickable links, recommendations and synopses of key findings will be accessible to a range of audiences and serve to enhance the communication around online provision of EAP in the wake of Covid-19. For these reasons, the report contains the following features, which we hope will prove useful for readers:

- **Overview and Key Findings**

These short paragraphs and bullet points at the start of each results and discussion section aim to summarise key data and findings for those not wishing to read all of the detail.

- **Clickable Links**

We have inserted hyperlinks to some of the key reports and research, as well as helpful websites, videos and other resources that may be helpful to readers.

- **Reading According to Role**

One of the main challenges of this study was designing research instruments to capture the experiences and opinions of individuals involved in many different roles and representing many different aspects of online EAP delivery and operations. As a result, the Results and Discussion chapter of this report includes sections which may be more or less relevant to different audiences. On the following page is an overview of the content indicating which sections might be most relevant to readers according to their role in EAP delivery.

Please note that you can click on any of the sections in the table on the following page and you will be re-directed to the relevant section in the report.

- **Conference Q&A**

We were delighted that so many colleagues attended our presentation at the recent BALEAP 2021 Conference and posed so many pertinent questions in the chat. We have included a Q&A section at the end of this report where we respond to your questions as we were unable to address all of them during the presentation slot.

- **Continuing the Conversation**

We would also really like to continue responding to your questions in relation to this report and to foster further discussion around the issues raised. It is possible there may be a launch event of this report, as well as perhaps some specific dates for conversation via social media. Please keep a look out on the BALEAP mailing list for details of these.

Results and Discussion Section	Key Content	Suggested Audience
5.1 EAP Design and Delivery	Emergency Remote Teaching vs. Online Learning Course Design Process Delivery Solutions: - Synchronous Provision - Flipped Learning - Class Size Challenges Strategies Opportunities	Managers, coordinators, curriculum designers and teachers
5.2 Assessment and Feedback	Challenges: - Integrity of online exams and Assessment - Technology and Connectivity - Time Strategies: - Learner Training - Ensuring Academic Integrity - Other Creative Solutions Opportunities: - Reflection on Current Practices - Feedback - Professional Development - Inclusivity - Enhanced Status	Managers, coordinators, curriculum designers and teachers
5.3 Online Communication	Connectivity and Accessibility Choice and use of Software Frequency of Communication Rapport Building Logistics	All
5.4 Preparation and Support	Sources of Support Community Training CPD Health and wellbeing	All
5.5 Operational and Administrative Processes	Admissions Registration	Administrators and managers
6. Future Directions	Hybrid learning Blended learning	All

4. Methodology

4.1. Overview

This section explains the approach and the data collection methods and analyses used to explore the research questions presented above. The various stages and timeline of the research are displayed in [Table 1](#).

Period	Actions
October 2020	Call for proposals
November 2020	Initial research and design of data collection instruments (questionnaire and interview guide)
Start to mid-December 2020	Pilot and redesign of questionnaire Ethics application and approval
Mid December 2020 to start of January 2021	Dissemination of online questionnaire Online semi-structured interviews
Start of January 2021	End of data collection through online questionnaires and interviews
Mid to end January 2021	Transcription of interview data
February 2021	Interview data coding and qualitative data analysis
March to April 2021	Questionnaire data coding Quantitative and qualitative data analysis First draft of report
April 2021	Continuation of report

Table 1: Overview of research process

A mixed methods research design was adopted to gain a full understanding of participants' experiences of EAP delivery and operations in the initial six months of the pandemic. Analysis of quantitative questionnaire data established trends and patterns across the sector, while the qualitative insights gained from open-ended questionnaire responses and semi-structured interviews provided first-hand explanations of the evolving situation. This valuable triangulation of factual data with writers' personal experiences facilitated a deep understanding of the various responses being adopted across the sector. Tashakkori and Creswell (2007) stress that mixed methods can be interpreted in many ways, but for them a prerequisite is the integration, rather than just the collection, of two types of data to draw inferences, as well as the use of both qualitative and quantitative methods. [Table 2](#) below provides an overview of the research design.

Focus	Data Collection	Data Analysis
RQ 1,2&3	Questionnaire administered on Google Forms (n=240) Semi-structured interviews (n=14)	- Descriptive analyses of quantitative questionnaire responses - Analysis of countable themes / codes from interview and questionnaire data
RQ 3	Questionnaire administered on Google Forms (n=240) Semi-structured interviews (n=14)	- Thematic analysis of open-ended questionnaire responses - Coding and analysis of interview data

Table 2: Overview of research design

4.2. Ethics

The questionnaire ([Appendix 1](#)), consent form and information sheet ([Appendix 2](#)) as well as the interview schedule ([Appendix 3](#)) were submitted to the Ethics Committee at Reading University for approval. The university's external ethics application form was also completed before the data collection process began. As advised by Flick (2018), participants were informed about the purpose of the data collection and the anonymity of their data. The identities of all questionnaire participants and interviewees are therefore confidential. Questionnaire respondents were asked to specify their institution to enable us to assess whether we had collected a representative sample of UK EAP providers. The information sheet was provided as an attachment in the original email sent out on the BALEAP mailing list and as an attachment at the start of the questionnaire.

4.3. Data Collection Instruments

4.3.1. Questionnaire

An online questionnaire was considered the optimum instrument for data collection to facilitate wide participation and efficient collection and analysis of quantitative data with the option to gain some qualitative insights through open-ended questions (Lefever et al., 2007). The questionnaire was designed using Microsoft Forms and disseminated via the BALEAP mailing list and various other social media platforms such as Twitter and LinkedIn. BALEAP representatives at UK institutions and members of other relevant organisations were asked to disseminate the questionnaire to their membership.

As the research aimed to gather data on administration, admissions, progression, course delivery and assessment, the questionnaire design had to be appropriate for a number of different populations working in EAP, including administrators, managers, coordinators, teachers, materials developers and more. For this reason, the questionnaire was divided into the following sections: Background Information; Student Admissions and Registration; Technology and Online Communication; Preparation and Support; EAP Delivery and Design; EAP Assessment and Feedback; and Final

Comments. The sections on Admissions and Registration, EAP Delivery and Design, and EAP Assessment and Feedback were optional, to cater for respondents involved in the different aspects of EAP provision. As an example, administrators and managers may have completed the Admissions and Registration section, but most likely not the EAP Delivery and Design section, whereas the opposite would apply to teachers.

This decision to employ this kind of conditional branching, to create a custom path through the questionnaire tailoring certain sections according to a participants' role came as a result of trialling with a manager, a coordinator, an administrator and two teachers. Initially, we had created two separate questionnaires to cater for the different roles, but analysis of trial data showed that some sections applied to all roles. Thus, questions addressing all three research questions were combined into a single questionnaire which relied on branching.

The final questionnaire included a total of 63 questions, 21 of which were open-ended and 42 of which were closed. Nineteen of the questions required a response whereas the others were optional depending on which aspects of EAP provision the respondent had been involved with. The breakdown of the questions can be seen in [Table 3](#), and the full questionnaire is provided in 9.1 Appendix 1.

Section Name	Number of Questions	Optional?
Research Information and Consent	4	No
Instructions	1	No
Background information	4	No
Student Admissions and Registration	7	Yes
Technology and Communication	5	No
Preparation and Support	10	No
EAP Delivery and Design	19	Yes
EAP Assessment and Feedback	10	Yes
Final Comments	3	Yes

Table 3: Sections of questionnaire

4.3.1.1 Analysis of Questionnaire Data

Questionnaire data were downloaded from Google Forms in the form of an Excel spreadsheet. Questions involving numerical responses, such as those with interval scales, were analysed using descriptive statistics in Excel to observe trends, while thematic analyses were conducted to analyse short answer and extended answer questions. The approach adopted (based on Creswell's (2003) eight steps for coding themes and Miles and Huberman's (1994) guide) was to identify themes relating to *individual* questions first and then to compare these across all sections of the questionnaire to identify *repetition* of themes in different questions. This allowed us to see which themes reoccurred the most and whether certain themes were more apparent in certain contexts. This thematic analysis was conducted in Excel by using key-word searches, reading to establish gist and also employing the count function.

4.3.2. Interviews

Questionnaire respondents were asked to indicate their willingness to participate in a 30 to 40 minute online interview. Sixty-eight per cent of respondents volunteered to participate in an interview and provided their email address to be contacted. Purposeful sampling was adopted to identify 14 of the volunteers, representing a variety of roles and institutions, to be interviewed. A semi-structured approach to the interviews was adopted using a simple interview guide (see 9.3 Appendix 3) to ensure both researchers asked similar questions, but also to provide interviewees with the space and flexibility to elaborate on their responses and lead the conversation if they had an important or relevant contribution (Brown & Danaher, 2019). Interviews lasted between 30 and 60 minutes and were conducted and recorded on Microsoft Teams, with the captions facility being used to aid transcription. Both researchers conducted seven interviews each.

4.3.1.2 Analysis of Interview Data

An inductive approach to thematic analysis was adopted to generate themes. While much literature suggests involving a second coder to check a proportion of the data to establish intercoder agreement (Cresswell 2009; Bryman 2008) we moved beyond this and adopted a fully collaborative approach to analysis to harness the value of having two researchers. This approach is defined by Cornish et al. (2014) as a process in which ‘there is joint focus and dialogue among two or more researchers regarding a shared body of data, to produce an agreed interpretation’.

We followed the stages suggested by Richards and Hemphill (2017) in their description of consensus coding (see [Figure 1](#)).

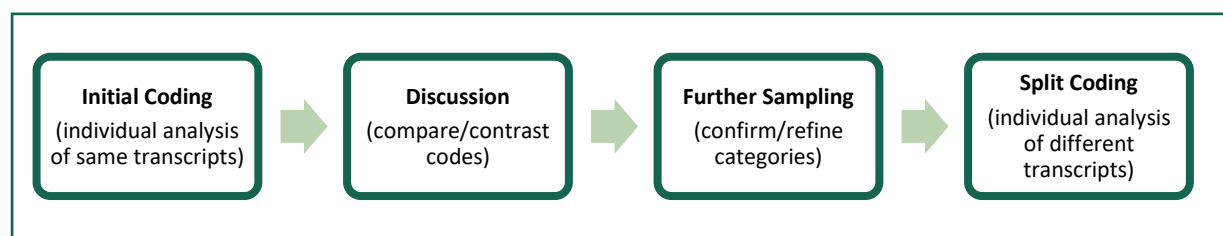


Figure 1: Consensus coding

4.4. Participants

A total of 240 respondents completed the online questionnaire. [Figure 2](#) shows the roles of the respondents. It had been expected that dissemination through the BALEAP email list would most likely target teachers and managers and this was the case with 130 and 45 respondents respectively, even though an effort had been made to canvas all colleagues involved in EAP provision, regardless of their role. Coordinators were well represented with 37 responses while materials developers accounted for only six of the respondents and administrators only five. Nevertheless, a total of 42 respondents were able to answer the Registration and Admissions section of the questionnaire, providing vital data regarding the operational response to the pandemic. Respondents represented a wide range of institutions, including 63 different UK universities and 8 UK private EAP providers.

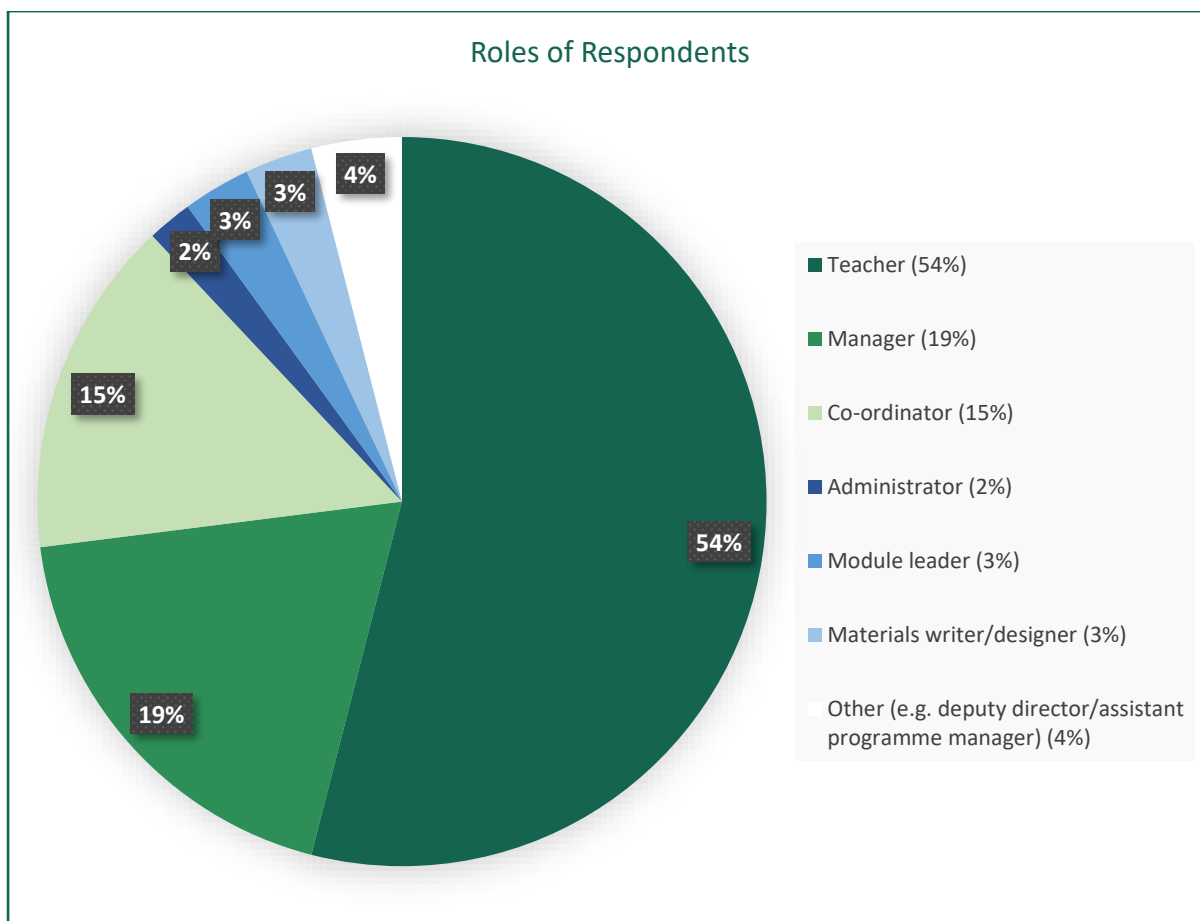


Figure 2: Roles of Respondents

The responses covered a variety of EAP courses as seen in [Figure 3](#), with the majority of respondents (109) working only on a pre-session course, whilst a small number (17) worked only on in-session courses. Fifty-four respondents worked on two or more EAP courses and they were asked to report on the first course they had been involved with. An open-ended question at the end of the questionnaire asked them to provide comments on their experience of later courses (if any).

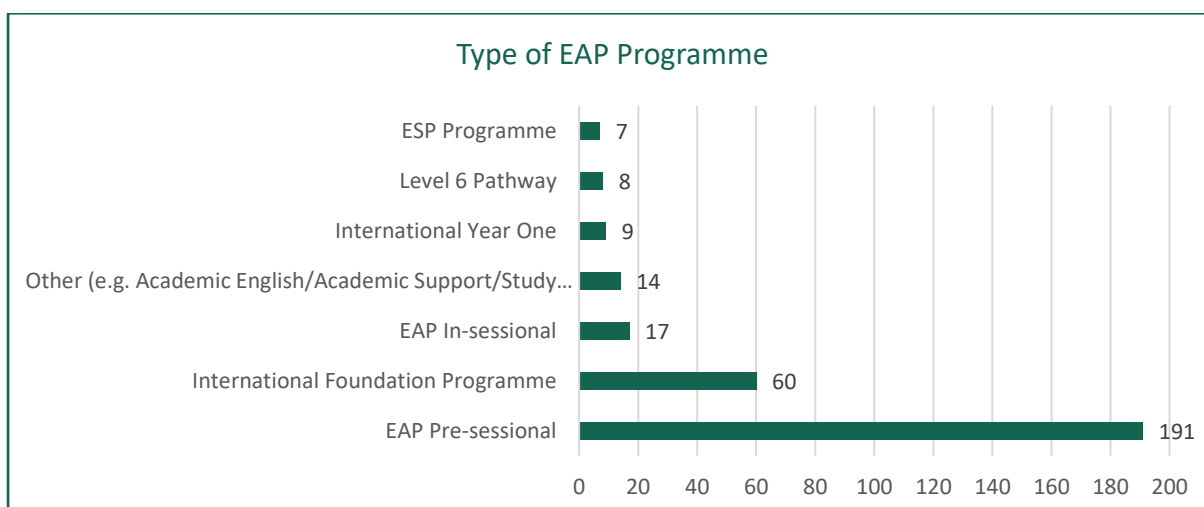


Figure 3: Type of EAP programme

Semi-structured interviews were conducted with 14 respondents who had volunteered in the questionnaire. This was a purposeful sample to ensure a representative sample of roles and institutions. The interviewees represented 11 UK universities and one private EAP provider, with five interviewees being teachers, as well as two administrators, three managers, two coordinators, one subject lead and one curriculum developer, as shown in [Table 4](#). Two of the teachers interviewed worked on two EAP programmes while the other teachers worked only on one. All of the non-teacher respondents worked on two or more EAP programmes during the period March-September 2020. The codes used to identify participants in the data analysis section of this report are also provided in Table 4, with M indicating male and F indicating female. Questionnaire responses are simply labelled as QR and are reproduced in their originally submitted form.

Role	Number	Code used for data analysis
Teacher (T)	5	TM1 TF1 TM2 TF2 TM3
Coordinator (C)	2	CF1 CM1
Manager (M)	3	MF1 MM1 MF2
Administrator (A)	2	AF1 AF2
Subject lead (SL)	1	SF1
Curriculum developer (CD)	1	CDF1

Table 4: Participant codes

5. Results and Discussion

This section of the report provides the results of the research as well as some discussion around the main themes which emerged. Sub sections include EAP Design and Delivery, Assessment and Feedback, Online Communication, Preparation and Support, Operational and Administrative Processes, and Future Directions.

5.1. EAP Design and Delivery

‘Online learning carries a stigma of being lower quality than face-to-face learning, despite research showing otherwise. These hurried moves online by so many institutions at once could seal the perception of online learning as a weak option, when in truth nobody making the transition to online teaching under these circumstances will truly be designing to take full advantage of the affordances and possibilities of the online format.’ (Hodges et. al. 2020).

Key Findings

- Despite some participants expressing a lack of clarity around what exactly they were preparing students for, 73% agreed that students were adequately prepared for their UK university degree courses.
- Although the unexpected challenges led to an increase in workload and stress levels, 77% of teachers felt satisfied with delivering the EAP programme online.
- Over 75% reported using flipped learning but there was a wide range of design solutions with differing amounts of synchronous provision.
- 74% agreed that the amount of real-time provision was appropriate in terms of student learning.
- Asynchronous activities were demanding in terms of teacher workload. While 80% believed the amount of synchronous provision was appropriate in terms of workload, only 66% believed that workload associated with asynchronous provision (e.g. preparation and feedback) was appropriate.
- Valuable lessons were learnt during the period March to August 2020, and these were reflected in the changes adopted for later programmes.

5.1.1. Overview

The picture arising from analysis of quantitative questionnaire data from 224 respondents and qualitative interview and questionnaire responses is for the most part positive. Although respondents recount tales of initial panic and chaos akin to ‘firefighting’, ‘fighting battles’ (interviewee MF2) or other frontline work, the lasting impact appears to be one of valuable lessons learnt through resilience, hard work and out-of-the-box thinking, which have changed the landscape of EAP provision and could potentially enhance future post-pandemic delivery.

Five of the interview respondents who were involved in teaching EAP explained how their experience of teaching online had far exceeded their expectations. They had been preparing themselves for the worst and were surprised by their own ability to adapt and also by the quality and effectiveness of the

teaching and learning which the online environment facilitated. The comments below from a teacher and manager exemplify this:

I quite liked being online and it quite surprised me because I'm not a techy person and at the start of it I was just struck dumb with horror by the whole thing. (MF2)

I almost didn't bother doing it this year. I felt that the whole nature of online teaching was going to be really hard going. And then I just decided to go with it and give it a go and I must say I actually felt it was one of the best teaching experiences I've had. I've never been at the end of an EAP course where everybody's cried. I mean, it was probably partly exhaustion, but it was very interesting. The way a medium like this was worked on in a way to create community. (TF1)

The results of the final question in the Design and Delivery section of the questionnaire (see [Figure 4](#)) corroborate this general feeling of positivity and opportunity with more than 70% of respondents expressing a desire for future EAP programmes to adopt a blended delivery approach. Together with the small proportion of respondents opting for a fully online programme (3.6%), the results confirm the qualitative insights from questionnaires and interviews which portray a feeling of optimism and an aspiration to harness the lessons learnt and the benefits of technology, but also a nostalgia for face-to-face interaction and real human contact and communication.

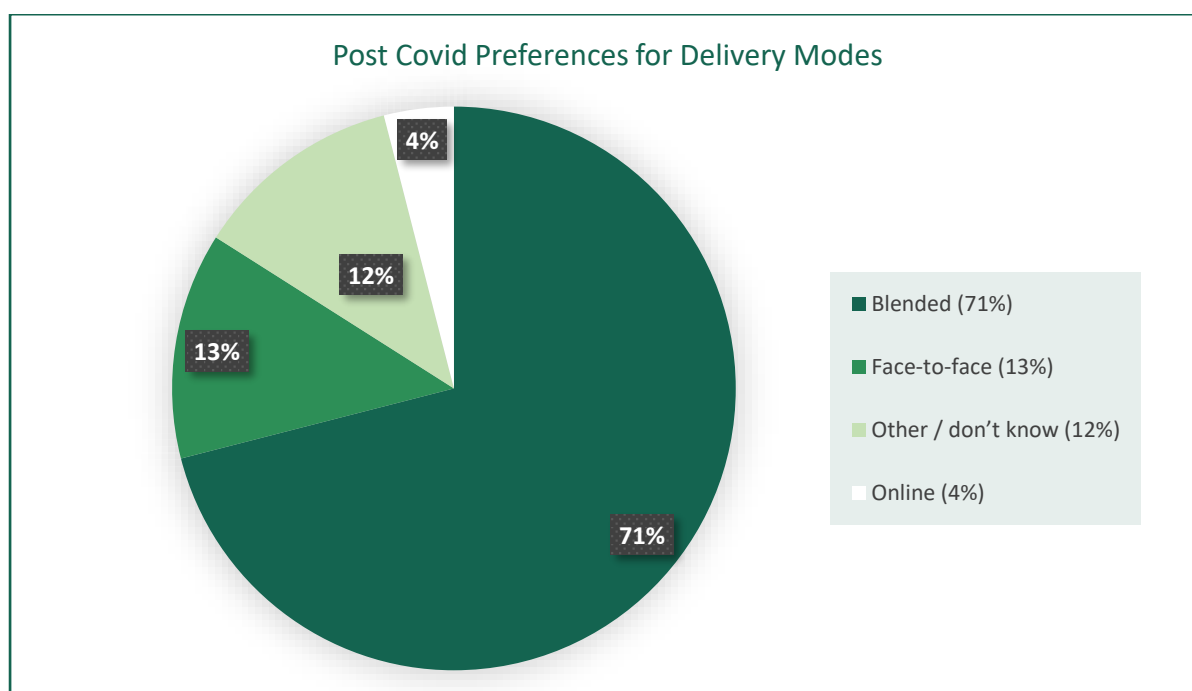


Figure 4: Preference for future delivery

5.1.2. Emergency Remote Teaching vs. Online Learning

Emergency remote teaching (ERT) has emerged as the term used by online education specialists to describe the instruction provided in the initial stage of lockdown when education moved to a remote mode of delivery to comply with government lockdown restrictions and halt the spread of Covid-19.

[Hodges et al. \(2020\)](#) describe this as ‘a temporary shift in instruction provided in the immediate aftermath of a crisis or pandemic, which will return to the original format’ (p.4). This contrasts with effective online learning which ‘results from careful instructional design and planning, using a systematic model for design and development’ (ibid.). It is interesting to note the use of the term ‘temporary’ in the definition of ERT. This implies that the main purpose of the instruction is to continue uninterrupted delivery to avoid disruption to students’ learning, regardless of what this delivery looks like. This research shows that during the Covid-19 pandemic, in the hurried attempt to provide uninterrupted remote EAP instruction to students already part way through a course or to those about to start a course, it was not always possible to engage in a careful and systematic design process as is described in the definition of online learning. This is evidenced through the various approaches adopted which were dependent on the contextual parameters.

One teacher interviewee (TM3) provides a detailed account of some of the issues involved in continuing to deliver instruction in the early days of lockdown:

The students didn’t know how to use Teams at first. I mean we taught them so they knew how to log in and how to use the chat function, but they weren’t particularly confident with using all the features, but they learned, step by step. All the teachers weren’t completely ready for it. And also to deliver all the materials because we use some text books and handouts and stuff so that was the tricky part. How are we going to do this online? But we obviously had to scan everything and upload into files on Teams. So it was about moving what we used to do by hand to that application. It was that part, how to do it online, how to get them to do the activities and to write and answer the exercises, not on paper obviously, we had to type them in a Word document or get them to take notes and then we show our answers. I think in a way it made us have to think outside the box. (TM3)

Comments from other research participants involved in delivery at the time university campuses closed depict a similar scenario. Interviewee MF2, a manager, described how she rationalised the ERT approach to the teachers:

I used to say this to teachers all the time. This isn’t an online course. This is an emergency conversion done at great speed with no skill and no knowledge of what we’re doing. I think it’s really important to remember that in any reflections of what happened and what was good and bad. We’re not talking about a finely honed, research-informed approach to online learning driven by passionate individuals, you know, that’s not what happened. (MF2)

She was basically endeavouring to reassure her team that whatever the remote instruction looked like in the initial crisis period, it was achieving its main aim, which was to continue to provide delivery. While some providers just had a few weeks left for their programmes to run, others were working with January intake students who would continue well beyond Easter. Some colleagues were fortunate to have more time for preparation of pre-sessional courses due to begin in July or August and those delivering a number of different programmes were able to exploit the lessons learnt from the early iterations to enhance upcoming provision. However, at the time, having a couple of months to prepare a whole course for remote delivery was certainly not regarded as a luxury as it raised the

expectations beyond just ERT provision. One questionnaire respondent refers to 'the rapid response required from knowing the course would be online in April and it starting in July'.

Interviewee CF1, a coordinator, presents a very real distinction between the early ERT, or the 'oh my god' phase, which was basically a knee jerk reaction with the primary intention of continuing instruction uninterrupted, and 'the online course', or the later programme delivery which benefited from the lessons learnt in the early days:

We didn't cancel anything, so that was 20 hours a week of oh my God, what are we going to do? But that was only for a few weeks. I mean lockdown happened mid-March then it was Easter and then the students mainly had assessments. There wasn't that much left of the course at that point so it wasn't that bad. And then for the online course it was a bit different. We designed it to have fewer face-to-face sessions. (CF1)

Some courses were, however, cancelled as the time and / or resources required to make the necessary changes were not available. The questionnaire response below exemplifies this:

Asynchronous materials take a huge amount of time to prepare, especially if there are videos to be recorded. We made the decision to cut some of our Academic Skills provision to turn the sessions into asynchronous sessions, but in the end, no one had time for this development during the term, so teacher workload was an issue. (QR)

One manager describes a different strategy which was far from ideal, but which solved the imminent issue of continuing EAP delivery:

We ran our PG curriculum with our UGs because we didn't have time to do our UG curriculum. We put them all in a separate class and we made some ad hoc changes but they got beaten up quite badly but they survived, they passed, they did well. That wasn't a great decision but there wasn't another decision available so it was what it was. (MF2)

The situation created a huge workload and demanded flexibility, resilience and thinking on one's feet. The same manager reflected on the need to remain calm and to communicate with her team:

It was all about the madness of the situation that was going on, the rapidness of what was going on, and it was all about just keeping it calm, keeping it cool, making sure everybody was in the loop. And I think if your whole team is in the loop and there's not random decision-making going on, keeps it very smooth. (MF2)

5.1.3. Course Design Process

Since the primary aim of ERT was to continue to provide instruction to students, this initially involved converting existing materials into an electronic format, keeping the number of face-to-face hours the same and endeavouring to rework assessments. Some colleagues who already had a well-populated VLE or who had been moving towards blended learning or even an online presence were somewhat more prepared for the crisis and thus the emergency phase was slightly less debilitating.

Since the unique context of each provider offered varying parameters and opportunities depending on the available time frame, expertise, resources and manpower, not to mention the size of the cohort, the learning objectives, as well as the underlying teaching philosophy and the stakeholder expectations, many different design solutions for remote EAP delivery were reported. These ranged from interim contingency measures and amendments to existing materials to complete course redesign and renewal, which in some cases was fuelled by a change to the assessment framework. Qualitative data seem to suggest that the difference between ERT and effective online learning mentioned by Hodges et. al (2020) is less of a binary distinction and more of a cline depending not only on the development window, but also on the decisions made in regards to design and delivery.

One interesting finding from this research is that in many contexts the implementation of responses to Covid-19 prompted or even necessitated new or enhanced collaboration with colleagues in the wider university (also discussed in section [5.3](#)). In the case of EAP programme design and delivery, this may have involved working with learning technologists or digital education specialists.

This new form of collaboration, however, was not always seen as smooth. One manager, interviewee MF1, describes the strain of working with the digital education team but also how they were helpful, especially in creating an online induction for students:

The university's got a digital education service who mainly work with academics to create online programmes but we got them to help us because we're part of the internationalisation strategy, because we are part of the students coming in and the pipeline. But they're used to working with people that don't really think about teaching and don't have a structured programme already, so we found it interesting talking to them. They had a lot of meetings, a lot of workflows, a lot of admin that they needed, and actually I think because we'd already got quite a lot of digital expertise in the language centre we found a lot of that quite frustrating because it felt like they were teaching us how to suck eggs as grandmas, but I think in lots of other ways they were helpful. So they created an induction for students in terms of the technology like a week pre them coming to us so we didn't have to think about that. (MF1)

A curriculum designer also describes the conflicting agenda of the learning technologist who was used to content-centric design rather than skills development and the provision of opportunities for communication and interaction. The learning technologist basically adopted a 'task answer task answer' approach to the presentation of the EAP material on Blackboard and 'he had a lot of text as well, sort of instructions to students and we were saying this is pre-sessional students, if everything is text-based, we've got a barrier right there' (CDF1). Interviewee CDF1 further explained how her team had to rework everything:

I got to a point where I said to my manager, I don't care if it's middle of May, we have to start from scratch almost. We have to abandon what he's doing, we have to take him off the project and you have to let me and x [colleague's name] start again. Every lesson had to be rewritten to be turned into what activities would make sense for a student working on their own and then what had to be moved into the classroom or into an interaction between teacher and student online or where they can send some work and get some feedback. That basic set of

principles hadn't been a conversation we were allowed to have with the learning technologist. (CDF1)

However, she did mention one valuable piece of advice which she received.

To be fair to the learning technologist, he did say you have to start with the assumption that people maybe can't download or can't connect and you have to keep thinking about that. So I did take that on board and that was a really useful piece of advice. (CDF1)

It appears that maybe digital education specialists and EAP colleagues can learn from each other. There may be some misalignment as the two groups typically have not really collaborated but this in itself presents an opportunity as both parties have different expertise to bring to the table.

In other institutions, managers relied on in-house EAP colleagues to prepare courses for online delivery and many different approaches were adopted. Interviewee SF1, a subject lead, explained how a necessary change in assessment processes from exams to portfolio drove the complete redesign of the pre-sessional course. She was tasked with this at the start of lockdown and explains the division of labour and design process, which is contrasted in her proceeding comment with another more positive experience from later in the summer:

The plan was given to us from the top, pre-sessional coordinators and from the senior management team. They designed the whole course and they gave us some context on it. Some things we were trying to challenge as we were writing the materials because some things would not fit. For example, some of the things we managed to sort of renegotiate with them but some not because they were fixed for whatever reason. We only worked on three days of one week and we were pretty much told what the outcomes were and what needed to happen in each session. It was quite prescriptive in that sense. If we just talk about this six week course we were developing Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday, me and my team. Thursday and Friday was developed by another subject lead with her team. And then another subject lead would be doing Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday of another week and then Thursday Friday by another. So whether that was the best way of doing it, I won't be able to sort of tell you that because I was not managing it. That's the way it was. There was quite a lot of miscommunication. I didn't have much power over the pedagogical kind of side of it. To be honest with you, sometimes I felt it was like a tick box exercise almost, so you don't need to know this. You don't need to worry about that, you know, just do it as we ask you to do it. Deliver this to us. And then we're going to worry about the rest. So, like I said, I was not happy with several things when I was writing those materials, I knew there was too much content. I would have not done it that way if it was in my power to change those materials but it wasn't. (SF1)

Interviewee SF1 compares this experience of developing course content with a much better experience later in the summer when she was working on the development of a foundation programme. The improved experience was not only due to the fact that she was teaching the programme but also to the enhanced autonomy and the expertise and know-how she had acquired over the previous months.

There's a completely different situation. I was given much more freedom. I had the power to kind of influence the scheme of work, pretty much changed it quite a lot. Communication was much better. Yeah, the participation was widened there, basically a lot of influence over things and you could feel that actually, you know what you're saying. So whatever training I got in the meantime, or whatever knowledge I had from before, and expertise, it was all taken into account. So many things that I would challenge were actually agreed. What is even more interesting I think maybe because you know you're gonna be teaching it, possibly you've got a different mindset. Maybe the responsibility is greater, but it was much more fun for me to be honest. Personally, maybe not for everyone, the second part when I was given more power, more responsibility, I was writing things which I'm now teaching along with other teachers and we get the feedback. There is a weekly Q and A padlet so whoever has a problem understanding anything or wants to challenge something it's there on weekly basis and we can respond to that and address that. (SF1)

5.1.4. Delivery Solutions

Figure 5 provides an overview of the kinds of methods and tools which were employed in online EAP delivery during this period. It is evident that synchronous sessions with students, whether with the whole class, small groups or one-to-one, were the most prevalent mode of delivery. Almost 90% of the 224 respondents reported: i) engaging in synchronous whole class lessons; ii) offering one-to-one tutorials and; iii) using breakout rooms. Asynchronous materials and activities, such as discussion forums and pre-recorded lectures or presentations were popular with around 65% of participants employing these.

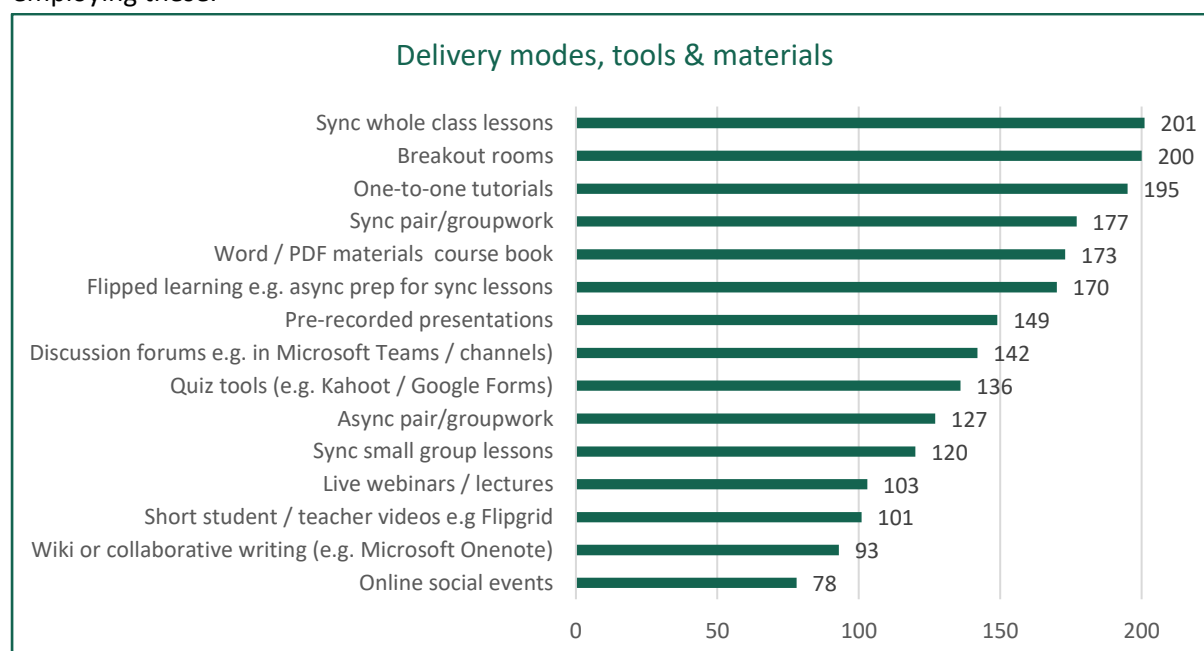


Figure 5: Delivery modes /tools / materials adopted

5.1.5. Synchronous Provision

Respondents reported a variety of different delivery models ranging from around 20 hours a week of synchronous delivery (i.e. the same number of hours as there had been in the traditional classroom-based model) down to a single synchronous meeting of 45 minutes a week with a weekly 20-minute individual tutorial (see [Figure 6](#) for some examples). Of the 104 respondents involved in pre-sessional delivery, the most prevalent number of synchronous hours was 10 per week, whereas this was 2 hours for in-sessional and 4 hours for IFP (see [Table 5](#)).

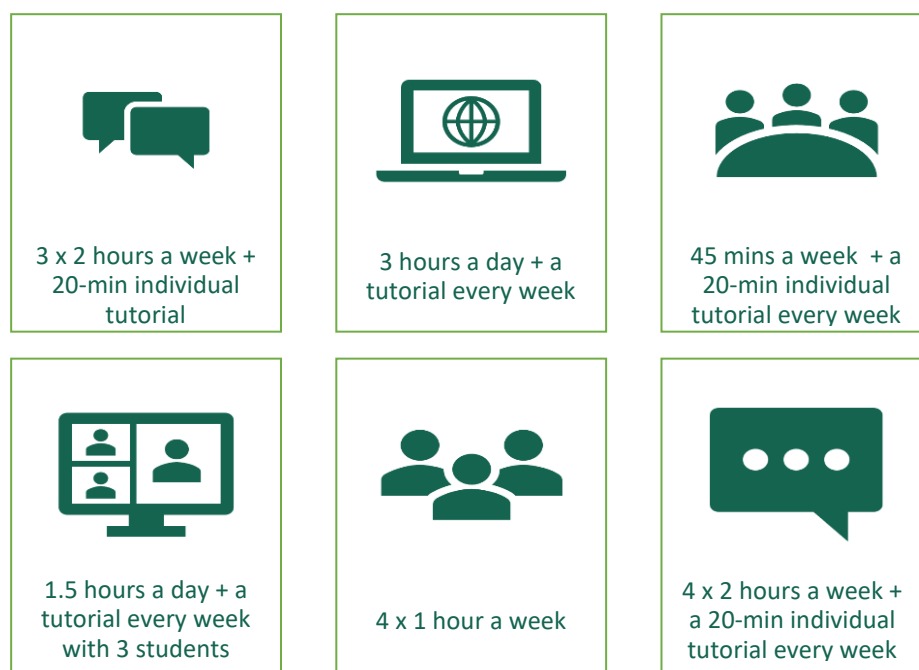


Figure 6: Examples of models (synchronous provision)

Hours	Pre-sessional (n=104)	In-sessional (n=15)	IFP (n=15)
0.5 - 5 hours	16	10	8
6 - 10.5 hours	44	2	1
11 - 15.5 hours	26	2	3
16 - 20.5 hours	14	1	3
21+	4	0	1
Mode	10 hours (n=20)	2 hours (n=5)	4 hours (n=4)

Table 5: Number of synchronous hours per week

[Figure 7](#) shows that 75% of participants felt that the amount of synchronous provision each week was adequate regardless of the differences in the number of hours. Analysis revealed a weak to moderate positive correlation (Cohen, 1998) of .28 between the number of synchronous hours in a week and

teachers' perceptions of the appropriacy in terms of student learning, perhaps indicating a perceived increase in learning with an increase in the number of synchronous hours.

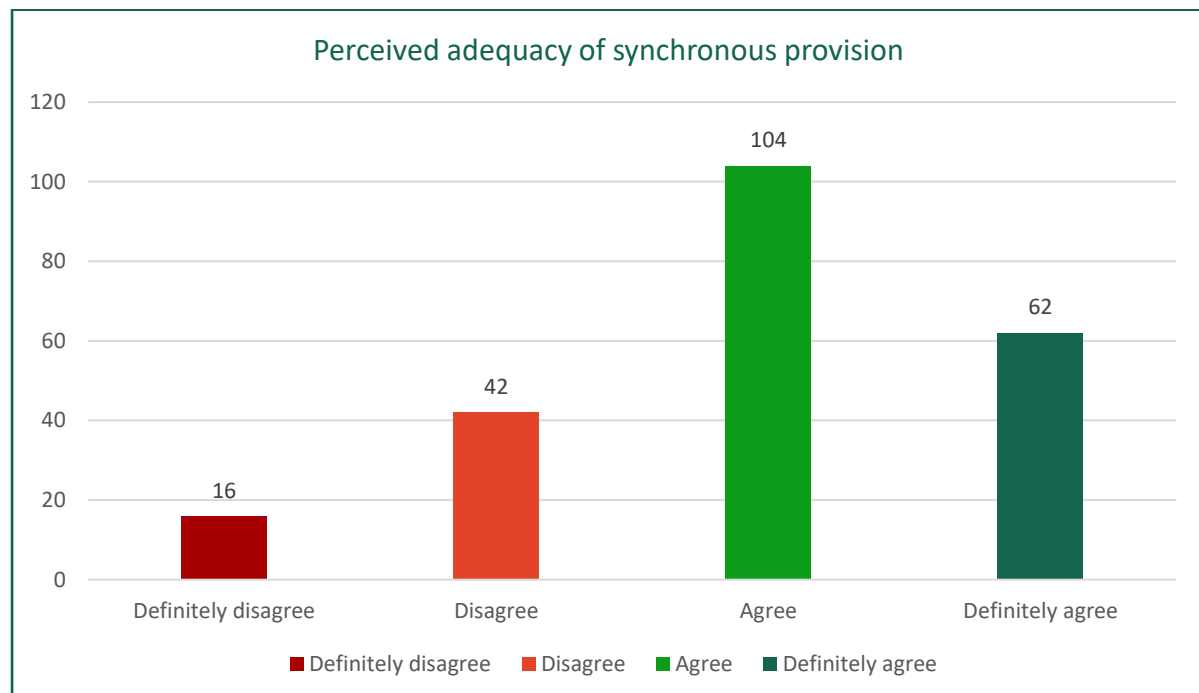


Figure 7: Perceived adequacy of synchronous provision

However, caution is expressed elsewhere in the data (for example, see earlier comment from interviewee CF1) about the inclusion of too many synchronous hours. Many participants explained how their institutions initially felt compelled to offer the same number of live lessons as previously provided in the physical face-to-face environment, but quickly learnt that this was untenable. Interviewee TF2, a teacher, explains how her institution endeavoured to maintain the same number of live teaching hours as they assumed students appreciated it and they felt pressure from stakeholders, such as fee payers, who perhaps held the belief that asynchronous teaching and learning were inferior. She describes why this decision was reversed.

Exactly the same number of hours, which was obviously not the right thing to do and was adapted at later stages because for example, one of my groups we had them for five hours and five hours face-to-face is not the same as five hours online. Despite having regular breaks and things, five hours is absolutely exhausting. And it's not the same. (TF2)

Interestingly, one successful model which was mentioned by a teacher interviewee, TF1 in the overview of this section, included only 45 minutes of synchronous whole class time a week and one 20-minute individual tutorial. This teacher, who had taught on the same pre-sessional for years, was astounded at how well this model worked. Details of this success story are given below in the flipped learning section.

5.1.6. Flipped Learning

Over three quarters of respondents reported following a flipped learning approach. [The Flipped Learning](#) Network defines flipped learning as

“a pedagogical approach in which direct instruction moves from the group learning space to the individual learning space, and the resulting group space is transformed into a dynamic, interactive learning environment where the educator guides students as they apply concepts and engage creatively in the subject matter.” (Flipped Learning Network, 2014, p. 1).

This approach had been gaining currency in the field of English language teaching before the pandemic. Bauer-Raazani et al. (2016) report that the TESOL convention included three presentations on this topic at the 2013 event, but this rose to 30 at the 2015 convention.

It is not clear from the data whether the respondents who reported adopting a flipped approach have a shared understanding of the principles and aims of classroom flipping but there do appear to be a number of different approaches, ranging in quality and effectiveness. It should be noted here that definitions of flipped learning were written with the physical learning environment in mind, i.e. the interactive element guided by the teacher took place in the classroom.

Interestingly, as mentioned above, interview data suggest that the pre-session programme with the least synchronous delivery (45 minutes as a whole group of 14 students plus a 20-minute individual tutorial each week) was one of the most successful. TF1, who came across as the most positive of the fourteen interviewees, admits to her initial scepticism. Since she had worked on the same pre-session for years she was apprehensive about online delivery, but she describes it as one of the best teaching experiences ever.

This seems somewhat surprising, but on closer analysis it appears that this really was a proper flipped learning approach. With reference to the definition of flipped learning given above, all direct instruction had moved away from the ‘group learning space’, or the traditional classroom, but this tended to be done collaboratively rather than individually. The group space, or the live element, although online rather than in a classroom, became a ‘dynamic, interactive learning environment’ with the teacher acting as a facilitator, occasionally asking concept checking questions and engaging students in a discussion of the subject matter. TF1 explains how her role as a teacher changed.

It was like a weekly meeting really rather than a lesson. Meeting with the students really was not to teach a particular aspect of EAP. It was just a bit of a practice at getting everybody together and building confidence for them. I'm really glad that it was not attempting to replicate being in a classroom online. (TF1)

She went on to explain how the asynchronous activities were working so well that it was challenging for her to think about what she should cover in the weekly class. In order to understand the critical factors contributing to this success, a deep analysis into the context was conducted. Basically, this institution offers their 4-week pre-session reasonably late in the summer which meant they had some time to research online pedagogy and prepare. The course coordinators followed a principled

approach to course design drawing heavily on [Gilly Salmon's five stage model](#) of sequenced [e-tivities](#) which starts from the basics of training students to learn about the technology and the tools and promotes a learner-centred, collaborative task-based approach to online learning.

Every [asynchronous] activity was done with another student or in a small group, so they were very rarely working alone because the whole nature of the course, whether it's face-to-face or online is collaborative, so they really get used to working in groups. I don't think any student felt short changed. (TF1)

One successful collaborative asynchronous activity was the use of Flipgrid for mini presentations. This not only served to build rapport between students but also facilitated audio feedback and reflection.

Had we only been relying on face-to-face work in the classroom, because the words have gone, then there's no record of them. Whereas particularly Flipgrid, which in the first prep week, I just thought what the hell am I doing here? Well, actually it proved to be the single most effective thing, little 2-minute presentations. And the students could monitor them again and again so that you could see that they'd watched their own video or someone else's video 25 times. So those flipgrid presentations, students were asked to feedback to other students, so it was kind of a community building task giving constructive feedback. I would then respond to every presentation and pick up certain things that they had done well, had done less well, and then suggest that they listened again to someone else's or whatever. So that was a lot of oral feedback. It was hard going. (TF1)

Although she admits that providing feedback on these presentations was time-consuming, this kind of monitoring of asynchronous engagement with the learning activities was a large part of the teachers' workload in the flipped environment.

Some EAP colleagues reported that they were already digitising course content and starting to utilise the capabilities of their VLE to create an online presence pre-Covid. In fact, some interviewees explained how the pandemic provided a catalyst to accelerate digitisation projects which were already underway or were on the development agenda.

They were planning on moving some things to online before, but the time scale was much much longer. So the wheels were in motion a little bit already to do some blended learning. I don't know what the idea was, so but then suddenly it had to be put into place really, really quickly and everyone had to be trained really really quickly. So yeah to say that it was all seamless and smooth and easy going. No, that's not true, of course. (TF2)

In May 2019 I inherited a new module and one of my plans for it was to really get going with the blended learning aspect, so this is completely pre-pandemic. So I was looking for new ways of working with materials rather than just documents. You know, PowerPoints, PDFs, Word docs in the VLE. So I started a project back then using content management systems and trying to create and get things online and using classroom interaction but using all the texts that you have online using Google platforms. When the pandemic struck I was pleased because this is what we've been doing. This is brilliant. (CM1)

Interviewee CM1, a coordinator, went on to explain how uploading content to the VLE worked well in the sense that he had created 'an outward facing classroom-based digital coursebook' which increased convenience, but in essence the teaching and learning remained the same. Content-centric delivery and teacher-led explanation predominated and the only difference was that all materials were in one place and were easily accessible to students and teachers. Stone (2019) refers to this as 'digital delivery of face-to-face content' and this does seem to be a common strategy, especially during the initial period of lockdown. However, CM1 goes on to explain how he embraced the opportunity of online learning to transition to an effective and fully interactive flipped learning approach. He used rapid authoring tools to develop interactive asynchronous tasks:

I started flipping stuff out onto these learning objects and then embedding them in the VLE. So actually what happened is it gave our provision a boost. I spent the whole summer not teaching but transferring all the content which had been online but very 2-dimensional onto these 3D interactive learning objects. So actually the pandemic was sort of a catalyst for what we kind of were going to do anyway because we wanted to make stuff more interactive. (CM1)

The implementation of these interactive learning objects, facilitated a shift in delivery resulting in 'the direct learning' taking place asynchronously:

There became a very clear line down your asynchronous and your synchronous content. All of the stuff that was language input, transmission, reading, listening, controlled practice, that was flipped out into the learning object. Students get their instant feedback and they do all this stuff in prep for the live session which was only an hour instead of two hours. (CM1)

Although in his role as coordinator he did not teach the course, he reported that student feedback was very good and that teachers liked the asynchronous learning objects and appreciated the reduction in lesson planning. However, he admits that some struggled with the transition to the new approach which involved 'monitoring engagement with the learning objects' rather than 'explaining stuff':

The teacher's role changed and you became a facilitator of discussion. So you would just have these open critical thinking questions about the stuff they'd studied, there'd be a bit of like how did you get on? What do you find difficult? But then you also have to just keep a discussion going for an hour, so I think that in terms of how the teachers adapted, that was the bit that they really needed to rethink. (CM1)

This aligns well with the comment from interviewee TF1 who explains how she organised a weekly meeting rather than taught a lesson. This change to a teacher's usual role was one of the most common challenges mentioned in the questionnaire and is reported in more detail below.

5.1.7. Class Size

[Table 6](#) displays the class sizes reported by participants during March to August 2020. Of the 202 valid responses to this item, 80.5% reported 16 or fewer students in a class.

Number of Students	Number of respondents
1 to 8	50
9 to 12	57
13 to 16	54
17 to 20	24
21+	17

Table 6: Class size

Despite the differences in class size as displayed above, 72% of respondents agreed that class size was appropriate with a mean of 2.97 out of a total of 4 (see [figure 8](#)). Analysis revealed a weak to moderate negative correlation (Cohen 1998) of $-.25$ between the actual number of students in a class and teachers' perception of the appropriacy of class size, indicating that to a certain degree as class size rises the appropriacy ranking decreases.

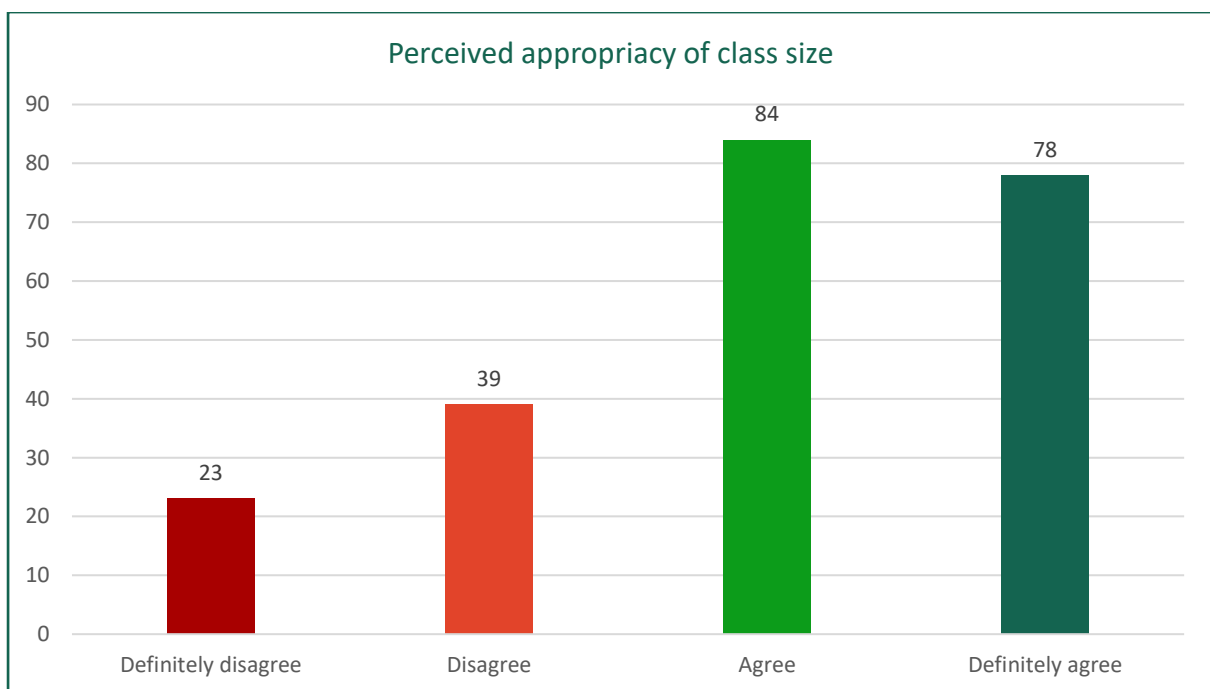


Figure 8: Perceived appropriacy of class size

Qualitative comments indicate that participants tended to favour small classes and this seems to be due in part to the workload involved in monitoring asynchronous activities and the feasibility of engaging students and encouraging participation and interaction during synchronous face-to-face activities:

I think we'll probably keep the small class sizes because that allowed for a good amount of interaction, feedback to students was quite personalised. (TM2)

I actually think seven is an ideal number in terms of teaching and managing everything. Certainly not an ideal number in terms of my manager looking at the money coming in. (CF1)

Luckily because my manager is an online learning technologist she made a really strong pedagogical argument that the small classes were what we needed. (MF2)

Between 6 and 8 generally I think it's better. It would have been unmanageable with larger classes and this became sort of confirmed....This part of the job is really bringing them in, come on turn your cameras on, contribute, unmute your mics and this is so much easier with small classes. With larger classes it becomes a lot easier, even easier than it was before for students to sort of fade into the background. (CM1)

5.1.8. Challenges

I think the UK university degree courses that students are experiencing at the moment, I just can't say what they're getting anymore because I think it's chaos everywhere. We were the first ones to do it in our university in terms of online stuff, so we were preparing them for an experience that we had no clue. Normally we have an idea of what it looks like, but still not a perfect idea. We had absolutely no clue what the rest of the university was going to be doing with them, so it was a complete blind preparation. (MF1)

Thematic analysis was conducted to identify key themes regarding the challenges posed by EAP design and delivery, initially using key word searches in Excel before reading through all responses to understand the gist of each and to highlight remarkable, unique or interesting experiences. [Appendix 4](#) includes the frequency of the themes which arose from analysing participants' comments.

5.1.1.8 Student Engagement

From the 206 responses, the most prevalent challenge was related to student engagement, motivation and participation. Comments referred to both synchronous and asynchronous activities and included completion of work which had been set as well as participation in live sessions:

They did the bare minimum in the asynchronous prep. (QR)

Flipped learning can be very useful for students who do the work set, and engage fully in live lessons, but it takes very good study skills, maturity and commitment to get the best out of it. (QR)

Student engagement - it was so easy for quiet/at risk students to hide, especially in a larger group. Silence ruled in plenary discussion and feedback sessions. Teachers really had to work hard to monitor and encourage engagement. (QR)

This situation was exacerbated by students' reluctance to turn their cameras on, which was mentioned by 8% of respondents. Participants' responses to questionnaire items on training corroborate this with 46% of teachers and the same number of coordinators expressing a desire for more training on 'encouraging student engagement online' (see [Appendix 5](#) for all results to this question). [The University of Liverpool](#) (Cheetham & Thomson, 2021) provides a helpful discussion around the cameras on or off debate.

5.1.2.8 Technology

Technology was the second most common challenge and was mentioned by 39% of participants. Comments tended to focus on connectivity, technical issues and a lack of digital expertise or training. This aligns with the findings from the Online Communication section of the questionnaire and is developed in detail there.

5.1.3.8 Workload

The increased workload which stemmed from the move to online teaching was the third most prevalent challenge, mentioned by 25% of participants. This included: administrative tasks such as setting up Teams; producing asynchronous materials; responding to forums; marking work done in asynchronous sessions; and monitoring students' asynchronous engagement. Participants' negative comments regarding their workload, despite the passing of many months, signal that this was a time of great stress:

The very steep learning curve of having to teach online whilst simultaneously developing materials for the following week. The workload was horrendous, and I was working well over my contracted hours. (QR)

We had to write materials and do things in a different way for the two courses, so that was just a huge amount of work really. And was I mean really, a nightmare. Probably the worst period in my working life I think during the summer. (CF1)

The workload of transferring existing materials designed for F2F teaching into online formats was painstaking. (QR)

[Figure 9](#) shows participants' feelings about the workload generated by synchronous and asynchronous provision. While 80% agreed that the workload generated by synchronous activities was appropriate, only 66% agreed that the workload associated with asynchronous tasks was appropriate.

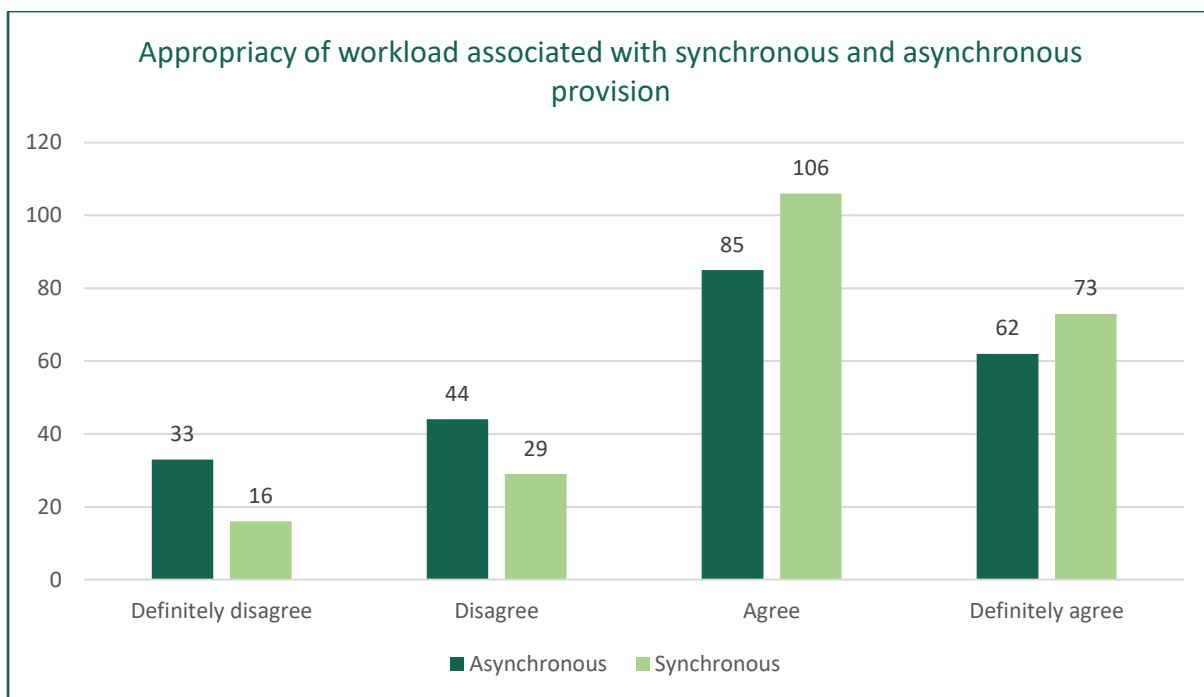


Figure 9: Workload associated with synchronous and asynchronous activities

The qualitative comments confirm this trend with participants making reference to the time taken to create asynchronous materials and monitor and provide feedback on asynchronous engagement. Many of the comments describing workload refer to the extra burden of having to prepare materials for remote delivery while juggling teaching responsibilities. In this respect it is difficult to gauge the overall impact on workload of purely the teaching element of online delivery, once the materials had been prepared as this research only focussed on the initial six-month period. However, it is clear that this time of added pressure required resilience, patience, flexibility and understanding. One coordinator explains this:

It's the only time where we've been in the summer where material didn't yet exist to a point. You'd be looking ahead going right Thursday next week, those lessons are still in the old 2019 format, we still haven't quite finished those. You know and sometimes teachers were like can we have the materials released a little earlier because some teachers are real self-starters and we were like no, we said Wednesday it'd be released and on Wednesday it'll be released. (CF1)

5.1.4.8 Training

Data show that various training opportunities were made available to a large proportion of EAP colleagues (see section [785.4.4](#) for more detail and [Appendix 5](#) for questionnaire findings). While attending training sessions could be said to increase workload, given the high proportion of participants expressing a wish for more training, the payoff was most likely worth the investment of their time. Interestingly, only 25% of respondents reported that they had received training in 'the theory of online pedagogy'. It thus comes as no surprise that 60% of coordinators and 54% of teachers expressed a desire for more training in this area. Although, 42.5% of respondents received training on 'adapting face-to-face materials for online delivery', 46% of coordinators and 42% of teachers would have liked more training on this (see [Appendix 6](#)).

5.1.5.8 Professional Identity / Change of Role

Given this situation, it is hardly surprising that 19% of participants referred to issues of professional identity stemming from a change in their usual role (discussed further in section [5.4](#)). There was a sense of unease from many respondents who felt they lacked the relevant expertise and training to perform their new role and this impacted their confidence. This aligns with the views of Howard (2013) who describes how teachers' identities are at stake when they are asked to make significant changes to their teaching practice. One questionnaire respondent referred to the 'initial deskilling of teachers - who took more time to adapt to new tools than students.

Teachers reported an increase in confidence as the online environment became more familiar. They adapted to the new expectations and learnt to be more flexible, as this comment from one teacher shows:

I think the interaction is improving as we become more confident as teachers. Because we are more confident, we're more enthusiastic, we're more sort of OK let's do this, let's do that rather than at the beginning, where I would be so hesitant to try breakout rooms in case things went wrong. And they did go wrong. It's not like they haven't, they've gone wrong and they still do sometimes. You know when you do it and nobody joins the breakout room. I think we just learn if plan A doesn't work, plan B, and just move on really quickly. (TF2)

In terms of teacher identity, participants made some very interesting comments describing the enforced change in methodology prompted by online delivery. Since flipped learning relies on students completing asynchronous activities in preparation for live face-to-face sessions, and owing to the reduction in the number of synchronous hours, there was a requirement for many to cover fixed content rather than having the freedom to design their teaching agenda and plan their own lessons around the learning objectives:

Prescriptive and rigid course design with little opportunity for differentiation, deskilling of teachers (we "delivered" lessons rather than teaching them). (QR)

Inability to deviate from online materials. Overall, the course felt mechanistic. (QR)

While earlier comments from participants centred around the teacher acting as a guide or facilitator, one respondent described how synchronous sessions often became teacher-led due to the sheer amount of content which needed to be covered:

Potential for teacher-centred learning - it was incredibly easy to default to a teacher-centred transmission approach, especially if there was too much content to cover in a session. I found that students got used to this, the more reliant they became on the teachers to give them the 'correct' answer and explanations, creating a vicious circle. (QR)

Other participants made similar comments about the changed role of the teacher, expressing frustration at the high proportion of teacher talking time in live sessions since students were not really

willing to contribute. One teacher referred to the need to ‘reverse engineer’ his skillset to teach online as he had not been trained for this.

5.1.6.8 Quality of Asynchronous Materials

Eighteen per cent of participants referred to the variability and quality of asynchronous materials. This was dependent to a large extent on the chosen design of the online delivery, the clarity of the instructions and the balance of live and asynchronous activities:

The institution took the face-to-face materials and converted them to synchronous and asynchronous materials without any pedagogic rationale. The students found the asynchronous materials difficult to navigate. (QR)

Students did not do enough asynchronous study to make up the gap because the independent study materials were badly planned and organised. (QR)

I think one of the things we got wrong was, so when we made the flipped learning tasks, they took very, very different amounts of time to complete so I think we managed to create lessons that took hours and some of them took like ten minutes. (MF2)

5.1.7.8 Physical Environment / The Human Touch

Regardless of the effectiveness of the online instruction, a feeling of loss or mourning for real contact and the physical environment was apparent in the data:

Lack of integration into the social and physical world of a British university, getting to know the city etc. (QR)

Lacks the real world opportunities that help students develop intercultural awareness and language development. Lacks the opportunity to develop team/ social skills. (QR)

In fact, many of the challenges mentioned in the questionnaires tended to have at their core the feeling of a missing human and social element to online delivery. One participant even mentioned ‘teaching into a dead space’ and asking questions and getting ‘dead air back’ while another referred to ‘soullessness’. Issues mentioned included:

- rapport (9%);
- socialisation or a lack of natural interaction and language immersion (7%);
- feelings of isolation or disconnectedness (5%);
- a lack of student community or class dynamic (3%);
- the lack of non-verbal clues to aid understanding (2%).

One teacher interviewee succinctly explained how the lack of visibility of the teacher’s face and the distraction of simultaneously posting in the chat, searching for files and reading documents detracts from the communicative experience and hinders students’ understanding:

The students started saying that they understand better when they are in a classroom than when they are online because they said we misunderstand what the teacher says online more often than face-to-face because of the lips, your face... you don't get to do that online because you get distracted with what is being said and the tool itself and the application and what you're going to do, am I going to answer now in the chat, or am I going to the folder? I'm looking at this document, so you don't get to see the person's face enough. (TM3)

5.1.8.8 Balance of Skills

One further challenge which arose was the affordance of online delivery for providing a sufficient balance of all of the skills. [Figure 10](#) shows participants' perception of the adequacy of the opportunities provided for practising each of the skills.

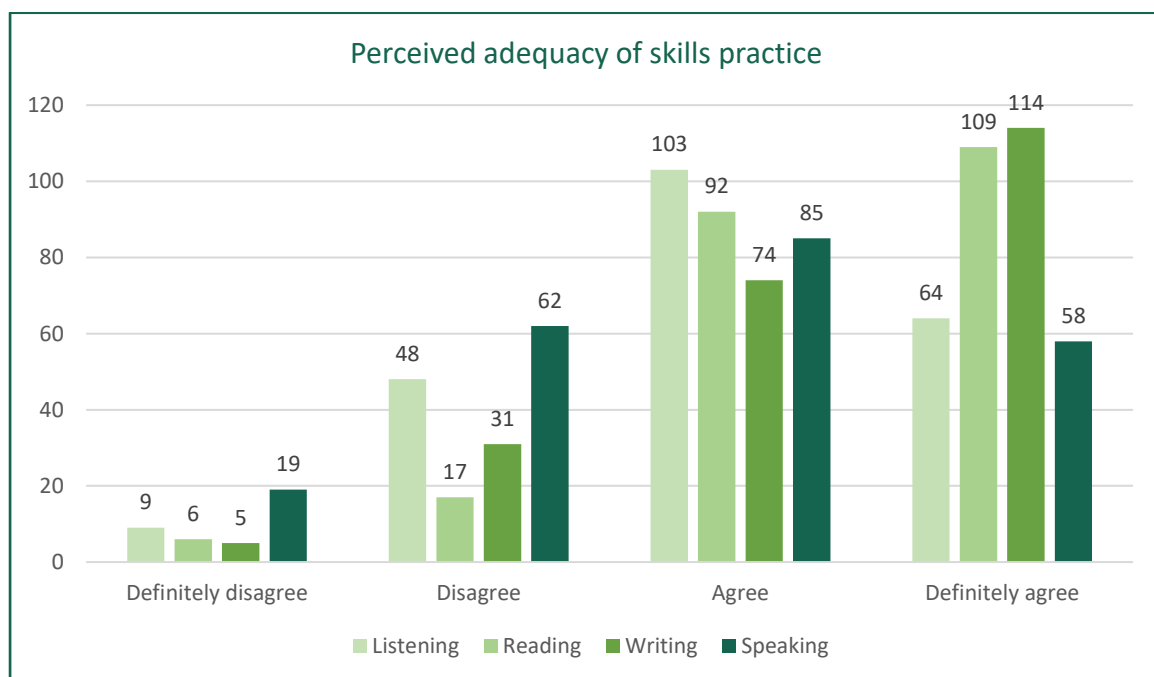


Figure 10: Participants' perception of adequacy of skills practice

The mean scores range from highs of 3.4 for reading and 3.3 for writing to lows of 2.81 for speaking and 3.0 for listening, revealing an overall feeling that there was less opportunity for students to practise their speaking and listening skills. The qualitative comments corroborate this with 8% of respondents referring to the reduced opportunity to speak or to ask questions and 3% reporting on silence in breakout rooms. However, 4% of respondents felt that it was challenging to provide adequate listening practice, while 2% expressed concern around ensuring that all aspects of skills were covered. The provision of adequate practice in all skills was highlighted by four of the interviewees. The two comments below from managers highlight the concern about speaking practice:

I think they were getting time, but it was written time rather than spoken time (in asynchronous feedback on Teams as opposed to face to face lesson time) (MF1)

I think that the only loss in terms of students' language development was in relation to speaking skills. We knew that speaking would be the area that we need to work hard on that and we kind of structured the course to as well as possible develop speaking skills but the thing that you can't compensate for is the fact that an on campus pre-session course gets students used to their environment in a way that any number of videos of the environment and photos of the environment and so on cannot compensate for. I think at the end of our pre-session course the students had developed their English as well or in certain skills better than they could have done in an on campus course but they still then arrive on their degrees in September without the confidence in their environment. Definitely student skill development, other than speaking, was significantly better across many of the classes. (MM1)

However, the teacher below explains his concern over the provision of writing practice compared to previous iterations of the pre-session as there was a feeling that this could be done asynchronously in students' own time:

The managers thought that we should concentrate the actual contact time on productive skills, especially speaking and that we had this asynchronous side based on Blackboard where they could do the writing in their own time, which was different from previous years where we used to do a lot of writing in class so a lot of class time was dedicated to speaking, like seminars, and listening, which I think the students enjoyed but obviously when they actually go onto their MA or whatever a lot of their assessment will be on writing so I don't know really it's a difficult balance really. I just think they needed more input with it really [writing]. I mean online you can obviously use things like Google docs so I think we could have done more online. Just more space for writing, like looking at some genre analysis or do some process writing, there just wasn't a lot of space for that really in the way it was set up. (TM2)

5.1.9. Strategies

Strategies mentioned tended to cover three main areas, namely approaches adopted to support teachers, approaches to support students and solutions for materials and delivery. Of the 224 respondents, 16% either left this item blank or reported that they did not have any strategies by simply writing 'no' or 'none'. This could be because they felt they had responded to this question in an earlier section (three respondents commented 'as above' or 'see earlier') or because they genuinely did not have any strategies to suggest.

5.1.1.9 Support for Teachers

In terms of support for teachers, the most prevalent strategy was formal help (36%) which covers the provision of opportunities for seeking advice, for communication and collaboration and for overall wellbeing. Many different innovative approaches were mentioned, such as assigning buddies, team teaching, dedicated IT coordinators, WhatsApp groups, a virtual staffroom, regular meetings and/or email communication, drop-in sessions, forums, tech support on hand during lessons and so on. Some of these are the same or similar to those suggested in section [5.3](#). One respondent explains in detail the structured and responsive support systems which management adopted:

We moved to a much larger more structured management model of co-ordinators responsible for small clusters of teachers each, this created ability to provide huge levels of ongoing responsive and proactive support in contained ways. We maintained incredible close-knit teamwork to disseminate ongoing acquired skills and solutions and to hop across remits - that was thanks to the team already built in some respects, and to managing ongoing morale and working culture. We established a 'teacher diagnostic' process whereby teachers got sent a form and filled it in and then had follow up one-to-one with member of management team and then this meeting was written up. This allowed us some valuable insights into teachers' working conditions / equipment / constraints / morale that we were then able to address or simply better understand what was going on. (QR)

One teacher interviewee explained the system for having live technical help on hand during synchronous class time:

So you would get [a second teacher in synchronous class for tech support] twice a week only. That person would come in, they'd look after the chat, answer students' questions, help them in the breakout rooms etcetera. That was useful because then you can monitor more than one group at the same time and the teacher would be giving the feedback, making sure that they participate etcetera. (TM1)

In addition to the type of formal support mentioned, just over 5% of respondents listed engagement in CPD whether in-house or through professional bodies such as BALEAP and turning to research to inform pedagogy.

Informal support from colleagues in the form of sharing materials, discussing approaches and learning from each other also played a vital role (14%). This may have been in lieu of the kinds of formal support discussed above, as one questionnaire respondent notes, 'Our employer didn't do anything about this. I and the teachers contacted friends and asked them'. Other comments include 'using online spaces to ask questions', 'having discussion around online engagement' and 'liaising with other teaching colleagues'.

5.1.2.9 Support for Students

With regard to the provision of specific support for students, this included: extra help for weak or absent students e.g. emails with extra tasks, mechanisms to identify students at risk of not achieving targets, additional skills workshops, targeted co-ordinator interventions and student buddy support groups (9%); various methods to build community, such as social events, forums, conversation cubs and so on (7%); designated pastoral support, drop in Q&A sessions, meetings with student reps (5%). Many of the same strategies were employed for both teachers and students, including formal training, video guides, specialist tech support and induction weeks (12%). One teacher (TF1) explained the careful approach which was taken to providing teacher induction with a concerted effort to establish a sense of community among colleagues and also to expose teachers to the kinds of activities which they would be using with students. Given that this teacher had been nervous about online teaching, and had no experience of using technology in teaching, yet came out the other end commenting that

it was one of the best experiences ever, it seems the efforts of the coordinators in providing training and induction were effective:

We had two weeks, supposedly part time, two weeks equivalent of one week full time to prepare to get used to using the technology. Every activity was around collaboration with colleagues and with the coordinators so there were a lot of activities designed, I think to create bonds and also we'd been matched, so maybe there were two or three experienced teachers with two or three new teachers. We were supposed to put in 18 hours the first week and 18 hours the second week and some of the activities were guided by the coordinators. And they set up the prep activity so that we were practicing the sorts of things that the students would have to do. (TF1)

5.1.3.9 Teaching and Learning

Questionnaire responses included a diverse range of strategies for dealing with the challenges of online delivery. Since coding these into broad themes may have hidden the true nature of the suggested strategy, many sparsely populated categories were generated. A full list of the strategies and their frequencies can be found in [Appendix 7](#), which uses In-Vivo terms from participants to capture the true flavour of the suggestions.

Many of these were concrete logistical solutions such as:

- small groups (5%)
- reducing the length of synchronous lessons / adding screen breaks (5%)
- recording all lessons (4%)
- changing the platform used (4%)
- adapting the attendance system (e.g. graded approach rather than binary option / present but not participating) (3%)

However, participants also reported some equally useful, although less tangible suggestions such as:

- reducing asynchronous work, using bite size materials and advising students which parts to skip (3%)
- hard work and patience (3%)
- laughing with students, making jokes, showing empathy and humanising teaching (3%)
- explaining the importance of using English / having the camera on (3%)

A frequent strategy, not surprisingly, addressed the most prevalent challenge: engagement and participation. Practical tips were offered for promoting interaction and participation during live lessons, such as:

- using emojis, apps, polls and so on (9%)
- nominating students, assigning roles and changing pairings (5%)
- shared writing (3%)

These strategies to promote engagement may seem somewhat simplistic, however, this research only reports on the period of March to September 2020. Since another six months have passed by, teachers

have become more accustomed to online teaching, research has been published and ideas have been shared, there is no doubt that a much wider and more ambitious range of tools and strategies are now being employed.

5.1.10. Opportunities

The overriding feeling from questionnaire and interview data is that this time of great challenge was also a time of growth, reflection and opportunity. As with the question on strategies reported above, of the 224 respondents, 16% either left this item blank or inserted 'no', yet many other respondents listed three or even more opportunities, as the comment below exemplifies:

Technical up-skilling. Opportunities for teachers to meet with coordinators and other teachers for online discussion, sharing of good lesson plans and online teaching strategies.
(QR)

5.1.1.10 Upskilling

The potential presented from the necessary use of technology-enhanced learning is evident with 38% of respondents referring to the opportunity to upskill or to experiment with new tools. Although this potential had always been there in the sense that most institutions had existing virtual learning environments (VLEs) or learning management systems (LMSs), most teachers had previously not explored the capabilities or initiated the incorporation of online pedagogies until there was a real and urgent need. This appears to have presented new opportunities and possibilities for enhancing teaching and learning. The four comments below from questionnaire respondents provide extremely positive insights:

Huge increase in staff skillset. Much less teacher resistance to online learning and greatly reduced teacher fear of online learning. (QR)

Slicker way of delivering. I will never go back to pieces of paper or booklets. This is as it should be, as content courses are increasingly delivered with the expectation that students will work on collaborative on tasks using their laptops. (QR)

I actually feel that I have become a better teacher through this experience because I've had to completely re-write all of my sessions so that they are clearer. In an online environment, things have to be explained step by step - in my experience, it's much more difficult to respond to students spontaneously, so I've tried to anticipate different issues and questions in my prep, and I've also thought hard about the staging of my sessions to support students in this environment. (QR)

The flipped approach meant maximising time in class to actually practice. This has been long overdue and now teachers and students see the value of this, we should be able to take this approach forwards in more "normal" times. (QR)

There was a positive feeling about the opportunity to reflect on pedagogy and to do things differently (10%) with some reporting that change was long overdue.

5.1.2.10 Flexibility

Despite the high levels of stress and the increased workload, many of the opportunities related to enhanced working conditions, such as flexibility for both teachers and students (10%), freedom for teachers to be based anywhere (10%) and also for students (9%). Inclusivity was also mentioned with 7% of respondents reporting that some students feel less exposed in the online medium as they have time to think before responding and quiet or shy students may be more eager to participate through different channels.

5.1.3.10 Community

The online medium also presented opportunities for building community (discussed at length in section [5.3](#)). While 10% of participants specifically referred to opportunities for collaborative work such as shared documents and interactive tools, 4% mentioned better relationships or bonds between colleagues, between teachers and students, and between students. Another 4% felt the online platforms were useful for building teacher support networks and other online communities. The questionnaire responses below illustrate these opportunities:

I felt that T&L on Zoom had positive effects on L autonomy, collaboration and initiative. (QR)

I felt a part of a great online community with my colleagues and students. (QR)

Opportunities to form a sense of purpose and team cooperation, despite geographical distance. (QR)

5.1.4.10 Student Autonomy and Engagement

Student autonomy was mentioned as an opportunity by 10% of respondents. One coordinator commented that previously students may not have done their homework but given the nature of flipped learning and the necessity of engaging with the asynchronous activities in order to benefit from the live classes, this was no longer an issue.

Although engagement was highlighted as a widespread challenge, a small number of participants felt that the online space actually promoted engagement as the two comments show:

Student engagement was for the most part greatly increased for a number of reasons, e.g. the novelty and comfort of working from home, more engaging online electronic materials instead of boring old photocopies; more opportunity for one-to-one discussion, almost total absence of any discipline issues (QR)

Some tutors communicated that they felt in class engagement was actually HIGHER across students than it has been on campus, especially in smaller group work tasks. They believed this may be less peer pressure due to greater anonymity, so this has benefits for staff and students. (QR)

Despite the overall positive feeling, it must be acknowledged that not all EAP colleagues felt this way. One participant, who had clearly not enjoyed the experience, commented, ‘No unless you are reclusive and painfully shy and shun human interaction’, again signalling the conflicting experiences and emotions regarding online delivery of EAP.

[Appendix 8](#) includes the full list of thematically grouped opportunities and their frequencies.

5.1.11. Section Summary

Stone’s (2019) remark, ‘Embrace the potential of technology and people’, provides an apt reflection on the current state of affairs. While research participants realise the potential of online delivery, the human side of learning cannot be overlooked.

The contingency measures and design solutions adopted during the first six months of the pandemic may have been effective, and participants may have emerged with a new skill set and aware of the opportunities, but when asked which mode they would prefer in the future, only 3.6% chose fully online (see Figure 4 in 5.1.1). The blended approach, or in Stone’s (2019) words, ‘technology and people’ is the preferred option.

To draw this section to a close, we would like to share two comments from a manager reflecting on the summer delivery. What is clear is that good decisions were made and flipped learning was heralded as a successful fix to a difficult situation, but at the same time there was also an element of luck involved as this really was embarking on the unknown:

So I think not having done flipped learning would have led us to a dark place, having really big classes, having loads of contact, having loads of video content where the video was essential, all of that would have undone us. When I look back I can see so many opportunities for peril while making the course really difficult to run. We can see, oh, that would have been so bad. Which didn't happen. (MF2)

What turned out to be good decisions, a lot of people made them. There were some good decisions to be made and some bad decisions to be made. And sometimes I think it was a bit of luck as to where your head was at the time and who you listened to, right. I feel like yes it went well but I think I was quite lucky. (MF2)

5.2. Assessment and Feedback

‘Instead of throwing their hands up in dismay during the unprecedented times of the COVID-19 pandemic, testing teams at these different institutions considered different alternatives and implemented ones that they deemed critical for maintaining the validity of their assessments, and in at least one case even used the challenge as an opportunity to upgrade the quality of their assessment.’ (Muhammad & Ockey 2021, p.54)

Key findings

- Concerns around the integrity of online exams and assessments with only 62% of respondents agreeing that measures adopted were adequate
- Enhanced opportunities for feedback with 89% of questionnaire respondents agreeing that methods of online feedback were adequate for student learning and progression
- A concerted move to contextualised assessment tasks with a focus on process and an increase in authenticity
- A low uptake of tech-enhanced proctoring solutions during this period

5.2.1. Overview

Questionnaire and interview data indicate that during the move to remote delivery, assessment was one of the areas of EAP provision which generated much concern and demanded complex contingency planning. While restricted access to standardised tests, such as IELTS, to provide a certified measure of English language proficiency for university entry purposes is covered in section 5.4 of this report, this section specifically deals with in-house assessment processes and feedback. Respondents' comments regarding assessment were not restricted to the open-ended questions in the Assessment and Feedback section of the questionnaire. In fact, many participants made reference to testing and assessment-related matters in all other sections, perhaps signifying the significance of the Covid-19 contingency measures on this aspect of EAP provision. This is corroborated by the interview data in which seven of the twelve interviewees involved in teaching, coordination or management made lengthy comments about assessment.

Bachman and Palmer's (1996) model of test usefulness includes the complementary qualities of reliability, construct validity, authenticity, interactiveness, impact and practicality and their view is that an appropriate balance between all of these needs to be found depending on the context. Although this is always a careful juggling act based on contextual parameters, this attempt to address all elements of the model came under intense pressure in the immediate aftermath of the pandemic and the rush to operationalise remote assessment.

5.2.2. Challenges

Participants were asked to list up to three challenges online assessment presented. Of the 224 respondents to this section of the questionnaire, a total of 181 responses were recorded. Eleven main themes were identified. [Table 7](#) displays the themes and their frequency of occurrence.

Theme (challenge)	% of respondents
Integrity / reliability / security	51%
Technology / connectivity	30%
Administration	12%
Listening assessment	9%
Workload / extra time	8%
Reading from script	6%
Feedback	5%
Time allowances	5%
Validity	4%
Digital literacy	4%
Cost / resources	2%

Table 7: Challenges posed by online assessment

5.2.1.2 Integrity of Online Exams and Assessment

It comes as no surprise that ensuring the integrity of assessment processes appears to have been the most widespread and demanding challenge for remote administration. Data suggest that colleagues whose programmes exclusively assessed student performance through coursework rather than controlled exams did not struggle to the same extent as those attempting to implement timed exams for remote administration. Despite this, live online exams were still a prevalent mode of assessment with a positive response rate of 67% and fewer than 30% of respondents stating that their programme did not include these regardless of the challenges of remote administration. In contrast, 86.6% of respondents stated that their programme included assessed coursework (see [Figures 11](#) and [12](#) below).

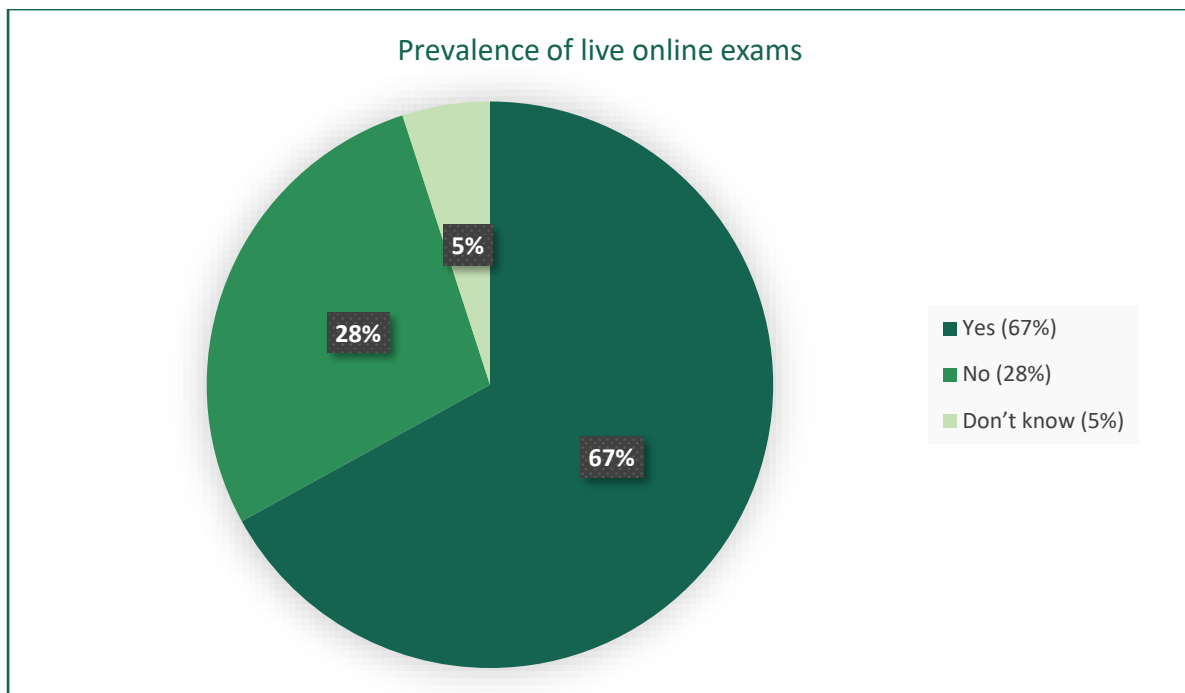


Figure 11: Prevalence of live online exams

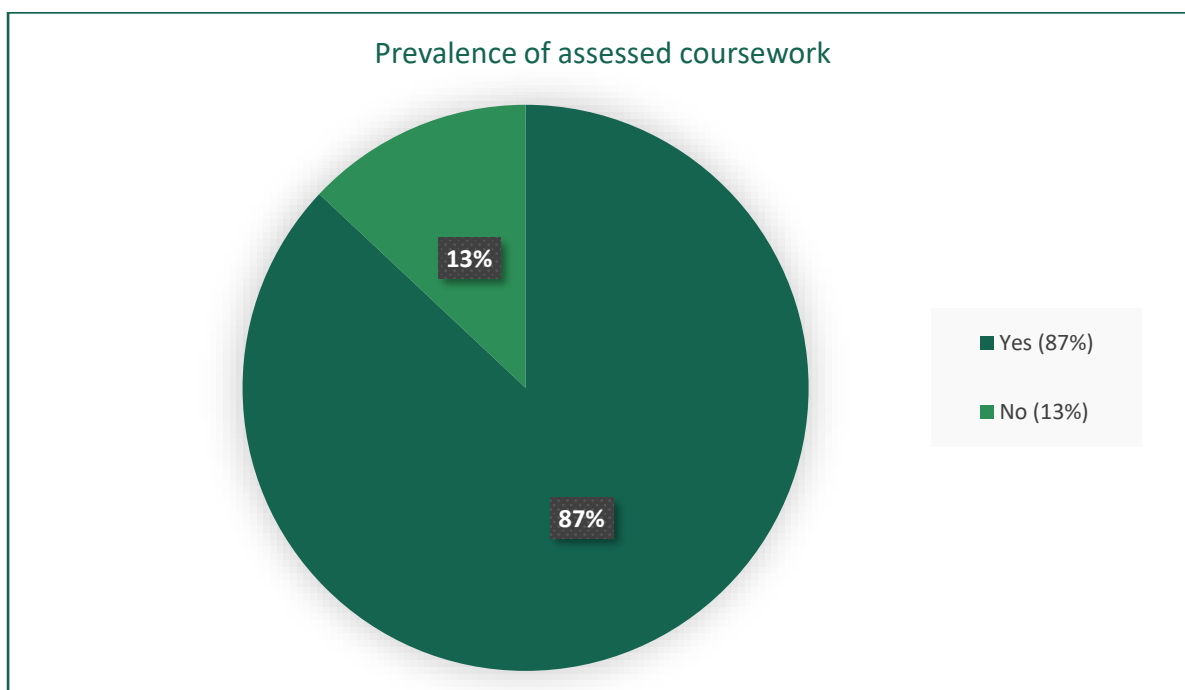


Figure 12: Prevalence of assessed coursework

Only 62% of respondents expressed agreement with the statement that measures to ensure academic integrity of exams and/or assessments online (e.g. plagiarism, cheating etc.) were adequate (see [Figure 13](#)).

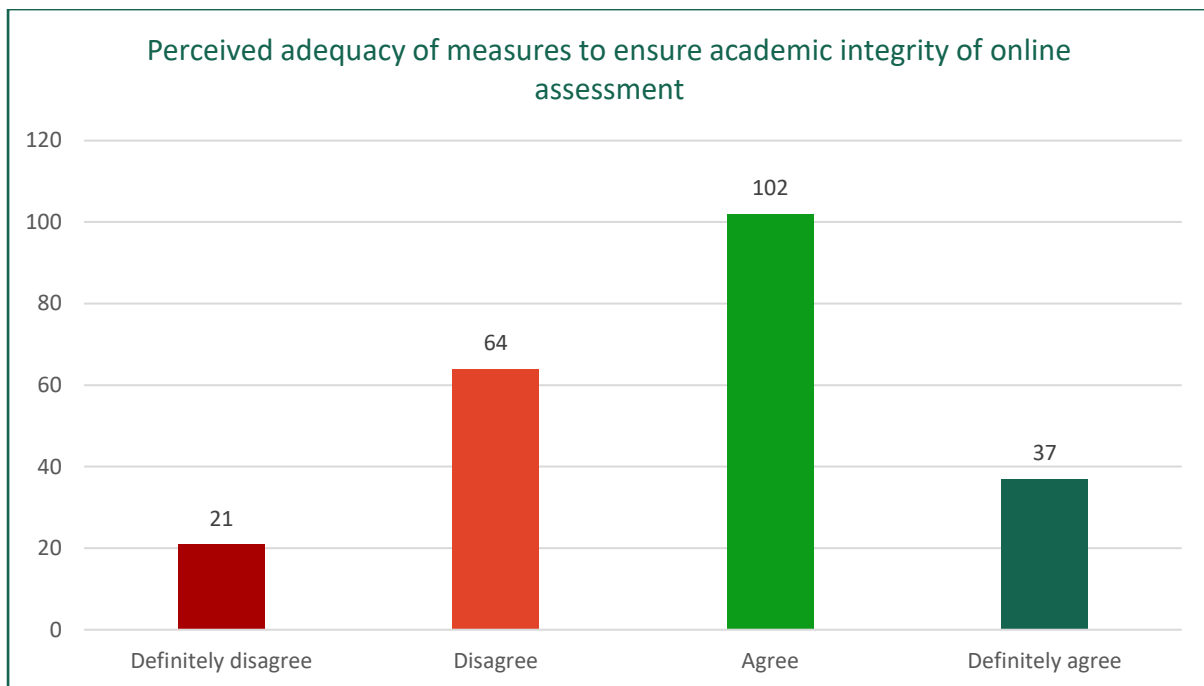


Figure 13: Participants' perception of adequacy of measures to ensure integrity of online assessment

This finding is hardly surprising given the low uptake rates of the various available measures to achieve this. [Figure 14](#) below displays these results. Plagiarism checker software, such as Turnitin was widely used (69%), although in many instances was most likely being employed pre-pandemic. However, most other methods did not have a wide application. The process of checking students' ID was employed by almost 40% of respondents, while the third most frequently used method was monitoring students' screen activity (30%) often through a requirement to leave cameras on.

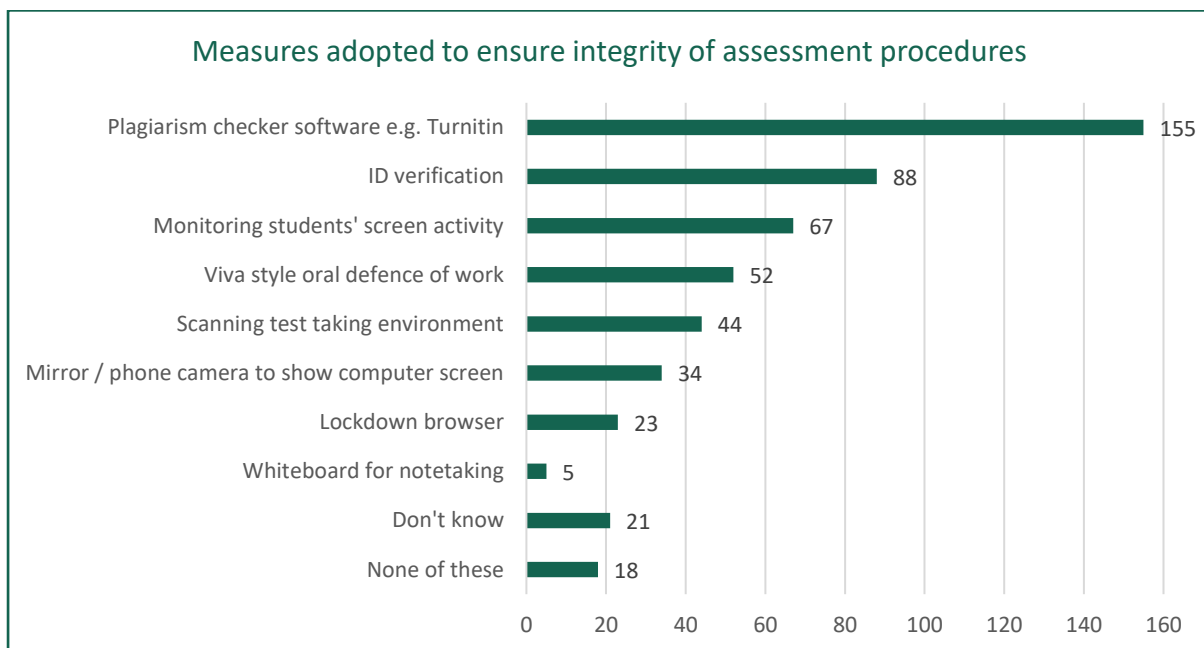


Figure 14: Uptake of measures to ensure integrity of assessment processes

Qualitative data give the impression that in the early days of the pandemic, faced with a lack of knowledge about commercially-available solutions, or at least the access to such solutions or resources to implement them, EAP colleagues were forced to rely on their own creative solutions (see section on Strategies below). One manager explains this:

At this point back in April we didn't know that we'd be able to get the online proctoring, the platforms that subsequently [we use] for the proficiency test, and we replaced things like more traditional listening-into-writing exams which had IELTS-like multiple choice dimensions to it, because we didn't think there would be a way to do that securely with the numbers of students we had and we didn't have the kind of familiarity with some of the things that tech would allow us to do with regard to test security so we revised test formats. (MM1)

The response from a questionnaire respondent highlights this further, with specific reference to the extra complications of access issues in China:

Platforms were not ready for Summer (software did not work in China). Uni guidance was for 'take home' timed exams. So, security was maximised only by adding a time limit, use of data validation (i.e., required sign in and guests would not have access) and heavily contextualised exams that required knowledge of what was learnt during the semester, thus discouraging fraudulent behaviour. Plagiarism checked wasn't available due to licensing issues, but writing assessments were heavily controlled by requiring students to incorporate specific texts. Next semester plan is to look to introduce proctoring once access issues in China have been addressed. (QR)

Given the urgency and gravity of the situation, it is understandable that a high proportion of respondents felt they lacked the necessary knowhow. Between 35% to 46% of managers and coordinators expressed a desire for more training on ensuring the academic integrity of online assessment and also on how to carry out online assessment (see [Appendix 5](#)). Interestingly, from the results, it appears the proportion of teachers expressing a desire for more training in these two areas of assessment was substantially lower at just under 24%. This may signify that managers and coordinators felt more accountability as they were actually involved in the decision-making processes and perhaps even the development work to ensure that testing and assessment processes and instruments were providing an effective measure of the desired construct.

There was a definite certainty in the tone of many questionnaire responses regarding allegations of transgressive behaviour or academic misconduct:

There was student collusion. Many essays were unnaturally polished, almost like they had not been written by that student. (QR)

The online assessments were a mess - lots and lots of cheating. (QR)

We didn't use a lockdown browser so students could be working on several pages at the same time and could collaborate. (QR)

Constantly evolving ways of bypassing authentication measures. (QR)

High propensity for students to attempt cheating; proctoring is expensive and practically challenging to set up; some students trip themselves up by plagiarising and then being unprepared for vivas. (QR)

Even those who had the requisite resources to install proctoring software expressed reservations about its effectiveness:

Robustness and security almost impossible online, even with use of proctoring which are easily manipulated. (QR)

Proctoring software used in practice exams was unreliable and presented challenges for the students. (QR)

In fact, such software may only serve as a deterrent if the manpower is not available to check the recordings which have been flagged, and in instances where simple screen recording technology was employed, this raised another issue:

Although we tried to do our best with very limited means to ensure test security, we just did not have enough resources to check screen recordings. We used this as a deterrent rather than as a serious detection tool. I hasten to add that the same goes for our current strategy (using proctoring software). Using screen recording software has also meant that students have a recording of the test on their computers, meaning that we cannot reuse those test versions for a while. I also worried a lot about impersonation. I conducted speaking and listening tests with students who I had never met, and they were using IDs in another script, so I could not verify whether that was the actual person taking the test. (QR)

Another participant mentioned that ‘contract cheating is more difficult to spot if students are numerous and do not always participate in class’. In the absence of more robust methods, many teachers resorted to a reliance on their personal insights into the students’ performance and capability as they were not confident with the measures adopted to deliver fair assessments. Trusting their own judgement seemed in many cases to provide a more reliable and informed method of decision-making. This process was obviously easier for teachers who were dealing with smaller classes:

Ensuring academic integrity is a problem which we have not really resolved yet. The system is currently based on trust. We are helped by the fact that we currently have small numbers of students who we know very well and so know their character and what they are capable of academically. (QR)

While a reliance on personal insights may have been a workable solution for teachers with smaller student cohorts, it is interesting that the comment above refers to teachers knowing students’ ‘character’. Clearly, this method is not a replacement for robust and fair assessment processes as ‘character’ is unlikely to be part of the construct under investigation and is thus not a criterion informing decision-making. In addition, this approach is understandably less satisfactory in instances

where the adequacy and/or the suitability of the samples of student performance on which to make a supposedly informed judgement is questionable. What is more in such kinds of achievement tests, decisions should be informed by actual ability rather than potential.

Another issue is whether the measures adopted to uphold quality assurance and test security posed a threat to test validity. While many creative contingency measures were implemented, there was some concern around whether these led to construct irrelevance (i.e. the introduction of extraneous, uncontrolled variables which may affect outcomes) or construct underrepresentation (i.e. omission of important elements of the construct in the measurement instrument), both of which negatively affect the meaning of the score and the implications made from it. Fair assessment is dependent on many factors and even under usual circumstances there is a careful balancing act to negotiate. Yet, the rush to administer tests remotely exacerbated this, as one questionnaire respondent commented, 'Striking the balance between security and validity' was a challenge.

Our data seem to show that of all of the skills, achieving this balance was the most challenging with regard to the assessment of listening:

Listening was the most challenging. (QR)

Listening was conducted in a live face-to-face session with an examiner like speaking. (QR)

We found listening scores were suspiciously high. Obviously what students are doing is just sticking their L1 subtitles on through the auto translate. There was not much you can do about that. (CM1)

One questionnaire respondent even reported that scores from an IFY listening assessment could not be used in determining final grades owing to the large number of irregularities and instead, a complex algorithm had to be adopted to calculate a score instead. Without remote proctoring solutions and a sensible timeframe to make robust amendments, students may have been free to control the recording, fast-forwarding and rewinding at their will. This can result in a change of construct, since certain items are designed to be tested with students listening once or twice only, such as listening for key words or information.

Another source of conflict with test security was student privacy. The issue of whether students have their cameras on during synchronous teaching time is covered in section [5.3](#) of this report. While opinions differ on this and on the impact on engagement and interaction, the debate is more high stakes when it concerns assessment processes. As one respondent mentioned:

No real security without invading students privacy. (QR)

It can be seen that the threat posed to the integrity of assessment processes through remote delivery manifested itself in various ways ranging from student attempts to transgress guidelines, or at least teacher suspicions of such behaviour, to colleagues' lack of confidence in the security of the processes adopted. Terms occurring frequently in the responses were: 'cheating', 'collusion', 'plagiarism', 'security', 'translation software', 'copying', 'relying on trust', 'no lockdown browsers', 'no proctoring

software', 'copying and pasting from internet', 'contract cheating'. Interviewee CF1 provides a suitable synopsis:

Really all the assessments were more challenging. And less reliable in a way, I felt like I had a bit less confidence that we were being fair. And then the marks, were they a true reflection of what the students could do? It must have been so hard for everyone. I think we know some of the assessments we did we couldn't really be sure that the students weren't cheating we just had to kind of trust them, which I think is fair enough for me. You should trust your students to a certain extent.. Yeah, it was hard. (CF1)

5.2.2.2 Technology and connectivity

The second most prevalent challenge mentioned was around technology and connectivity with 29% of respondents referring to this. This is discussed at length in [Section 5.3](#) with regard to communication, while here the issues are specifically related to testing and assessment. As the four comments below from questionnaire respondents show, the problems were wide ranging:

Technical issues (and the stress caused by these) and learner training for exams. (QR)

Using a lockdown browser with students in Asia was a complete disaster in practice exams and abandoned for the final exams, with other security measures introduced instead. (QR)

Technology/ internet problems when recording presentations, China blocking e-stream so difficulty sharing recorded videos, unsure of whether students had written assignments themselves. (QR)

Access to video/audio files was a huge challenge due to Chinese firewall and connection issues. Up to 6x backups using various methods were required for a listening exam. Administration of online assessments was not adequately resourced - not enough IT staff to address potential issues. Numerous back-ups of every exam paper were required in the event IT failed or students had individual connection issues, which added significantly to workload. (QR)

Synchronous remote test delivery through video-mediated computer technology such as Zoom or Teams was a popular method of test administration, especially to assess speaking, but also for other skills. While this enabled face-to-face assessments to continue it presented a number of additional challenges such as internet connectivity and strain on bandwidth, which then required further solutions to be implemented, such as re-arranging the test or using scores from previous assessments.

Digital literacy was coded as a separate theme to technology, with 4% of respondents expressing concern over stakeholders' capabilities:

Preparing students for using software - It took a lot of time and effort to get students used to the screen capture software as they lacked digital literacy and were nervous about what could go wrong. (QR)

The online exam invigilation software was complex. (QR)

This was not only a problem for students but also for some teachers. The additional requirement to provide training for users of new systems and platforms to ensure smooth administration of assessment processes created an extra workload at an already busy time. In addition, students' lack of familiarity or confidence with the technology may have introduced construct-irrelevant variance, potentially hindering their performance and affecting their outcome:

How to monitor cheating in exams + how to design online assessments that would not unfairly impact students with lower levels of digital skills / access to adequate technology or internet connection. (QR)

Ensuring that EAP skills and not IT skills were being tested. (QR)

5.2.3.2 Time

The word 'time' appeared frequently when describing the challenges posed by online assessment. This was generally related to test administration and ranged from students residing in different time zones to suitable time allowances, but also included increased time and workload for staff. These questionnaire responses highlight some of the concerns:

There wasn't enough thought given to the deadlines and turnaround times for tutors. (QR)

Impossible to limit students' time on an online test to just the 2 hours recommended as they needed a window of 48 hours to complete the written test. (QR)

Couldn't ensure that all students started a test at the same time due to connectivity issues, things took longer online. (QR)

One strategy to mitigate the impact of time zones, seems to have been giving students a longer window of time to complete an assessment, for example 24 hours, rather than administering it in controlled conditions to the whole cohort. However, this raised other concerns related to outside help such as the use of translation software, contract cheating and so on.

The comment from a teacher interviewee below highlights one issue relating to time, which is the hours required to provide individual feedback. What is most evident is the lessons learnt along the way in order to improve practice. It shows that being reflective and open to admitting that strategies were not working, and not being afraid to make changes or to do a U turn was a useful disposition in order to work towards quality assurance and striking a balance:

There was a lot of mistakes made and things where we initially did one thing and then changed it to something different after like a week we were like oh no that's too much, we need to go back and we're gonna have to give whole group feedback instead of individual feedback or it's

gonna take a hundred hours and that was like some of the kind of the tense conversations we were having in our little team was like we were pushing for a reduction in the amount of feedback we had to give on this and someone else was saying no I think it's fine, that was stressful. (TM1)

5.2.3. Strategies

Participants were asked to list up to three strategies they had adopted to address the challenges posed by online assessment and feedback. There were 128 responses to this question. The full list of categories which were coded to group the strategies and their frequencies can be found in [Appendix 9](#).

5.2.1.3 Learner Training

The most prevalent strategy was the implementation of learner training with 19.5% of respondents referring to this. This included the provision of clear instruction to ensure that students understood task requirements, expectations concerning academic integrity and the online assessment platform. The concerted attempt to prepare students well for remote assessment and possibly new or amended assessment tasks is reinforced as 14.5% of respondents mentioned their efforts to support students through the provision of model answers, mock assessments and practice exams. This aligns with Purpura et al.'s findings (2021), who describe the additional measures that they took to ensure that test takers could navigate the online system. This included having an instructional video about how to set up their computers and take the assessment in an online environment. They also found that having a person from their centre, who was familiar with the needs of students with limited English language proficiency, was needed to help test takers communicate with the support team at Honorlock (a commercially available assessment security system).

Although this kind of learner training, support and familiarisation is necessary to reduce stress levels in students and mitigate against construct irrelevance and other unintended consequences, in some cases this was seen to be a very time-consuming endeavour, as one teacher interviewee reports:

I don't think the assessment really reflected the content of the course. There was a bit of a gap between what we were teaching and what they were assessed on. I think it was like the tail wagging the dog because there were so many problems with the assessment, with transferring it online. It took up an enormous amount of time towards the end of the course just getting students familiar with it. So at the end of the course everything became focussed on the assessment really. (TM2)

5.2.2.3 Ensuring Academic Integrity

The next most prevalent response concerned measures taken to ensure security and limit collusion or opportunities to seek external support. Interestingly, even though this was the most common challenge listed, only 14.8% of respondents referred to such strategies. This could be due to a lack of awareness around the availability and types of digital solutions, insufficient resources to invest in such

solutions and the pressing need to act quickly. In fact, the financial cost of proctoring software was a theme mentioned by four participants:

Screen capture software – not enough resources to check it. (QR)

Cost of proctoring solutions. (QR)

5.2.3.3 Other Creative Solutions

Rather than turn to commercially available solutions, it appears that in the initial throes of the pandemic assessment developers were forced to think out of the box and implement creative approaches to continue to obtain samples of student performance for assessment purposes. A popular approach involved producing bespoke, contextualised assessments, such as linking assessment more closely to class content, adding a reflective or personal element and including drafting and feedback cycles. Respondents mentioned an increased use of portfolios and vivas, as well as more integrated tasks such as reading-into-writing or listening-into-speaking. The purpose of the traditional viva expanded with assessment colleagues opting for this mode to assess interactive listening, for example, immediately after an oral presentation, or as an opportunity to collect a sample of unscripted speech. In total, all of these ideas were mentioned by 25% of participants who responded to this item (see [Appendix 9](#)). The questionnaire responses below show some of these creative solutions:

- *For coursework, these issues to some extent are present F2F, although without knowing the student so well it was more difficult to identify when they may have had help with a piece of work. The issue really (for coursework) is designing tasks which are difficult to reproduce by a third party i.e. a closed reading pack, a bespoke brief etc. (QR)*
- *Balancing assessments with a portfolio approach, extra vigilance / training / vivas. (QR)*
- *We assessed listening through an extended viva following the speaking assessment. We also assessed language through the viva so that we could know it was the student's own language. (QR)*
- *A learning journal to show development each week with a weekly tutorial. (QR)*
- *Personalised element to assessment and group work. (QR)*
- *Recorded invigilation checks – students recorded exam and we watched video afterwards. (QR)*
- *Reading-into-writing: Students had to compose a reading log which showed their research. (QR)*
- *Exams were changed to allow double the time and a Turnitin submitted piece of work was checked against previous work. (QR)*

Some of the issues no doubt existed already and were just highlighted through the concerted effort to tighten processes which was sparked by the shift to remote administration. In essence, this forced opportunity to evaluate and reflect on practices cast assessment in the spotlight and should result in enhanced processes and greater assessment literacy.

What is clear is that assessment developers employed bold and creative methods to enable students to access tests in a Covid secure environment while attempting to uphold quality and validity

standards. Insights from one manager provide a summary of the state of affairs at the start of the pandemic when little was known about the kinds of measures which are now commonplace:

At this point back in April we didn't know that we'd be able to get the online proctoring ... we didn't have the kind of familiarity with some of the things that tech would allow us to do with regard to test security so we revised test formats, particularly the listening test, fairly significantly and we also just changed the balance of assessment, increasing the significance of coursework and adjusting the nature of coursework tasks and increasing the number of coursework tasks to reflect their new importance. (MM1)

5.2.4. Opportunities

'It is exciting to see what kinds of out-of-the-box thinking will continue to emerge in the field of language assessment.' (Muhammad & Ockey 2021, p.54)

Participants were asked to state up to three opportunities which had arisen in the area of assessment and feedback as a result of moving to remote administration. A total of 112 responses were collected with 51 participants either leaving a blank or simply stating 'no' or 'N/A'. A very small number explicitly stated that assessment had not given rise to any opportunities.

Definitely not in the very early stages (April). (QR)

Not really it was mainly challenges. (QR)

I'm unaware of any opportunities online assessment created. (QR)

Those who did respond tended to present the positive view that ideas about what is possible have expanded and aspects previously on the development agenda have been expedited. Comments show that the opportunity to rethink teaching, to question learning outcomes and to re-evaluate testing processes and instruments has resulted in more authentic and meaningful assessment and enhanced ecological validity. This corroborates Ockey (2021), who in the special edition of *Language Assessment Quarterly* on the impact of Covid-19 on placement and admissions tests for university entry, optimistically notes that construct-representative assessments have been successfully delivered despite technological limitations. He believes this will help 'to shuttle in a new era of technology-driven language assessments' (p.5).

5.2.1.4 Reflection on Current Practices

The most common response, which was mentioned by 15.2% of respondents, was the opportunity to reflect on current assessment practices, to re-evaluate and make improvements or implement new and more innovative modes of assessment such as vivas, virtual posters and problem-based learning tasks (see [Appendix 10](#) for full list). The positive tone to the comments from many questionnaire respondents is refreshing and bodes well for the field of EAP assessment:

The opportunity to experiment with different styles and formats of assessments to both allow for more authentic assessment and to encourage positive backwash on the course. (QR)

Online assessment gave flexibility for staff and students and opened up some different ways to approach testing listening skills. (QR)

A much more relevant and developmental approach to assessment was enabled. It truly became assessment for learning. (QR)

Responses suggest that the shift in assessment practices led to more authenticity, a greater focus on the learning process and enhanced positive washback, with more than 13% of responses making reference to these themes. Through a reduced number of summative assessments, a focus on process rather than product and an increase in at-home tasks done in more naturalistic rather than controlled exam conditions, there was a feeling that assessment was more meaningful and that revised practices often enhanced reflexivity and context validity, for example, through a learning development portfolio. The two questionnaire responses below both exemplify this:

Move away from traditional timed exams to portfolio pass/fail approach; less stress as no surprises - all in student hands; more emphasis on process over product. (QR)

Adjusted focus to the PROCESS of enquiry/thinking through online monitoring between drafts; use of blogs and padlets to do this, so the tutors could always/easily access drafts and follow the journey of the students' writing. Tutors reported that they were given exceptional insight into the thought processes and development of ideas. This moved the focus to a developmental one rather than students bringing drafts to tutors and feeling that these drafts needed to be 'polished', however much it is taught that drafts do not need to be polished. (QR)

5.2.2.4 Feedback

Just as the respondent above felt that the online environment and the use of certain tools facilitated opportunities to monitor students' progress and to provide feedback, many other responses were related to feedback practices and the enhanced opportunities for transparency and flexibility. This corroborates participants' confidence levels in the methods of feedback employed in the online environment, with just under 90% of participants agreeing that they were adequate for student learning and progression (see [Figure 15](#)).

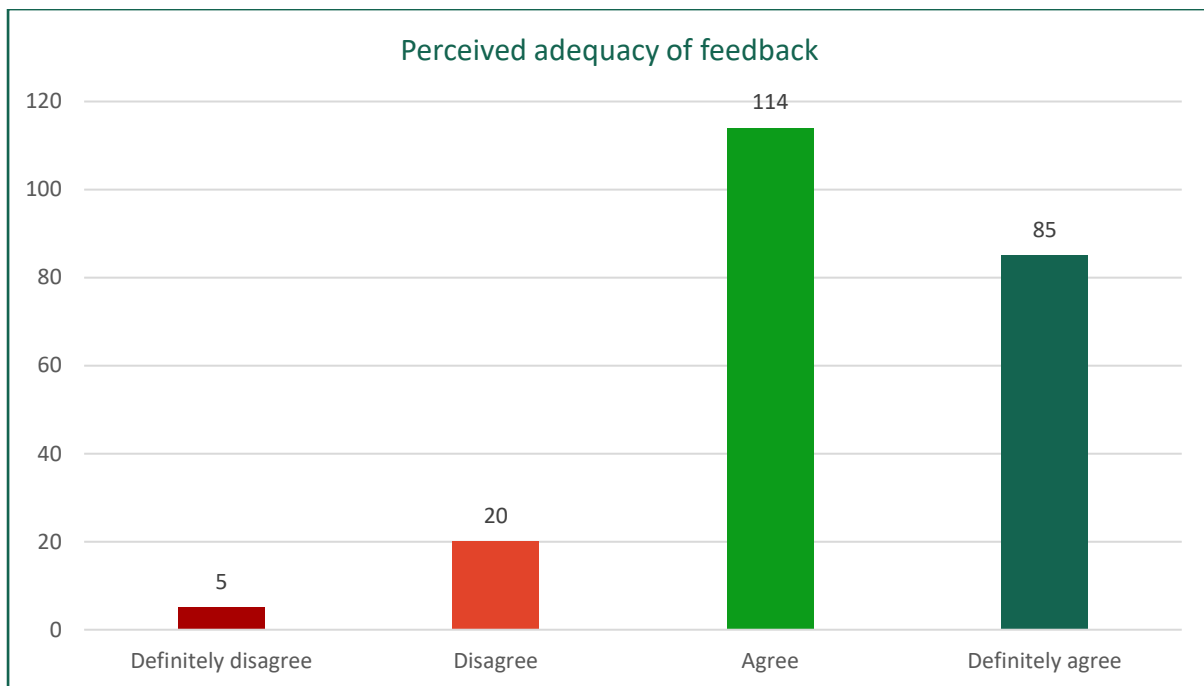


Figure 15: Participants' perception of adequacy of feedback

This strong belief in the adequacy of the feedback provided is reflected through the findings in [Figure 16](#) below displaying the popularity of different forms of feedback. It is striking that all of the methods listed, including both written and verbal peer feedback had a very high uptake, with between 49.6% and 93.8% of respondents using all of the nine methods.

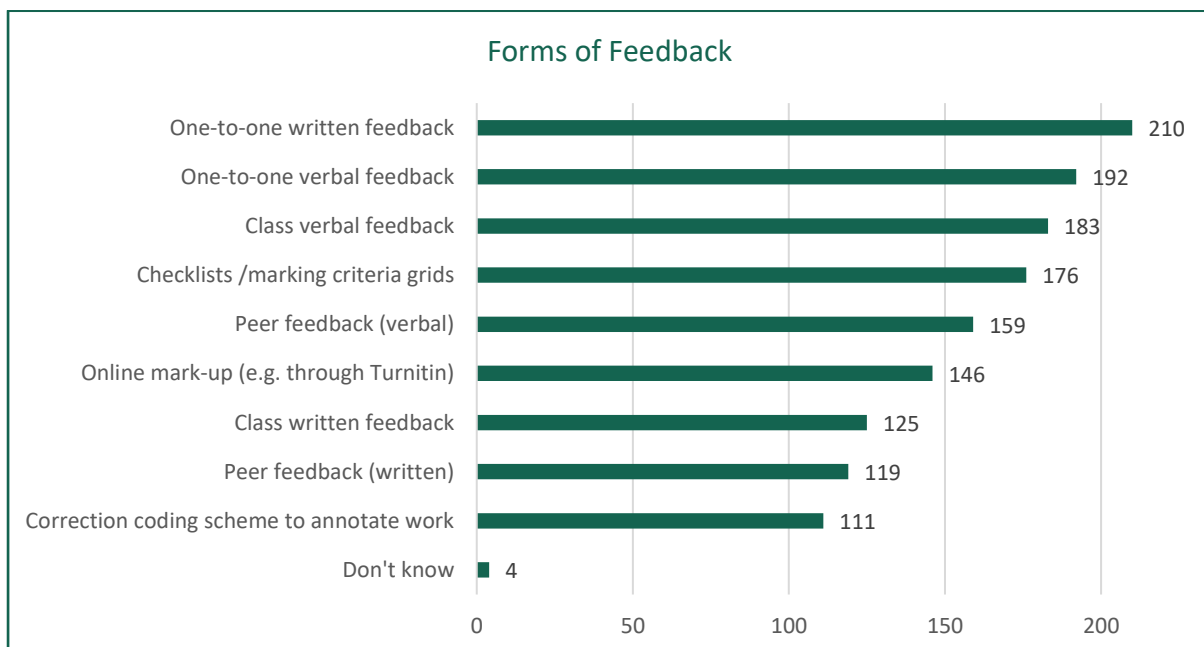


Figure 16: Forms of feedback

The questionnaire responses below detail some of the novel opportunities provided through the provision of feedback online. These include different types, such as audio feedback and interactive

feedback, improvements in processes, such as access to recordings and the speed of returning feedback and also the enhanced visibility of what students are doing in out-of-class activities:

Interactive feedback, collaboration, online speaking/recording and feedback on this (perhaps an increase on 'normal' levels). (QR)

Video recording of students' performance in discussions allowed for more detailed feedback and self-assessment. (QR)

Greater amount of (informal and formal) written participation and feedback opportunities; In theory, easier overview of which students had participated and in what way. (QR)

5.2.3.4 Professional Development

Just as in the Design and delivery section of the questionnaire, the opportunity for professional development and upskilling was viewed favourably with just under 10% of respondents listing this as an opportunity. Examples included giving online feedback, recording assessments and digital literacy in general.

5.2.4.4 Inclusivity

Three participants mentioned the important issue of inclusivity and the ability to access exams and assessment from anywhere in the world. This was a welcome opportunity for students with mobility issues or those with special-educational needs as this comment shows:

For students with learning difficulties, such as dyslexia, not having a timed written assessment in the classroom allowed them the time they needed without the stigma normally attached (all students had to submit within a window). (QR)

5.2.5.4 Enhanced Status

One serendipitous opportunity was mentioned by a manager who described how EAP experts were drafted in to offer support to colleagues outside the language centre. This led to increased visibility within the wider university. Since controlled exams were replaced by at-home, open-book assessments, faculty were being confronted with the issue of contract cheating, and as many of the suspected cases involved international students, EAP colleagues were called on:

Everybody in the rest of the institution is in panic and meltdown about contract cheating. Particularly when you look at sort of cases that go to the secretariat or wherever it is. A high proportion of them are English language learning students, international students, so I think it's kind of becoming conflated and we have to work with them to talk to them about that. I think because of that sort of flattened hierarchy, because students are contacting teachers in a different way that it's been made clear to them that their assessment instructions are not clear to students because students are having to ask in writing. So, the EAP colleagues that

work in-sessionally are working with tutors now to think about how they write their assessment instructions and when they're marking online the sort of feedback and how they're breaking it down. I think it's making people think a little bit more about where the language and where the content knowledge is, and sort of how you kind of express yourself, where they kind of intersect. (MF1)

5.2.5. Section Summary

Responding to the challenge of delivering valid assessments during the unprecedented times of the Covid-19 pandemic was certainly not easy. However, the efforts will undoubtedly lead to developments in the field of language assessment. (Muhammad and Ockey, 2021, p.1)

Data has shown that assessment presented myriad challenges in the first six months of the Covid-19 pandemic. However, the overall impression is that valuable lessons were learnt during that short period and these have provided much food for thought in terms of improving practices which were often outdated and no longer fit for purpose. There seems to be a move towards more meaningful and authentic assessment, fewer assessment tasks and multi-modal and interactive feedback. Plus, in searching for solutions, this time of crisis really heightened the importance of professional communities of practice for providing support, reassurance and dissemination of ideas. One questionnaire respondent reported how 'Sharing innovative and successful strategies through communities of practice e.g. BALEAP TAFSIG and TELSIG, BAAL TEASIG and so on' was a real source of support. The reflections of one teacher sum up the transitions from initial panic to a place of equilibrium and reflection and renewed possibilities for the future:

There was a lot of feedback on [integrity] and there were loads of meetings with teachers and I mean it wasn't a disaster, it was generally fine but there were just so many issues coming out of it that I mean it's very easy to pick holes in assessment, it's a very soft target. I think we did the best in the circumstances. Next year I think we can go forward from that. (TM2)

5.3. Online Communication

And now it's so easy to ask people things. I can just go on Skype or zoom and just video chat with someone if I've got a two-minute thing I need to ask whereas before I'd go and have a meeting with people, so now it's just so much easier to communicate with people but then, there's a lot of people you're not seeing. (AF1)

5.3.1. Overview

In the 1970s, Michael Moore, an American professor of education, coined the term 'transactional distance', to refer to the communication that occurs between a teacher and learner who are physically at a distance from one another. He explained how physical separation creates 'a psychological and communications space to be crossed', a transactional distance that results in particular behaviours and potential miscommunication (Moore, 1993, p.22).

During the period March to September 2020, this transactional distance might have been expected not only between staff and students but also between colleagues and with the wider institution. For this reason, we will take a novel approach to the application of the term transactional distance and apply it here, not only to communication between teacher and student, but also between staff within the EAP programme and the institution as a whole. Whilst elements of Moore’s (1993) miscommunication and the psychological sense of distancing are evident in the data, the overwhelming feeling is one of improved communication owing to the shift online. Just under 90% of respondents felt online communication had been successful for everyday interactions with staff and students during the period March to September 2020 (see [Figure 17](#)). As defined in the questionnaire, this does not relate to teaching, but rather the day-to-day interactions, such as emails and messaging, between staff and between staff and students.

This section reports on some of the challenges faced by participants when communicating online and shares some of the strategies employed to reduce effects of transactional distance. It also discusses the opportunities which resulted from online communication and highlights those that are likely to be retained beyond the pandemic.

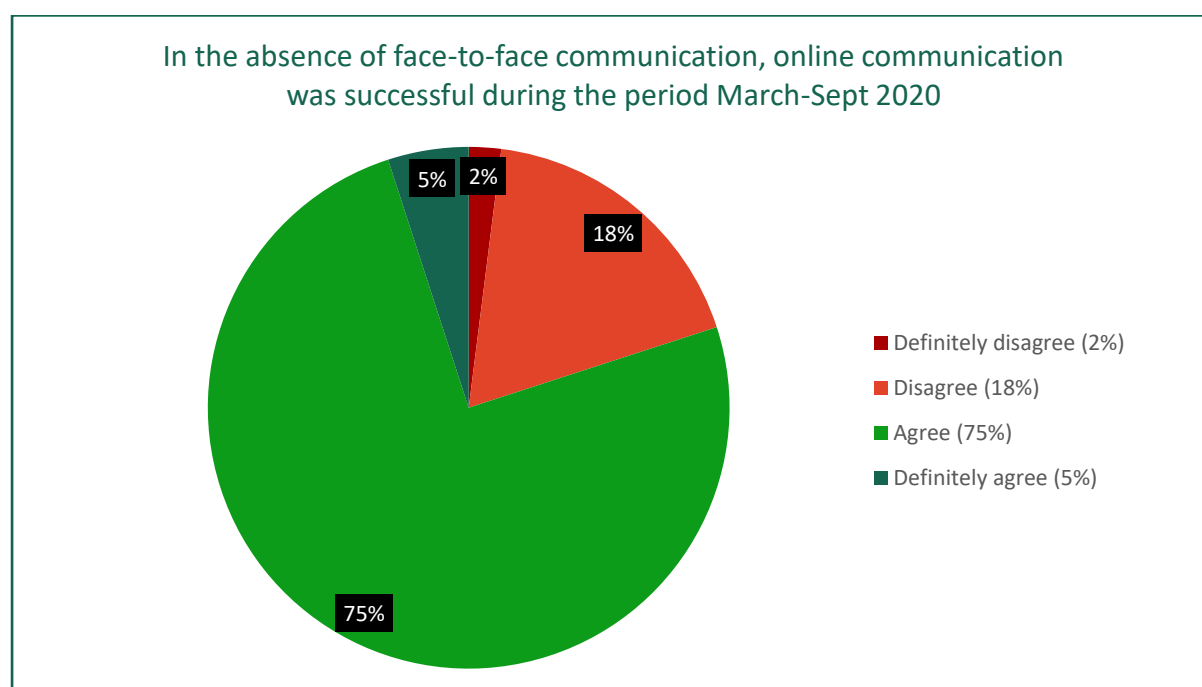


Figure 17: Online communication success

5.3.2. Connectivity and Accessibility

Key findings

- 43% of respondents experienced issues with internet and connectivity
- The Chinese firewall posed a major challenge for accessibility, particularly for VLEs
- Setting or ensuring minimum requirements regarding hardware and internet connection can help to mitigate later connectivity challenges

The most notable challenges in terms of technology included internet connectivity and speed, which were mentioned by 44.6% of respondents. A further 5.6% referred to other technological challenges such as insufficient hardware, namely 'microphone, camera, headphones, laptop' and the need to ensure staff and students had the minimum requirements in terms of internet connection and equipment. Interestingly, these findings correlate entirely with another study carried out in Turkey to investigate the impact of Covid-19 on higher education staff and students. This study saw 47% of participants report technological issues as a barrier to education online and 46% report their internet connection for the same reason (Doyumgac et al., 2021). The irony of the situation for those participants, as well as for the participants in our study, is that technology and the internet were also acknowledged as the main facilitator of online education by 35% and 32% respectively. Without the requisite technology and without an internet connection, quite simply the UK EAP programmes of 2020 may not have been possible, and yet, the very same two facilitators proved to be also the greatest barriers to successful communication online for EAP staff.

One connectivity challenge related to the UK EAP sector's largest nationality student cohort. Chinese students make up approximately a quarter of all international students in the UK, with 120,385 Chinese students studying on UK university courses in the year 2019/20 (HESA, 2021). It is logical therefore that UK EAP programmes also see Chinese students make up a large percentage of their overall cohort. With many of these students physically located in China during the period March to September 2020, a number of related issues arose. Six per cent of respondents specifically mentioned how their students in China often struggled to access the materials/platforms/applications/tools, owing to poor internet connection and/or the Chinese firewall. The Times Higher Education reported on this issue in April 2020, stating:

Some foreign universities now find themselves unable to engage fully with students who have returned to mainland China during the coronavirus pandemic. Educators are scrambling to upload materials to whatever platforms they find handy and usable, and many lack experience dealing with Chinese internet restrictions, widely described as the great firewall of China. (Lau, 2020)

A number of respondents and interviewees appeared to be all too aware that the challenges they were facing were a result of the so-called Chinese firewall. One coordinator explained how this prevented his institution using the Google tools they were already accustomed to pre-pandemic, as 80% of their cohort were Chinese and Google is blocked in China; asking them to find a way around this would be considered illegal (CM1). The BBC also reported on this issue in July 2020 in an article that suggested UK universities were consequently having to comply with Chinese internet censorship in order to make sure course materials were accessible to their students located in China (Coughlan, 2020). In some cases, finding ways to either legally navigate around the Chinese firewall or provide materials and communications in other formats and through alternative platforms led to a great deal more work for EAP programme staff:

The Chinese Firewall presented significant problems as the student university email was Gmail based, this also was an issue with Blackboard. Having to make sure that all communications were delivered through several means, documented and stored for ease of access was very time-consuming. (QR)

Yet, the challenge of communicating online was not only due to the Chinese firewall, but also connectivity when using VLEs. There were reports of calls crashing and students struggling to access materials which then had to be sent via email or posted in other places, adding significantly to staff workload. For one interviewee, the connectivity issues related to the VLE became insurmountable and they decided to switch platform partway through the programme:

So it did take me a while at the beginning to adapt. And then it was not just because we had to use so many different platforms. I mean for one of the universities we were meant to be using Blackboard Collaborate. But we had students from abroad from China and other areas and we had problems with connectivity. So we then had to move very quickly. Some groups were moved to Teams, some groups were moved to Zoom, so we had to learn to use all the platforms in a very short period of time. (TF2)

Another teacher explained how their move from the VLE to Teams meant they were finally able to use their cameras, which previously had not been an option owing to the connectivity issues exacerbated by the VLE (TM1). It is therefore apparent that connectivity issues will need to be considered in regards to the choice of platform and applications used, particularly where there is a large cohort situated in China. [Taylor's \(2020\) list](#) compiled for the University of Sussex in October 2020 could be a good starting point for finding those which might offer best connectivity in China.

5.3.3. Choice and Use of Software

Key findings

- Email was the most prevalent form of communication, used by 88%
- Moving from the VLE to Microsoft Teams was seen as a strategy for facilitating better online communication
- Training and support in the use of technological tools and platforms is essential
- Determining a clear function for the various applications/tools/platforms can be useful

In [one of her blog posts](#), Gilly Salmon (2017), whose e-tivities and 5 stage model have proven invaluable to many colleagues in the recent shift online, referred to virtual learning environments (VLE) as a 'keystone species'. She explained that the VLE was central to all university ecosystems in the same way keystone species are to the continued balance and maintenance of a biological ecosystem, and that without one, the ecosystem would simply collapse (Salmon, 2017). The findings of this study reveal that there was prevalent use of a VLE, with 72.5% of respondents selecting it as one of the main tools used to facilitate online communication. However, it was not as prevalent as email with 88.3% or Microsoft Teams at 73.3.% (see [Figure 18](#)). In addition, contrary to Salmon's (2017) statement, the VLE was often a source of frustration and conflict, as aforementioned, and a number of programmes seem to have shifted away from the VLE and towards Teams or Zoom, a move listed by 10.5% of respondents as a strategy for improving online communication.

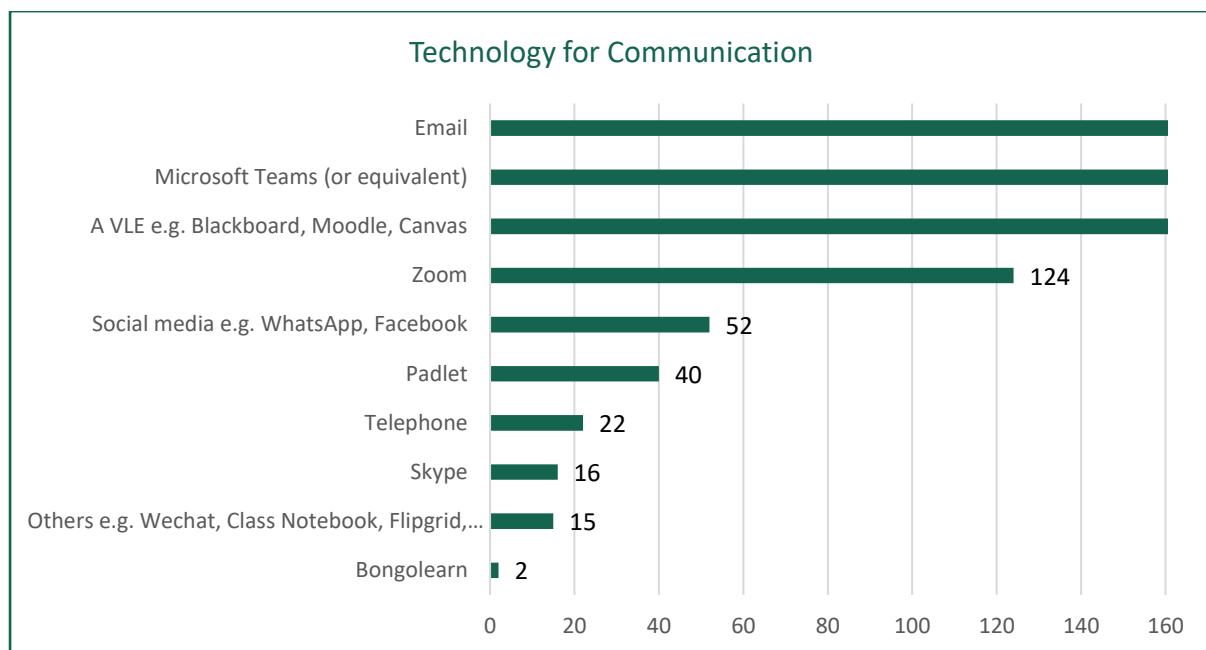


Figure 18: Technology for communication

One teacher interviewee explained how the programme he was working on had to move from the VLE to Teams part way through the course and he praised the EAP programme leaders for listening to the teachers, perhaps against the demands from higher up:

I felt like maybe it [the change from Canvas to Teams] wasn't supported by the uni IT department or the uni, or some other group in the uni who were like if you wanna use Teams you use Teams but we're not gonna help you or we can't help you. (TM1)

The preference or insistence of institutions to use their VLEs as the main tool on the programme resulted in various levels of frustration amongst participants. The lack of support from the wider institution regarding the use of these tools was echoed by several questionnaire respondents also, with them recognising that they fell 'outside the university's recommended platforms' (QR). One curriculum designer described her struggle with IT colleagues not understanding the educational needs of an EAP programme for an online platform and why, in the end, she too opted for Microsoft Teams as opposed to Blackboard:

I spoke to a man at [IT support] and I tried to explain you know we're not like any other academic module and that's where the misfit's coming. We'd need multiple modules to kind of limit and contain but with that would come its own problem of managing that but the angry [IT support] man said it is totally fit for purpose and it is totally fit for all your needs. To which I said that's great thank you for clarifying for me. (CDF1)

This frustration was described by a manager also in relation to the digital technologists not really appreciating the level of expertise amongst the EAP programme team (MF1).

Perhaps as a result of institutions insisting on the use of VLEs and/or the lack of full functionality of any one platform or software, most programmes seemed to use multiple platforms and spaces for

communication. This was highlighted as a challenge by 8.2% of questionnaire respondents and summarised by one of the interviewees.

I think that generally the most negative feedback [from teachers] was around the number of tools and platforms that they had to work with because the university has got its own VLE, but it's not supported in China, but we had to use that for submission of assessments through Turnitin, so they had to use that for that, and then they needed to use Zoom for the live teaching because at that point, Teams didn't have breakout rooms and all sorts of functionality, and then we were using Teams. (MF1)

Yet, McRae (in Mavridi & Xerri, 2020) recommends that 'the number of applications used within one course is limited to around three or four, so as not to overwhelm new staff and students experiencing this technology for the first time' (p. 71). Unfortunately, this recommendation may not have been considered in the panic to use anything and everything that was going to work, with some staff being trained to use one particular platform and then having to shift to another part way through owing to connectivity and accessibility issues. As a consequence, 11.3% of respondents reported struggling with a lack of familiarity with the online systems and platforms and 4.3% felt this was also a challenge for students.

This interconnectedness of technology and communication success is made further apparent in the questionnaires by the number of respondents who refer to technology-related solutions as successful strategies for facilitating online communication. Ten per cent refer to training in technology as having been key for successful communication while another 5% mentions support from IT departments and digital leads. Other helpful support included 'how to' tutorials and trouble-shooting. Thus, it is clear that for successful online communication it is first necessary to have successful skills and understanding of the use of the technology. This is a notion supported by [Gilly Salmon's 5 stage model](#), which states the initial stages of any online learning should involve gaining access to the various online spaces and becoming familiar with them, as well as accessing support in doing so (Salmon, 2013). Whilst Salmon's (2013) model refers to learners, the same process applies to staff accessing these platforms for the first time and attempting to carry out all of their work-related communication through them. If these technological platforms and tools are to continue to play such an essential role in EAP provision in the future, then thorough training in their use will surely be imperative for both staff and students (Kebritchi et al., 2017).

Not only do those working with the technology need to know how to navigate around the various platforms and work with the applications, they also need to know how to use them effectively and which to use for which purposes. One questionnaire respondent clarified that determining a different purpose for each tool could be seen as a successful strategy for communication:

I think communication was better. We quickly got used to Teams and used this to work with teachers. Teachers used Teams to communicate with students and we used Blackboard as a repository for the course materials, assessment submission and whole course communication. We used Zoom for whole course information sessions (only a couple) because of the participant limits on Teams. (QR)

One curriculum designer explained this allocation of different tools for different purposes in some detail:

[Blackboard] is your kind of mothership, it is your hub, it is where formal assessment takes place, it is the repository. So, to find the core materials, find the videos, find the assessment, find the policies, [Blackboard]. It's clunky, it's horrible but it's solid and then Microsoft Teams is where you find your classroom and it's where you meet your students and it's where you chat with them and it's where you decorate and it's where you add your flipchart stuff and it's where all your classroom ecosystem generates and it gets deposited and it's where your students meet and kind of before class or after class or stay in and that's all lovely. (CDF1)

There was also the sense that different tools would be used for varying levels of formality, with 'Teams for social, email for official, VLE for course info' (QR). Although email was used by 88% of respondents, only 2% actually listed it as a strategy for successful online communication. In contrast, 12.3% referred to Microsoft Teams, noting its chat and video call facilities as enabling 'quick' and 'informal communication'. Teams was often described as the preferred alternative to the more formal email approach:

I began using Teams chat as the informal quick query/how are you/knock on the door option to differentiate between email or a calendar invite meeting. (QR)

Microsoft Teams seemed also to be the space used for virtual staff rooms and for informal meetings such as virtual tea or coffee breaks, as posited by 10.5%, while email was considered to be more formal. One of the younger teacher interviewees likened the platform's sociable and informal feel to social media:

To me it was like Facebook but for students as well. We type questions and stuff and then we go and post things and comment on each other's work and they can record things and upload it on their space. It was really nice. (TM3)

However, it was also acknowledged that Teams needed to be used 'carefully' in order to make sure messages were not missed and information was successfully communicated. This could be achieved through clear use of channels and tagging people.

Thus, it is clear that keeping software, applications and platforms to a minimum and setting clear guidelines regarding which ones will be used for different kinds of communication can be helpful. In addition, training and support with the technology will be key. It is also possible that for communication purposes, the VLE will not be the optimum choice, but rather software such as Microsoft Teams as a more sociable alternative.

5.3.4. Frequency of Communication

Key findings

- Too many platforms/tools/applications can result in information overload
- Guidelines need to be set regarding communication response times and working hours
- More frequent meetings between staff can enhance communication
- 21% explicitly stated that communication is easier and faster online

McRae's (2020) suggestion of keeping platforms to a minimum becomes pertinent again in terms of the amount of communication that might occur online as a result of multiple tools, applications and platforms being used. Thirteen percent of respondents referred to a real increase in the amount of communication as being a challenge with some describing it as 'overwhelming' and 'information overload' at times 'with information coming from multiple directions'. Another 12.6% linked this feeling to their frustration at having to move between multiple platforms, applications and tools to find different information, with one explaining that 'a proliferation of communication methods results in too many platforms to keep checking for and receiving messages.' There was also the feeling that there were 'too many types', including 'email, Teams, Moodle, and teacher WhatsApp' and this could result in information being lost.

This was not only expressed as a challenge for staff to keep up with, but also for students. Nine percent of respondents explained how they were often unsure whether students had checked their email or various other communications and thus their ignorance as to whether students had understood instructions or indeed had even seen them.

Some students were perhaps overwhelmed by volume and length of email communications - important and complex messages about e.g. last minute changes to assessment formats and schedules might have been missed, or it was hard to check understanding. (QR)

Another teacher explained they felt like 'students were bombarded with online communication' and that consequently, 'they failed to read half of it' (QR).

Both increased amounts of communication or increased amounts of time taken to communicate (mentioned by 10.4%) could explain why there was the feeling people were spending longer working than they would usually do in a face-to-face environment. Respondents expressed the 'inability to disconnect', especially as communication was occurring at all hours of the day, and sometimes the night too. Thirteen percent of respondents linked this constant flow of communication to time zones and the fact that students and teachers were often located in multiple time zones around the globe, as noted by one of the teacher interviewees.

That got quite intense though because of the time differences. I mean you're getting messages at like 2 o'clock on Saturday morning and things because you think well why am I getting this message and you realise well it's only 8 o'clock in Hong Kong or whatever. (TM2)

In addition, the nature of technology such as Microsoft Teams and other instant messaging applications resulted in heightened expectations of quick response times, leaving people unable to switch off.

Discrepancies in how people believed different modes should be used - e.g. most people don't expect an instant reply to an email, but many do expect a quicker response to a chat message on Teams. (QR)

One teacher interviewee, who lived for several years in China, reflected on the fast pace of messaging between his Chinese students and in China in general, particularly through the use of WeChat. He explained how there would likely be expectations from students regarding response times, which is something that would need to be managed.

Maybe that's another thing for the whole class contract thing because specially this generation of students they are used to instant messaging and everything is faster... like waiting three days for a reply to an email is anathema to them so some of that needs to be thought about. (TM1)

As a consequence of the facility for fast messaging and the potential expectation of immediate responses, 5.9% referred to the creation of guidelines regarding response times and appropriate messaging times for students and staff. This could also be managed by turning off notifications on phones and on Teams so as not to be disturbed outside of work hours or when unavailable to 'chat' or respond automatically. One interviewee explained the clear need for setting boundaries when communicating online.

Just learning to separate work life from home life because now it's just one continuous cycle, which doesn't stop neither of them. So one minute you're doing work the next minute you're emptying the dishwasher and then in the evening you finish dinner. You're working again, and then at the moment this is what it seems like. So maybe it's a good idea to just, really from the beginning set boundaries. So these are my working hours. This is my break. I think that is the worst thing, probably and I wish I'd done that from the beginning. Now I'm learning to do that as well, just sort of, set boundaries, so otherwise you'll be working all day long, all weekend. (TF2)

Despite these clear challenges in relation to the levels of communication online, the data revealed an appreciation for the enhanced communication that came about as a result of working online, with 15% of questionnaire respondents specifically highlighting the more regular occurrence of scheduled meetings as a useful strategy. Teachers seem to have participated in meetings with:

- Their assigned co-ordinator and a group of generally three to five other teachers
- Only their teaching colleagues
- The entire programme staff, including all colleagues, co-ordinators, managers, administrators

Managers and administrators also expressed a sense of increased communication, not only amongst the management team but with people across the institution. The weekly or sometimes daily meetings they attended involved the following people:

- Management team, including co-ordinators and materials designers
- Entire staff cohort
- Departmental leaders
- IT services
- International office
- Admissions

One manager explains why she felt frequent management team meetings were necessary:

When I got feedback [from staff], it was like two meetings a day, good god, but we needed it. It meant that nothing fell through the cracks, there was minimal communication. Because it was new, everything was moving so fast and everything had the potential to be a debacle. You felt like you were ten minutes away from some kind of disaster, sometimes. (MF2)

Some respondents also explained that not only were meetings more frequent, they were also more organised with the content of the meetings being more clearly defined beforehand to maintain a 'strict agenda'. One management questionnaire respondent refers to the notion of 'flipped meetings' where meeting participants would be sent relevant reading and information in advance of the meeting in order to improve their efficacy:

We had 'flipped' weekly meetings: sending out written instructions etc beforehand for teachers to read through, so the focus of the meetings was to answer questions/clarify etc. Less 'democratic' but it made everything clearer and meant we could check teachers knew what they were doing. (QR)

This regular communication did not only come in the form of synchronous meetings but also written forms, such as daily posts on the VLE, Teams, or SharePoint, weekly newsletters as well as emails.

Overall, there was a general sense that communication was faster and easier online with 22.7% respondents explicitly stating this to be the case. This was particularly noted in reference to the chat function on Microsoft Teams, for example, and the ability to gain a quick response to a quick question without the level of formality required by an email. One respondent explains how communication was better online.

Communication is actually better online because: 1. We introduced short daily meetings for management as 'coffee catch ups' that were non-work related which supported well-being; 2. We introduced short daily meetings for tutors which worked better than the weekly staff meeting 'dump' of information; 3 'Grabbing' team members for a quick catch up during the day was easy using Teams Chat or a video call - worked better than hunting round a building trying to find them! (QR)

Thus, it is clear that the online environment will bring the potential for increased amounts of communication that may be easier and faster and in various formats via various tools/platforms/applications (Roddy et al., 2017). Nevertheless, the expectations around communication will require prior thought and planning in order to ensure that there is not an information overload and that effective and efficient communications are facilitated.

5.3.5. Rapport-building

Key findings

- Communicating online can result in a lack of student engagement
- Communicating online can result in increased interactions for building stronger rapport between students and teachers, and amongst staff
- Spaces and opportunities for informal communication need to be facilitated e.g. through informal chat, informal meetings, online virtual staff rooms
- Social media and social media-like interactions can enhance communication and help establish relationships between individuals and groups

Communication has been defined as a system with the use of common symbols perceived by all senses in order to exchange meaning (Birdwhistell, 1970) and it is recognised as having two dimensions, namely verbal and nonverbal. Both aspects are believed to contribute to the expression of meaning and emotion and therefore support the formation of relationships, thus increasing the level of social presence and feeling of community in an online environment (Bolliger, 2009). As a result, when nonverbal cues are not available during asynchronous communication or calls without the use of video, building rapport might be seen to be more difficult. Seven per cent of respondents felt this to be the case with 5% referring specifically to the lack of ‘visual cues’, ‘body language’ and ‘physical expressions’. This was often due to students not putting on their cameras and therefore, teachers and students not being able to see people’s faces. This was mentioned by 9% of respondents and one described the result as teaching feeling ‘disembodied’ (QR). Another respondent referred to the ‘black wall of initials on Teams’ (QR), indicating the facelessness of online teaching without cameras. Online communication was also referred to as ‘cold’ and ‘formal’, with a ‘lack of warmth’ and ‘collegiate atmosphere’ amongst staff, potentially another consequence of the lack of nonverbal cues that can be a consequence of a ‘faceless’ form of communication.

Nevertheless, this feeling of coldness was not always the case, particularly as it was felt that community was established online (see later section), and research relating to the necessity of visual cues and cameras does not support our assumptions. Walther (2011) builds rather a convincing argument surrounding this and argues that we should be prudent in our rush to plug in cameras. He (ibid) further points out that some may prefer the nonvisual communication the online environment can provide, and this is echoed by one of the teachers (TM3), who explained that some students in particular might feel more comfortable with their cameras off as they may be conscious about their appearance. Alternatively, one respondent noted that students seemed to be more interactive online than face-to-face potentially because they ‘felt more protected when behind a screen’. Indeed, 8% specifically stated that they believed communication and interactions with students were more

successful online. This was particularly discussed in relation to one-to-one meetings which were additionally enhanced by the ability to share screens and documents for discussing written work.

Another indication of where online communication might have been advantageous was with those students who were seen as 'shy'. Some people noted that shy students appeared to communicate more successfully online, with one respondent stating that it 'suited some students very well and some quieter ones flourished in the online classroom vs on campus classroom' (QR). This notion is corroborated by Arasaratnam-Smith and Northcote (2017), who state that, even 'the most socially awkward and reclusive person could be the most vocal and assertive in presenting his/her opinions, if s/he is confident in written articulation' in an online setting (p. 192). This is where the multiple forms of communication that an online setting provides can again be seen as advantageous (Roddy et al., 2017). Students are not restricted to oral communication and can interact in other ways, such as in the chat box, in forums and threads, through messages and emails (Roddy et al., 2017). This provided students with the additional opportunity to practise important writing skills like composing formal emails and informal messages through Teams, as highlighted by 5%. This is an advantage of e-learning and discussion boards acknowledged by other scholars (e.g. Aloni & Harrington, 2018; Kimlova & Poulouva, 2011). Several respondents felt these writing skills would be important skills for students' main course, particularly being able to write 'appropriately worded and formatted emails'.

This also applied to staff communication, with 5% of respondents commenting that they were more thoughtful and precise when it came to composing emails or messages, making them more effective than before. When the usual face-to-face interaction is not always an option, it may cause people to explore other ways and be more considerate in their communication, as one respondent explained: 'We explored different modes of communication, it caused us to examine the importance of clarity of message' (QR). It is therefore possible that rapport-building was enhanced as a result of increased opportunities for alternative forms of communication in the online setting.

In contrast, 7% of respondents detailed the lack of informal chit-chat and spontaneous encounters as impacting on both the atmosphere of the classroom and the interactions amongst staff. In reference to challenges of online communication, one respondent provided some detail, which seems mostly to relate to relationships between staff impacted by the lack of opportunity for informal interaction:

- 1) *Apart from video conferencing, no body language etc to help interpret tone and any communication suddenly became more formal - couldn't just pop into an office or talk in the kitchen or in passing about a quick query. Meetings were scheduled or emails sent instead - difficult for informal wellbeing/ how are your conversations to happen.*
- 2) *People might have felt 'safer' or more removed and therefore were more aggressive or rude in their communications at times.*
- 3) *You only get a snapshot of the mood of an individual at the time of communication, not of the team as a whole like you can get with everyone being all together in an office every day.* (QR)

Three other respondents also referred to a sense of 'passive-aggression' amongst staff online. Other comments echoed this inability to read people's emotions online, particularly lamenting the loss of the staff room and the chance to 'let off steam' amongst colleagues. Online communication was also generally seen as a 'new' way of communicating, with new skills to learn such as netiquette, turn-

taking and dealing with time lags. This new communication was seen to have an effect on student engagement and even result in a reduction of interaction, or even miscommunication.

With the challenges online communication brought, strategies were sought to mitigate them, some of which are detailed in the Community section below. As has been mentioned, the informality of Teams was helpful in this aspect, particularly in its similarity to social media:

Teams has quite a 'social media' feel for it, so in some ways it allows much more immediate, 'friendly' communication with students. Students in some ways have been more responsive, as they tend to 'respond' readily to social media-type communication, with emojis etc, so the immediate feedback is useful. Surprisingly this allowed us to build what felt like quite a dynamic 'community'. (QR)

WhatsApp was specifically mentioned as a way to better connect teachers:

So I created a WhatsApp group for everyone so we could communicate, it was just easier and faster... We were assigned a co-ordinator so if you had questions you would arrange a meeting with the coordinator and ask them. They were really responsive... but you just had those little questions from now and then. It's just like one question. It takes like one second to answer... so that was quicker to have a WhatsApp group so I added all the teachers there and we used to communicate through this WhatsApp group. We still are in touch actually on the WhatsApp group. (TM3)

Slack and WeChat were also mentioned, WeChat particularly in relation to students from China as a form of 'backchannel communication' (TM1). One interviewee coordinator explained how he felt Slack helped to improve rapport between the team.

We moved on to Slack so we made most of our communication asynchronous as well... we might have the occasional Zoom meeting once a month or once every six weeks, but we talk on the chat thread everyday so we don't really feel there's a need to. So that was brilliant as well. I mean, again, if we went back to the office tomorrow Slack, we would keep, it's phenomenal in that you can share files. You can, we build rapport we got to know each other better than we would have done if we were in separate offices on campus. (CM1)

This notion of social media applications facilitating the building of rapport is supported by a recent research study amongst Chinese university students using WeChat where it was found that usage of the application correlated with quality of friendship (Amosun et al., 2021), as suggested here by our participants.

Not only was social media referred to in terms of effective communication tools but also in relation to the style of communication, which could be achieved through social media applications but also through Teams and Zoom. Three percent of respondents described social media-like interactions as a successful strategy for communication:

"Social-media-like" interactions (responding to posts, using emojis and gifs) made students feel they were in touch with programme staff and other students. (QR)

Aldunate and Gonzalez-Ibanez's (2017) research indicates that emoticons have the power to 'affect decisions, mood, or perspective of the conversation' and can enhance communication through providing a fun element to written text as well as decoding ambiguous text. These are important advantages of online communication that could be harnessed moving forward. They also help to illustrate that building rapport amongst people in the online environment is necessary for mitigating the loss of the 'human aspect' that some associate with online communication.

5.3.6. Logistics

Key findings

- Some communication that is impossible face-to-face owing to logistical issues becomes possible in an online context
- Communicating online presents important opportunities in terms of accessibility for shared practice
- Grouping individuals into smaller teams can facilitate online communication

The ability to teach a course or manage a course from your own bedroom, living room, whatever with people all over the world in similar circumstances in their own homes is pretty cool. If you'd told this to my 20 year old self I would've thought oh that's not a bad existence. (MM1)

This overall positive impression of the logistical advantages offered by online working and communication is supported throughout the data. Six per cent of respondents explained that communication was logistically easier as there was no need to all be in the same physical location and therefore, no need to book rooms for meetings or classes. In some instances, communication that would not have been possible face-to-face became possible online:

Possible to get more people together without worrying about room booking/room size e.g. we could have an online progression ceremony of all students which would not be possible face to face as we don't have a big enough space. (QR)

Another participant explained how they now had 'more opportunities to get all staff together as [they] were beginning to be restricted by the space of [their] rooms' (QR). Four per cent also appreciated the opportunity to communicate with staff and students whilst working in their own home and even from different global locations. One respondent particularly expressed their appreciation for the simpler logistical aspects of working from home:

No logistical disasters such as not being able to find the room on campus etc. Not having to share a cramped working space with other teachers. (QR)

Six per cent specifically noted the flexibility which online communication afforded, while 4% highlighted accessibility and the ability to communicate with a wider audience, themes that are typically associated with distance education (Veletsianos & Houlden, 2019) and remote working (Angelici & Profeta, 2020).

Getting to grips with the technology has been challenging, but it has accelerated moves towards new ways of working which would have taken years without the pandemic. We are all upskilled and I for one am looking forward to a much more flexible work life going forward. (QR)

Thus, it is clear a number of opportunities have emerged and perhaps expedited some of the changes that would have come eventually. One respondent explained how no longer needing to go physically to meet with someone to communicate meant that their communication with members in other parts of the university was better online than it ever had been face-to-face.

Ability to "chat" or video call over teams with any colleague either within the ELC or even in other parts of the Uni. Much more immediate and I found myself making contact with a wider range of colleagues than previously. (QR)

There was also the sense that staff were more in control of communication through being online. Two per cent of respondents stated that they could be more productive owing to all colleagues working from home. One interviewee (AF1) explains how she found it 'much easier' working from home as there were fewer distractions. Previously, she said, 'you could do an entire day of no work at all' because of people disturbing your work (AF1). Time was also saved through not having to commute, as mentioned by 3%, thus allowing more time for work and vital communications.

Another important aspect of work and communication which became accessible to some as a result of the shift online was the opportunity to engage in shared practice. Six per cent of respondents highlighted this in their comments:

Collaborating with staff has become easier and I've been able to attend more workshops now I don't have to walk 20 minute across campus to do so. (QR)

Three per cent specifically noted the increased ability to attend workshops and conferences for CPD, while 7% were grateful that meetings were recorded and there was a record of all written communications, making all information available at all times:

A record of communication is centrally stored - this has added benefits for cases where cover is required and staff can see what has been discussed and access all files on one place - individual emails between staff and students were discouraged. (QR)

In contrast to this positive view of the logistical opportunities afforded by online communication, there were also a number of logistical difficulties identified, particularly in relation to managing classes, which is expanded upon in more detail in the delivery section. Nevertheless, some of the challenges identified referred to trying to manage large classes online, monitoring their work and discussions,

and navigating new ways of turn-taking and netiquette in the online environment. In relation to this, a study by Lee and Martin (2017) found that students preferred working in smaller groups online while Hew and Cheung (2010b) discovered that the larger a group is online, the less inclined people feel to contribute. It might be the case that such findings also apply to staff when working and discussing in groups online. 4% of questionnaire respondents and four interviewees referred to putting teachers into smaller groups of four or five led by a coordinator as a management model that successfully facilitated online communication. As ManagerF2 concluded, 'I think you have to sub-divide the team when you're online. It wouldn't work doing the big team.' One teacher explains this model.

The coordinators reconfigured it so that five or six teachers have their own coordinator who was always on hand to support us through any sort of technology issues, um, so that I felt that was made a huge difference to the smooth working of the course. I don't know how the coordinators felt, 'cause obviously they were working even harder than we were. (TF1)

The role of coordinators really seems to have come to the fore here with one questionnaire respondent stating, 'The coordinators of the programme always came up with solutions to tech issues'. This is corroborated by one of the interviewees:

We'd already decided we'd move to a different management model where we'd group teachers in a group of no more than ten and give them their own coordinator who was their problem solver supreme and online that was utterly necessary but we would have done it face-to-face anyway and those people also became tech wizards through trial and error. (CDF1)

This forming of smaller groups seems to have made the logistics of sharing and communicating with colleagues more manageable and encouraged peer support between staff. One institution with very large numbers of staff separated teachers into five different virtual staff rooms.

Each teacher and student on the pre-sessional was placed into one of 5 staffrooms. This meant you only had to communicate on a regular basis with around 20% of the workforce over the summer, including your direct line manager and teaching partner. You did not need to do anything with the other 80% unless you happened to meet them in virtual 'tea, biscuits and banter' afternoons. (QR)

Another management respondent explained the rationale for splitting tutors into small groups:

We set up 'buddy groups' of 4-5 teachers each with mixed experience (of the course, online teaching, permanent/temp staff). These proved to be mini-support networks and teachers naturally used these as their first port of call for questions, checking understanding, sharing ideas and materials, lesson planning, discussing issues. This created the support teachers needed and reduced the number questions directed at myself and the course co-lead. (QR)

In addition to small groups, there also seemed to be increased possibilities for one-to-ones or small group support in the form of drop-in sessions. The data does not always indicate if this is between coordinators and teachers, or teachers and students, or coordinators and managers, but 5% of respondents referred to this aspect as a strategy and four interviewees described the inclusion of one-

to-one communication between coordinators and teachers to provide additional support, mostly with technology challenges. One curriculum developer explained this provision.

I think the coordinators running their little cluster teams so they had live check-ins two or three times a week so that's quite intimate and they were pretty much 24/7 responsive. (CDF1)

Thus, the importance of the role coordinators played is certainly highlighted here in terms of being the port of call and providing support for a group of teachers. Grouping colleagues in this way seems to have been a successful model and several interviewees stated they would continue with this, even in the event of a return to face-to-face provision.

5.3.7. Section Summary

The shift online brought with it many challenges to everyday communication, including grappling with new technology and new modes of interaction. Nevertheless, the change was considered successful and many aspects of communication online will surely be retained. While the increased frequency of communication was overwhelming at times, people found ways to manage this and embraced technology to enhance their communications with other members of staff. A return to face-to-face meetings and having to book meeting rooms to do this is unlikely to occur, as the fast, flexible and easy form of communication online has been much appreciated.

5.4. Preparation and Support

We just had to jump into a brave new world online. My colleague and I supported each other, and that was the main way we coped. (QR)

5.4.1. Overview

In a review of the literature looking into the issues and challenges for teaching successful online courses in higher education, Kebritchi et al. (2017) reached the following conclusion:

Higher education institutions need to provide professional development for instructors, trainings for learners, and technical support for the content development and delivery of online courses to address the challenges in online education and enhance the effectiveness of online teaching and learning. (p.21)

This might seem rather obvious, but in an Emergency Remote Teaching scenario, was this always possible? The data reveal that in most cases, to a greater or lesser extent, it was, but there are certainly lessons to be learnt.

5.4.2. Community

Key findings

- 90% regarded colleagues as a source of support
- 77% felt part of a community with colleagues online
- Coordinators played a key role in creating a sense of community
- Some respondents did not feel their voices had been heard, particularly by management

At no point during the course did I feel isolated from my colleagues and I always knew that if I needed to ask a question or talk to someone I could. (QR)

The data show that participants received support from a variety of sources though the emphasis on the need for technological support is evident with 76.3% depending on IT and technical support services and 49.2% turning to online training programmes. As McRae (in Mavridi & Xerri, 2020) confirms, any kind of online learning demands the support of an IT team as a ‘basic requirement.’ However, most importantly, the respondents felt they gained support from each other, as illustrated by [Figure 19](#) below, and by the consistent mention of this throughout the answers to open-ended questions. Almost 90% of respondents indicated that they gained support from their colleagues and a sense of community really permeates the data.

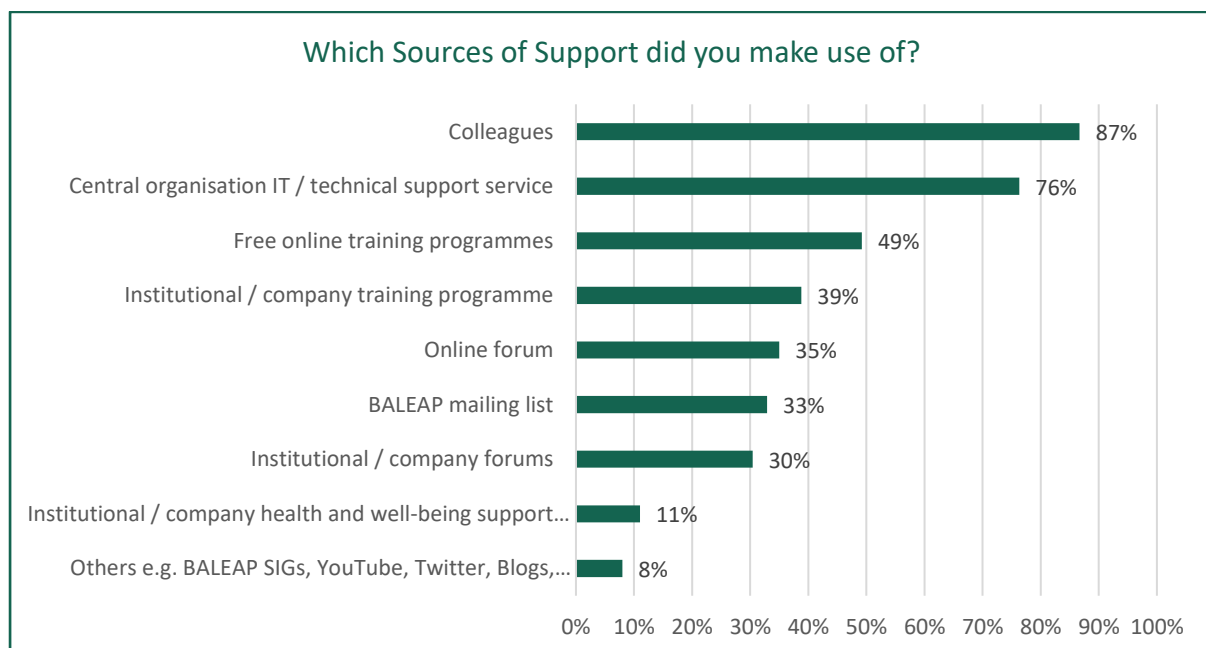


Figure 19: Sources of support

5.4.3. Sources of Support

According to Palloff and Pratt (2007), ‘The social constructivist context wherein the group works together to actively create knowledge and meaning becomes the vehicle through which learning occurs online and is a critical component of the process of online work’ (p.18). In other words,

interaction, teamwork and collaboration are essential factors for establishing an online community, and community is essential for online course success.

One practical way in which community was established was through the inclusion of extra-curricular activities, for both staff and students. Such activities are highlighted in the work of Spencer-Oatey and Williams (2014) as tools for enhancing a sense of belonging, integration and well-being. In line with this, Hodges et al. (2020) stress that, for students, lessons and lectures are only 'one instructional aspect of an overall ecosystem specifically designed to support learners with formal, informal and social resources' (p.6). It is clear in the data that many efforts were made to facilitate these co-curricular and other social supports for all concerned. For staff there were virtual staff rooms, quizzes, virtual tea breaks, and other themed online events. For students, there were activities and meetings offered in relation to library resources, career services, and health and well-being services while more social, informal events included:

- Watch parties of films
- Group discussions
- Virtual 10k race
- Flipgrid recipes
- Flipgrid stories
- Post a photo of where you've been this week
- Book club
- Conversation club
- Language exchange
- Cultural exchange through Teams channel posts
- Quiz
- Virtual tours

One teacher, who had taught on the same EAP programme for many years previously but face-to-face, felt that students connected more online and had more learning opportunities than they normally would, particularly about culture and other countries:

Community was built among students both in terms of the EAP tasks that they were set to work in pairs or threes or fours, and also in terms of some of the more social activities that were set up so again, you know the students got a strong sense that they were building friendships and they were able to sort of talk about their own culture much more than we have time for by teaching face to face. (TF1)

This was particularly facilitated through the discussions in Teams channels, a format which has been found to be effective in other research studies (see [Aloni & Harrington, 2018](#)). One of the managers also acknowledged the possibility that students connected better online but explained that this did take more effort to achieve and was not perhaps as natural as it would be face-to-face; they had to engineer ways to engender the community spirit, particularly through the inclusion of social events and 'coursework that necessitated student interaction outside of the class' (MM1). Another manager also highlighted the importance of collaborative activities within the curriculum for establishing community:

A lot of the asynchronous stuff was asking them to do group work, and so I think within the class, the module leads worked really hard to create that sense of community so they would post things like this week, post a photo of where you've been for a walk or something like that and we've got essentially a self-access area, but it's called the language zone and they do a lot of work with this around extra language learning opportunities so they have a conversation club, book club, chat and they set up their own teams. All students could go to that. They did a lot of work with us this summer to sort of create a wider sense of community. (MF1)

Thus, for students, a combination of collaborative and interactive curriculum activities in addition to informal, social events can be helpful for creating a student community online.

While the data do not give a great deal of insight into students' sense of community on their EAP programmes, and this certainly requires further investigation, they did reveal a sense of the staff communities created online. Respondents were asked to rate their level of agreement with the statement 'I felt part of a community online with colleagues', and 77% responded in the affirmative, clearly highlighting a sense of community was successfully established (see [Figure 20](#)).

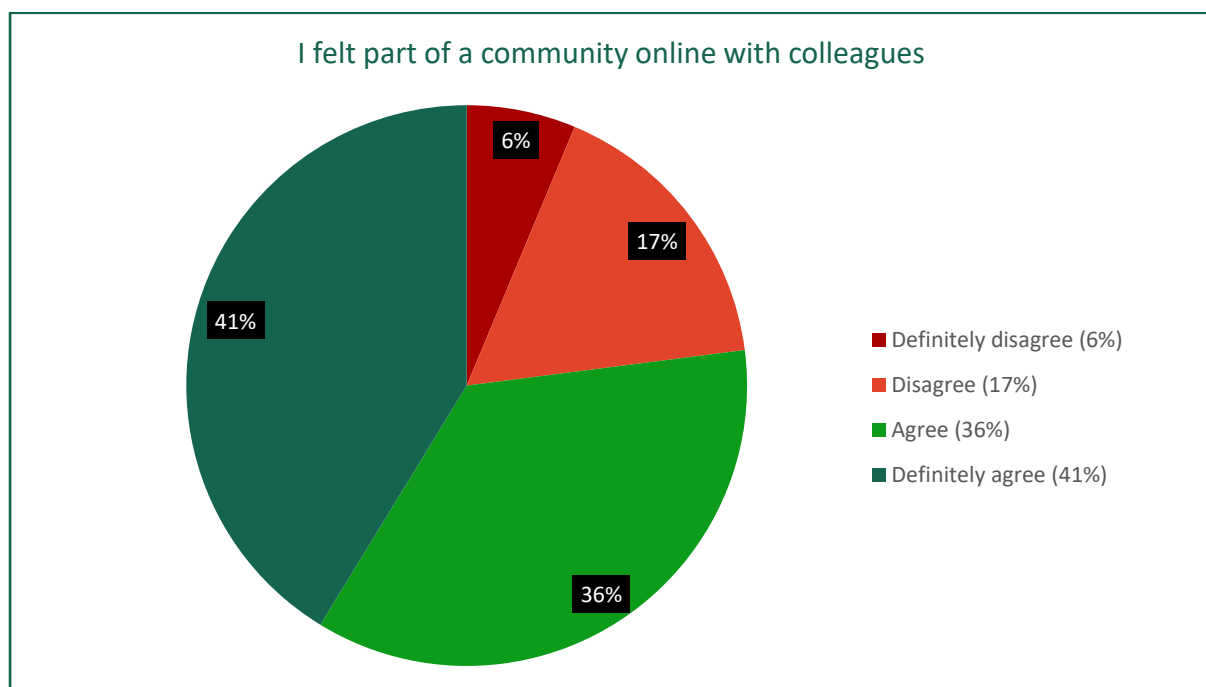


Figure 20: Community feeling amongst colleagues

This positive feeling was reflected in the interviews where ten interviewees referred to various aspects of community and efforts to bring staff together to form a team online. This was perhaps mostly achieved through staff willingness to share and help one another. One teacher (TM2) refers to the notion of 'staff bubbles' through which teachers could 'share ideas and experiences'. Another teacher explained how one teacher who knew how to use Teams came to the rescue when they switched to this platform part way through the programme:

However, because you had a fairly good community people would support each other quite well and I remember a guy he liked to do Teams, he probably had a bit of experience before the pre-sessional and he was like, right guys if you want, just like tutor to tutor, let's do a practice if anyone wants to join us. (TM1)

This collegial spirit amongst teachers was noticed by managers who expressed their appreciation for their teachers working together so well: 'Our team of teachers were exceptional; and at times like these you need to draw on a collegiate spirit' (QR). However, as with the students, this community may have taken some effort to build and three of the interviewees point to the coordinators' role in facilitating this.

The coordinators are wonderful and they always have been, but the fact that they managed this huge transition this year and managed it so well because quite frankly they should be rolling out courses to academic staff, because they [the coordinators] know how to build community and they know how important it is not to just focus on how to write an essay, all the nitty gritty bits and pieces which are part of the EAP course. But most importantly, they built a learning community in a very short period of time. (TF1)

This insight indicates that staff also recognised the importance of an online community and appreciated it. Another interviewee (TM1) understands how challenging this may have been for coordinators to help establish a community online, particularly as it was something they also were not accustomed to doing. Thus, there is a sense that creating a community had to be intentional and effort had to be made in order to achieve this; it would not simply 'happen', the same way it cannot be assumed it simply happens if everyone is together physically in the same room.

Nevertheless, not everyone felt part of a community and 6% expressed that they definitely did not. One manager (MF1) acknowledged that at her institution, 'A lot of people did express that they missed the presence and the collegiality.' Another teacher explained how he was new to the university while his colleagues had previously taught there, so the challenge of breaking into the community was exacerbated by the online medium, unable to go for lunch together or join in social events (TM3). One teacher tried to explain what is lost through the move online:

I think that was beyond technology really. If something kind of just goes from a physical environment where you can see people and chat after the lesson with them, and suddenly you only see them for that one hour behind the computer screen, the dynamic just changes completely, whether you're using Zoom or Skype or whatever. I mean people are kind of used to looking at computer screens. In a way the kind of technology thing is a red herring really. I don't think that's the real issue. It's something more intangible going on really. (TM2)

Despite some participants struggling to feel part of a community in an online setting, there was still the recognition that this community spirit amongst colleagues was needed in order to survive the 'baptism of fire', as one respondent named it. Another questionnaire entry highlighted the fact that, for some, colleagues may have been their only source of support because higher up the hierarchy, people were just trying to keep everything going:

No preparation was possible given the speed of shutdown. Support was limited because everyone was stressed, and those who were in management positions did not appear to be able to help with the issues causing stress, as they themselves were struggling with the technical demands. Peer support was vital. (QR)

There was some frustration expressed with management style amongst respondents, with 4% stating that managers did not consult others regarding decisions and that 'teachers were ignored'. One manager acknowledged this, stating that there were comments made that people 'felt that there should have been more presence from higher up leadership' (MF1). One teacher recognised that managers might not always have had the flexibility to manage the challenges faced by teachers, as they too were receiving directions from higher up the hierarchy:

You might get a direction from the top which is, we demand this and other people, like the people nearer the ground are thinking like that's just not realistic. (TM1)

It is likely that university leadership teams had little understanding of what was occurring for teachers 'at the Zoom face' (QR). This frustration also came through with some feeling their challenging home situations in the midst of a pandemic had not been adequately considered, which could have left them feeling less like part of a community:

The two weeks of preparation were wholly inadequate and there was insufficient support for people's mental and physical mental health (staff and students). There was little thought given by the institution to people's home working conditions - the adequacy of their work station, internet connection and caring responsibilities. There was an expectation that we would just get on with it, without considering the impact. (QR)

Amongst managers, there was a certain feeling that perhaps for the first time, the EAP team was seen as an important part of the university community. There was support offered to them from a variety of other areas of the institution, such as the IT department and university leadership team (MF1). In return, the EAP teams offered support to the rest of the university, as mentioned by three interviewees. Since online EAP programmes were rolled out earlier than other programmes in the university, EAP colleagues were in a position to share their insights and expertise to others who would be delivering online modules in September on the main degree programmes:

[We] have done quite a few sessions for the sort of online for the wider University community about how we've used the technology, how we've built in collaborative work, how we've tried to create a sense of community. (MF1)

This collaboration appeared to contribute to the raised profile of EAP in the institution, an area which perhaps beforehand lacked visibility or importance. It may also have created a sense of 'flattened hierarchy', as mentioned by two managers:

The university was freaking out and the big thing was, are the international students gonna come? So everyone was in the same position, so suddenly, everyone really cared what we thought. Everyone really cared that we were there and that we were ready. And everyone

really cared that we were good, that the students weren't gonna rock up, and that we were gonna offer some shoddy thing. Suddenly everybody cared about pre-sessional. Suddenly we were involved in quite a lot of conversations and there wasn't this kind of squeeze on resources that there sometimes tends to be. (MF2)

Overall, the general feeling was one of teamwork and communal achievement, something which would not have been possible if it were not for people's willingness to share and work together, as a community:

It was a stressful time, but I think we survived and thrived in the end because we were open and honest about problems with communication and were all working to our strengths, supporting each other with our weaknesses, and pulling together in the same direction. (QR)

5.4.4. Training

Key findings

- 66% felt adequately prepared to carry out their roles online
- 90% received some form of training
- Training was skewed towards technology and did not provide enough focus on online pedagogy
- For those involved in ERT, and for managers and coordinators particularly, there simply was no time for training or it came too late

The majority of participants (66%) felt prepared to carry out their work online, which appears positive given the short timeframe many were working with. Nevertheless, 34% of respondents reported that they did not feel prepared, which may have contributed to an overall negative experience.

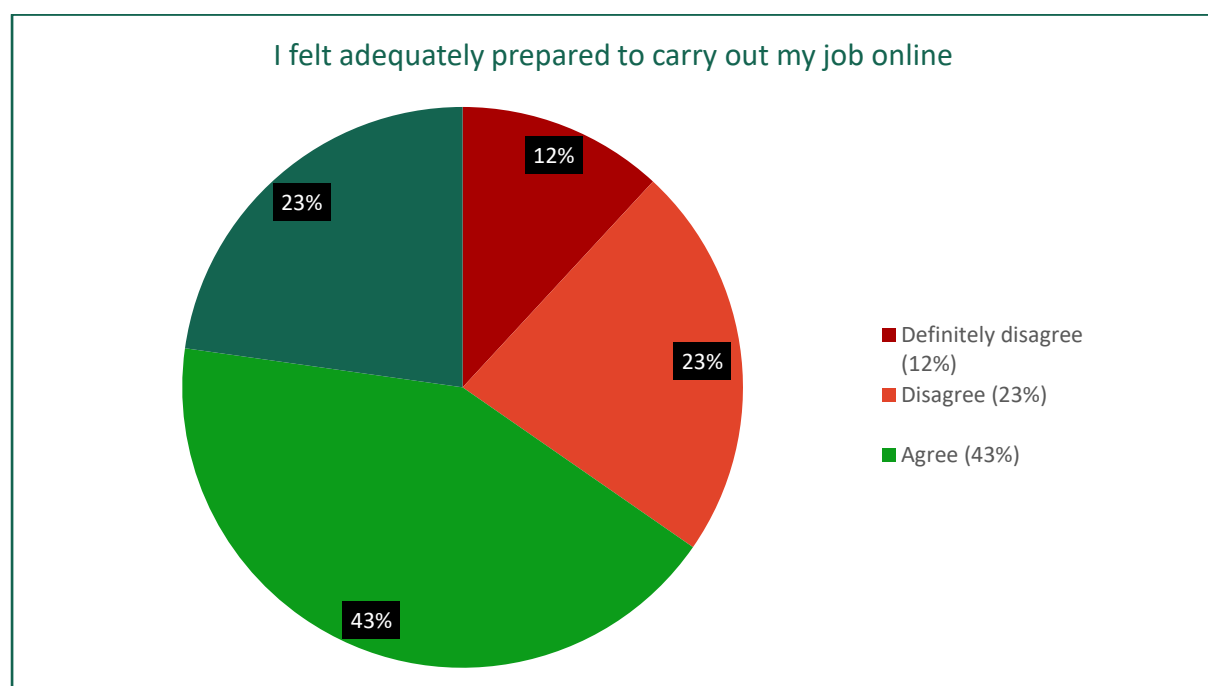


Figure 21: Preparedness for job

Six per cent of questionnaire respondents alluded to the fact that there simply was not enough time to feel prepared, particularly for those having to transition to teaching online over the course of a weekend. Thus, the fact that 90% of respondents reported having received some training, is a testament to the extra work which colleagues put in to prepare for the remote delivery. The content of this training is displayed in [Figure 22](#), which shows both the aspects of training respondents received and the aspects of training they would have liked more input on.

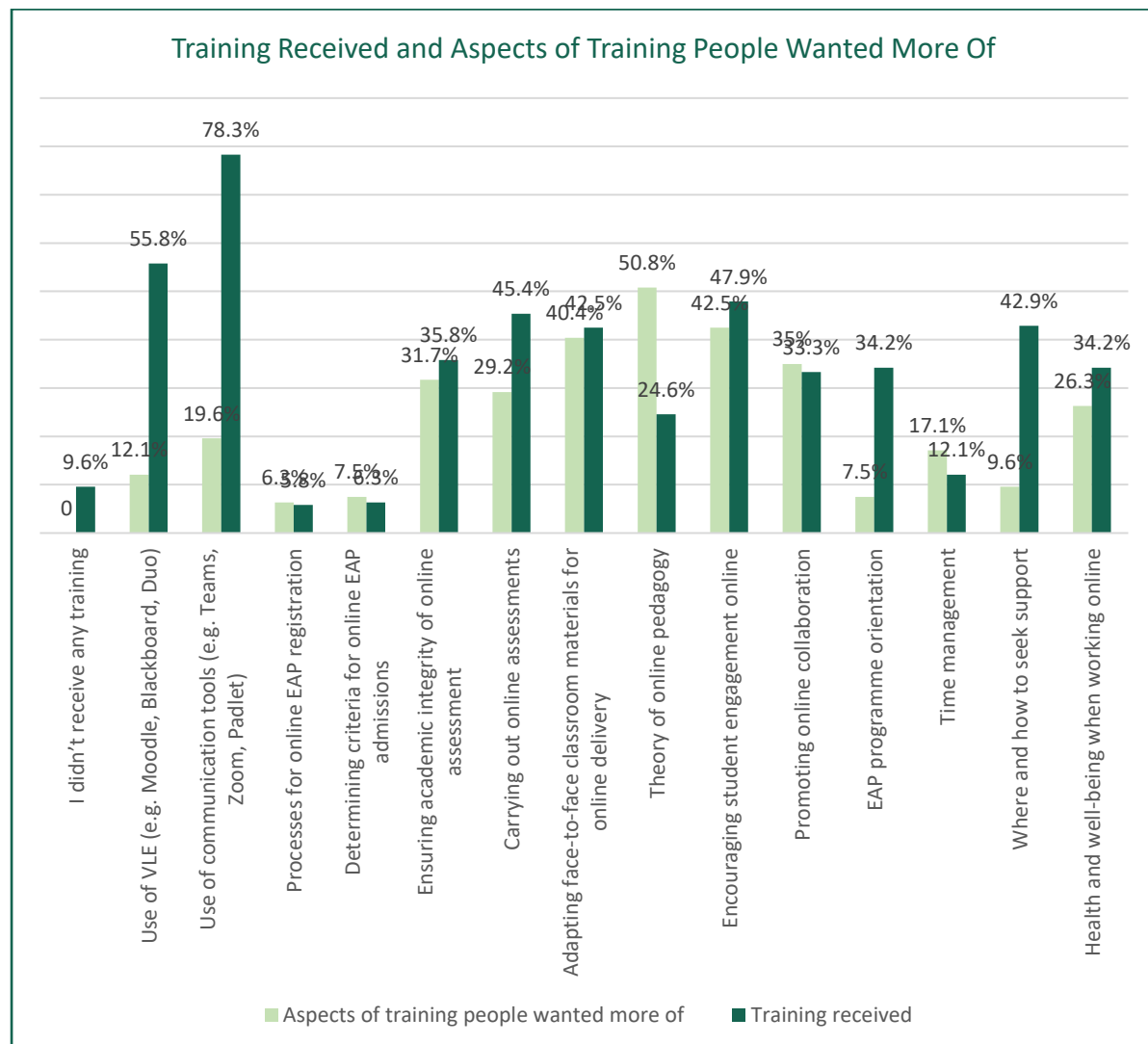


Figure 22: Training

One aspect of significance here is the lack of focus on online pedagogy. While 78.3% received training for online communication tools and 55.8% for the VLE, only 24.6% of respondents reported having input on the theory of online pedagogy. More than half of respondents selected this as an aspect of training they would have liked more input on, highlighting their recognition of its importance. A further 42.5% stated they would have liked more guidance on how to engage students online. One teacher in the interview corroborated this focus of training being skewed towards the technology and less so the pedagogy:

I think it was definitely more focused on the tech, on using the VLE and using Collaborate and then a lot about the courses and what we're teaching in the content and the kind of design of it and the assessments and things. So, actually how to do it and how to put into practice and how to engage students online, I think that was a bit more implicit in sort of some of the peer support that we were given so no, we didn't have so much about theories of online learning. (TM1)

Incidentally, this teacher's institution soon switched from the VLE to Teams, which meant all the technology training then became redundant. Englund et al. (2017, p. 73) highlight the importance of understanding not only how to *use* the technology but rather how to *teach* with it, referring to 'the competence of teachers to know why, when and how best to implement educational technologies' as being a critical factor in their successful implementation. Yet, in this rush to move online, this vital background may in many cases have been missed, an omission reflected by Prevatt-Goldstein and Thomas (2021) in their account at UCL. One questionnaire respondent echoed this sentiment:

I was not trained as a digital pedagogue, and I know very little about it. We pride ourselves on our ability to do our job, and having to suddenly do a completely different job without really knowing what to do, and not recognising the impacts that will have on both physical and mental well-being is going to have long term effects that I think we are yet to see. (QR)

In Howard's (2013) research working with teachers and integration of digital technologies, he notes that 'teachers' identities are at stake when they are asked to make significant changes to their teaching practice', and this does seem to have been the case for some participants, one of whom commented, 'I'm a different teacher when I teach online and I don't like that teacher'. A coordinator explained their thoughts on the teachers who struggled the most:

The greatest challenge was supporting those teachers who had been resisting the use of tech in their practice for many years and suddenly couldn't opt out any more. Those teachers who had embraced these opportunities and were more open to trying new practices coped much better. (QR)

This further echoes Howard's (2013) assertion that it is essential to engage teachers carefully and considerately in technology for teaching so they are less likely to 'resist the change with the heat of emotion'. Unfortunately, the Covid-19 pandemic and the consequent switch to online teaching in an ERT scenario did not really allow for this careful and considerate approach. The issue of professional identity is covered in [section 5.1](#).

Nevertheless, in spite of the challenges, most notably, lack of time, the vast majority of teachers did receive some form of training. Only 4.5% of teachers reported receiving no training. Given the challenging circumstances, the fact that some training provision was available seems to have been appreciated. Five per cent of questionnaire respondents specifically expressed their appreciation regarding the preparation and support they received, recognising the time pressure and demand that must have been placed on managers and coordinators to provide this in time. Expectations perhaps were also lower, as many were struggling just to get through the various scenarios the pandemic was

creating, and some were simply grateful to still be working. One respondent's comment in particular gives this impression.

I have to add that given the circumstances, they did all they could. I am grateful that the teaching was able to be done, i.e. I had a job and got paid, any comment seems a little churlish alongside the efforts made, but, feedback is vital for improvement of course...(QR)

However, 5% of respondents commented that they had to rely on their own initiative, as no training or inadequate training was provided. One respondent explained.

All training that I did was initiated by myself, there were no directives/instructions/resources compiled by my employer, so I relied entirely on my own intrinsic motivation and knowledge about resources to access for training and CPD purposes. (QR)

In the case of managers and coordinators, their new online roles were carried out with much less training, with 12% of managers and 25% of coordinators reporting having had no training at all. This is reflected in the interviews where eight of the interviewees referred to aspects of their roles that changed throughout the period, sometimes quite radically, making it rather predictable that they particularly may not have been adequately trained or prepared for the roles they found themselves in. One teacher (TM2), for instance, found himself in the role of materials developer, responsible for transforming the face-to-face materials into online materials. A coordinator (CF1) described her typical role as 'course leader' responsible for 'the operational side of things', but in 2020 she also found herself writing materials because there was 'just so much to write'. In addition, a curriculum designer noted that she did 'a lot of admin' while a teacher (TF1) explained how coordinators were suddenly required to have a lot of 'technical knowhow' in order to respond to teachers' questions, and this left them 'doing an awful lot more than they should have been'.

Thus, with such a shift in roles, it is perhaps surprising that so many (66%) did feel prepared for the jobs they had to carry out, which, in some cases, were quite different to their roles pre-Covid-19 or indeed, the roles they had expected or were trained for. This is again testament to people's resilience during this trying period.

5.4.5. Continuing Professional Development (CPD)

Key findings

- 57% had adequate opportunity to engage in CPD online
- CPD was not always tailored to the programme and so was not always particularly useful
- Many felt like they were engaged in CPD every day, even just through doing their job because everything was new

What began as quite a scary unknown space (I am not an online teacher!) has become quite normal now, I feel happy and confident teaching online and feel it provides accessibility,

flexibility, opportunities for collaboration and very purposeful communication and knowledge building. (QR)

Again, despite the rapid rollout of EAP programmes between March and September 2020, the majority of participants (57%) still felt they had adequate opportunity for CPD, though admittedly, 36% of this majority only ‘mostly agreed’ (see [Figure 23](#)). One respondent interestingly pointed out that during this shift online, just doing the job was like CPD itself, as everything was new and a ‘steep learning curve’, a phrase adopted by three respondents:

Due to time issues, I didn't have the opportunity to take on CPD. However, the experience of the work was CPD as it was. (QR)

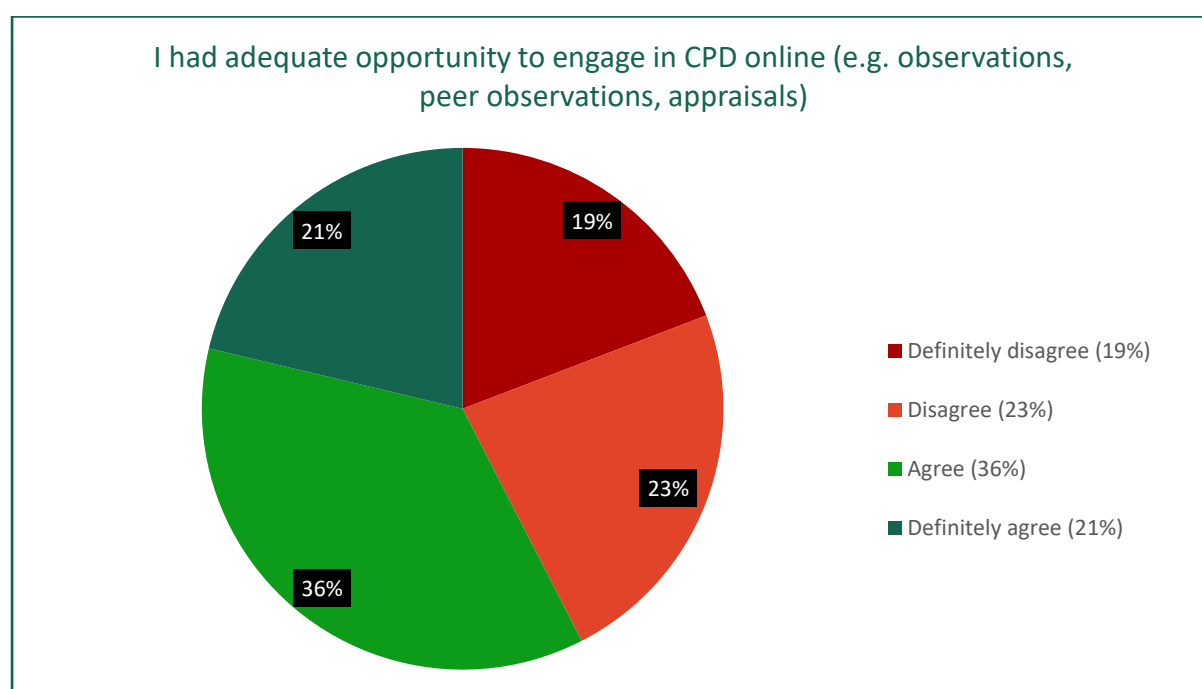


Figure 23: Opportunities for CPD

Various CPD activities are mentioned in the qualitative data. One interviewee (MF1) whose centre usually runs a short conference during the EAP programme, decided they would go ahead with an online version, with two synchronous plenaries and the rest asynchronous with an ensuing discussion on Teams. Another interviewee explained that she did not feel observations could be carried out because everything was new to everyone but diagnostic questionnaires were used instead to see how everyone was coping:

Basically, we said we won't do teacher observations because we thought everyone would be so anxious about teaching online, teaching on Teams and we didn't know much about it either so we would be fairly hypocritical to be judging people beyond a baseline so we thought right, because about half the teachers are returners anyway we'll banish the idea of observations. (CDF1)

One manager explained how he felt creating a community amongst staff was more important for CPD than any CPD workshops he could offer:

You learn a lot more from your colleagues than you do from that one or two days of CPD that the management have to provide and working to facilitate communication between the teachers was something that I was aware of the need of and it worked to some extent. But the problem is that the more experienced teacher, you know particularly the ones with kids, they finish class and they go back, right and previously that type of teacher would've at least passed the less experienced teacher in the hall or at the photocopier and those interactions were really invaluable for the less experienced teacher so to force it I paired teachers in a way that I wouldn't normally. (MM1)

Again, the notion of community comes to the fore here and the importance of creating opportunities for sharing. This is reflective of Heath's (2021) approach at the University of Leeds, where 'promoting a community of practice' amongst staff was seen as the number one solution to the challenges the shift online brought. Heath (2021) reports how Teams was used to incorporate collaborative activities and sharing of tips and technical issues to facilitate collaborative professional development and knowledge construction. This was felt to have been successful, and this notion of sharing practice appears to have been the dominant approach to CPD in our data.

Another example of this is provided by a curriculum developer, who recognised her teachers were her resource and she had to exploit the knowledge from within the team:

On our staff team we created a 'how to' channel where we got people to start recording one minute videos of anything they'd learnt, that worked for them to share. The cluster teams of small groups of teachers which we made them meet like three times a week and I think there were five or six in a cluster so I think a lot of upskilling went on there and you use your resources because you find out, ok somebody's got a teacher who knows way more about this, talk to them. At one point I got a teacher who seemed very happy, I got him to talk me through what he'd been doing in week one, show me around his team and even clip screen. I didn't know how to clip screen, I learnt it from a teacher, I started showing everyone. (CDF1)

As Shelton and Saltsman (2004) explain, 'even experienced online instructors can glean helpful and time-saving ideas from tips shared by other instructors'. This kind of sharing, between teachers, coordinators, curriculum writers, managers and so on, seems to have been key during this tense time. Suddenly, nobody was the expert and it appears to have been accepted that everybody, regardless of their position, had something to contribute and something to learn. This notion is corroborated in [Longwell's \(2020\)](#) helpful reflection of his EAP teaching experience at Sheffield in 2020.

On the other hand, not every CPD comment was positive, and seven respondents did state that any CPD provided at the institutional level was 'not great' or even 'useless'. The general reason for this was that videos or training had been provided for the entire university and not specifically for EAP or any one subject, which meant the content lacked the information EAP staff were really looking for:

We received a lot of CPD sessions, but the content of these was of virtually no practical use. They were company-wide and a lot of information didn't apply to our particular centre. The VLE training sessions would have been much more useful if trainers had consulted teaching teams to find out what we actually needed to know beforehand. (QR)

Thus, CPD appears to be an area in need of attention and was perhaps something that was left a little behind in the scramble to train staff to simply 'get by' with the technology. Where CPD was provided, it may not have been as effective as it could have been, and this is surely an area programme leaders will look to improve in the future. During the period March to September 2020, it seems many felt they were all individually engaged in a massive form of continuous professional development just through the move to working online, and this, for 2020, was perhaps already more than enough.

5.4.6. Health and Wellbeing

Key findings

- 72% felt students' health and wellbeing had been adequately considered
- 62% felt their own health and wellbeing had been adequately considered
- Exhaustion, stress and anxiety were common sentiments expressed with working online, from home, with an increased workload, in the middle of a global pandemic
- More needs to be done to support health and wellbeing in relation to working online, including staff training

It is important to remember that all of the EAP programmes referred to in the data took place during a time of anxiety and crisis for many around the world. Covid-19 created high levels of uncertainty and stress for both students and staff, not only in terms of their studies and work, but for their life in general (Sahu, 2020). This context must not be overlooked as it frames all of the data here.

While our research instruments did not engage the students themselves, we asked colleagues for their opinions on whether students' health and well-being had been adequately considered, and 72% responded in the affirmative (see [Figure 24](#)).

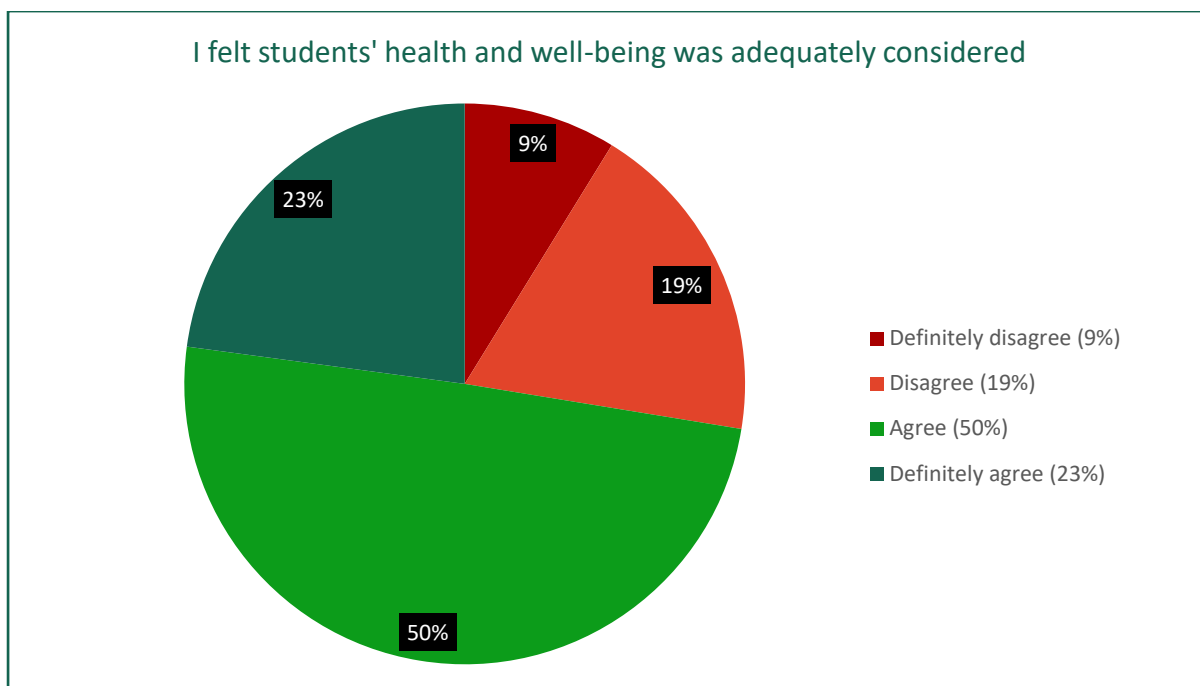


Figure 24: Student health and wellbeing

However, the qualitative data did provide some insights into the challenges students faced in terms of their health and wellbeing. One respondent mentioned that ‘students had often been in terrifying lockdown situations’ and one interviewee described her students as ‘scared kids’, not knowing whether to stay in the UK or attempt to travel home, or even whether they could (AF2). Four interviewees described other external issues affecting students’ learning and wellbeing, such as being alone in hotels during quarantine, having to work, having no childcare and experiencing stress with connectivity and internet speed:

We had some students that had been based in the UK who were trying to get home and got stuck in hotel rooms with children and they were learning on their phones and there were all sorts of external to learning stuff going on. (MF1)

Some teachers also expressed their concerns regarding students’ safety, with two respondents describing their students accessing lessons through their mobile phones whilst driving. In addition to the external factors inevitably affecting students during the pandemic, there was also concern regarding students’ lack of social contact during isolation periods and lockdowns. One teacher explained why he felt being online had an impact on his students’ wellbeing:

Having social events where teachers or students actually physically meet to do social things apart from teaching, that for me is important. Remember when we used to go and have lunch together and just meet in the park, we had meals and just talked... whereas if we’re all sat in our homes, our mind never goes out of this space. So we’re all like between those four walls so all we think about is the table, the chairs, the Teams and all we see is the house that we’re in. We don’t even go in new buildings, new classrooms, see new people. This is all inhumane, I would say because you don’t have this advantage anymore. We didn’t appreciate this before. That humane thing I want back. (TM3)

On the other hand, one of the managers felt that not too much changed for students in the sense that they would have spent a lot of their time connecting with others online anyway:

The students typically they end up spending a lot of time in their room and their laptops are that kind of connection to friends and family back home so I don't think they actually found it kind of anywhere near as tough as other people would, normal people whose lives existed outside and away from their computers because there wasn't much of a change. (MM1)

In terms of staff, the overall feeling was generally more positive than negative with 62% agreeing their health and wellbeing had been adequately considered (see [Figure 25](#)).

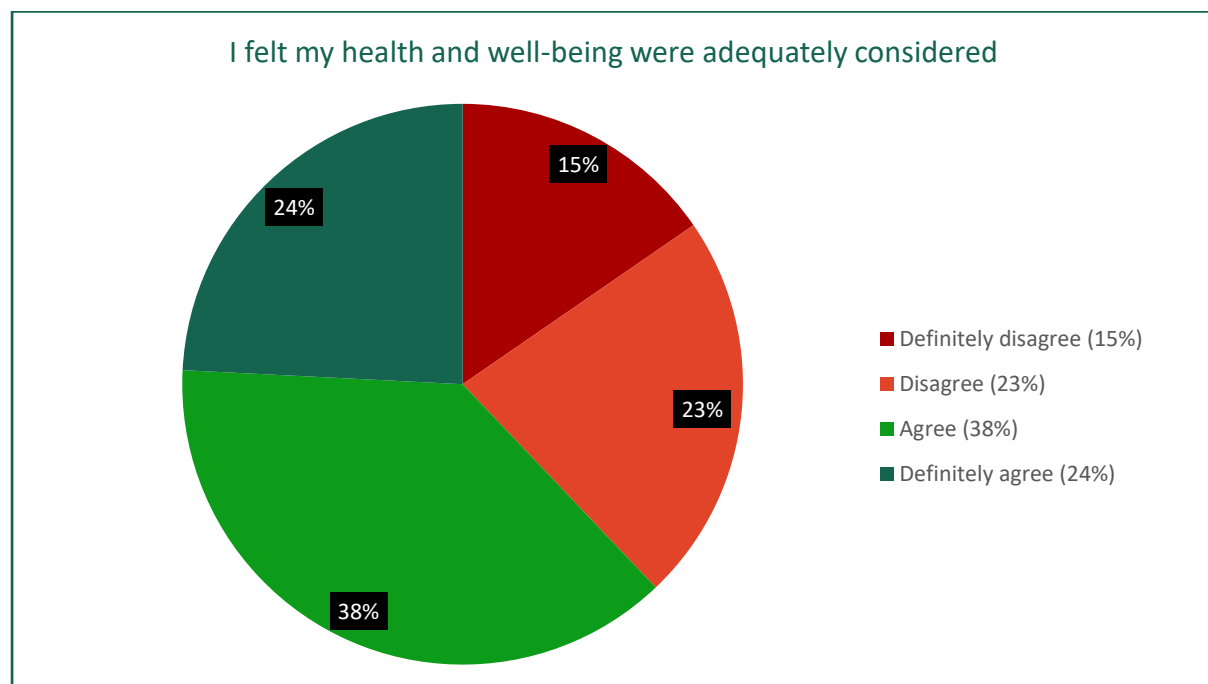


Figure 25: Staff health and wellbeing

However, a considerable amount, 38%, felt their health and wellbeing were not adequately considered and aspects related to this were evident in the qualitative data. One of the difficulties for teachers appeared to be a lack of recognition from within their institutions of the time it took to engage and support online students effectively:

There was an underestimation of screen-time involved in giving feedback etc. to students. I worked much longer hours than I had worked on the exact same pre-session course in previous years - for the same pay. (QR)

It was also noted by several respondents that online things just took longer and this added to the 'stress and anxiety':

There was a huge amount of stress and anxiety. Staff worked very long hours. Online teaching involves far more work, at least at the initial set up stage, than face to face teaching and is much less rewarding. (QR)

'Anxiety', 'stressful' and 'exhausting' are key words that appear frequently in the qualitative data and therefore must be acknowledged. This correlates with a study at a university in the USA, in which Son et al. (2020), found that 71% of students reported increased stress and anxiety due to the Covid-19 outbreak, giving an indication of the context within which staff also were working. Eleven per cent referred to 'screen fatigue', with other health issues such as 'RSI', 'headaches', 'dry eyes' mentioned also:

Multiple system fatigue/confusion; tiredness due to increased concentration needed for screen based communication to be successful. (QR)

In addition, 26.3% of participants noted that they would have liked more training and direction regarding maintaining their health and wellbeing while working online, signalling that this is certainly an aspect in need of more attention.

In contrast, one manager actually felt her health and wellbeing were better protected through conducting her job online as opposed to face-to-face:

I quite liked being online and it quite surprised me because I'm not a techy person and at the start of it I was just struck dumb with horror by the whole thing. I was like oh my god but actually, the level of human intensity when you're a manager on a pre-sessional is massive and the amount you soak in of people, all these teachers that you're bringing in and inducting and managing, and everything they bring to the table, good and bad. Sometimes you can feel a bit like a punchbag by the end of the summer, an emotional punchbag. I'm always ill at the end of it. I get to the end and I'm ill because it's so exhausting and I felt much better this year. I think one, because I had the barrier of the screen so it wasn't so personal and two, we had created this better management structure which was much more humane. (MF2)

This also seemed to be the case for teachers, who, the manager explained, would normally be ill, but not while working online.

I'd often spend half the summer covering or finding or dealing with cover. No one was ill. No one was ill because everyone was rolling out of bed and also the reduced teaching time I think brought the pressure down.... (MF2)

Overall, the impact on health and wellbeing was mixed, with both positive and negative outcomes for staff. One teacher explained that on a scale of one to ten his stress level was definitely ten but he admits he really enjoyed it (TM4). Perhaps this respondent's summary serves to highlight this mixed emotion, and :

This period of time was one of the most challenging teaching experiences I have had. Many of my colleagues, myself included, have been isolated working from home, either because they

live alone or have felt there has been little contact by managers or enough support for their wellbeing. In saying that, there were many positives. Learning how to use unfamiliar technology, adapting materials and devising teaching strategies to engage students have all added to my skills as a teacher. I believe these are exciting times for teachers as we move forward into a new way of working. However, training is much needed. Investment by universities is much needed. Online teaching is something which can now be embraced and can be an effective approach to EAP programmes. (QR)

5.4.7. Section Summary

In light of the fact that for some, the shift to online delivery occurred within a matter of days, it is really rather impressive the number of participants who did manage to receive some training and CPD during March to September 2020. For some, particularly those responsible for providing training and CPD, this simply was not possible as there was not the time. Whilst training was appreciated, there was acknowledgement of the need for more, and that for many, every day was a form of self-training. The dependence on a community of practice is very evident here and supporting each other was certainly the way people survived or sometimes thrived through this trying time. The impact on health and wellbeing, however, is all too evident and must be given further attention. [Wonkhe's](#) (2021) report and [Hardman's \(2021\) blog post](#) on UK Higher Education staff's experience of digitally-enabled learning during Covid-19 provide interesting further data on staff needs and expectations. [Moorhouse and Kohnke \(2021\)](#) equally could be informative here.

5.5. Operational and Administrative Processes

It was an exceptional situation and also because everything was really escalating so fast. You know normally if you were planning to change the whole thing online you'd have a bit more preparation time but it really was like OK, this is going to happen, let's do it. (AF1)

5.5.1. Overview

Forty-two respondents in addition to the 14 interviewees provided insight into the operational side of the EAP programme delivery, including admissions, registration, staff recruitment and more. The data provided suggest that perhaps operationally, there was not the same level of unknown as there was with academic delivery. This may have been because many of the processes were already taking place digitally or online and therefore, only adjustments had to be made as opposed to an entire revolution. Nevertheless, unexpected challenges arose and hasty solutions had to be sought, some of which, it already appears clear, will be retained for future years, even in the event of a return to face-to-face delivery.

5.5.2. Student Admissions

Key findings

- 73.8% saw a decrease in student numbers
- Dissatisfaction with certain language tests, namely Password and Duolingo
- Increased opportunity for in-house language testing for entry onto EAP programmes

With all of the uncertainty around travel, safety and educational provision during the pandemic, it is perhaps not surprising that the majority of respondents, 73.8%, saw a fall in the number of students admitted onto their EAP programmes. However, this does contradict [UK Higher Education data](#) overall, which suggests there was a 12.3% increase in international students for 2021 (Bolton, 2021). The qualitative data provides some possible explanations as to why EAP programme numbers may have fallen in 2020 despite international student numbers rising overall.

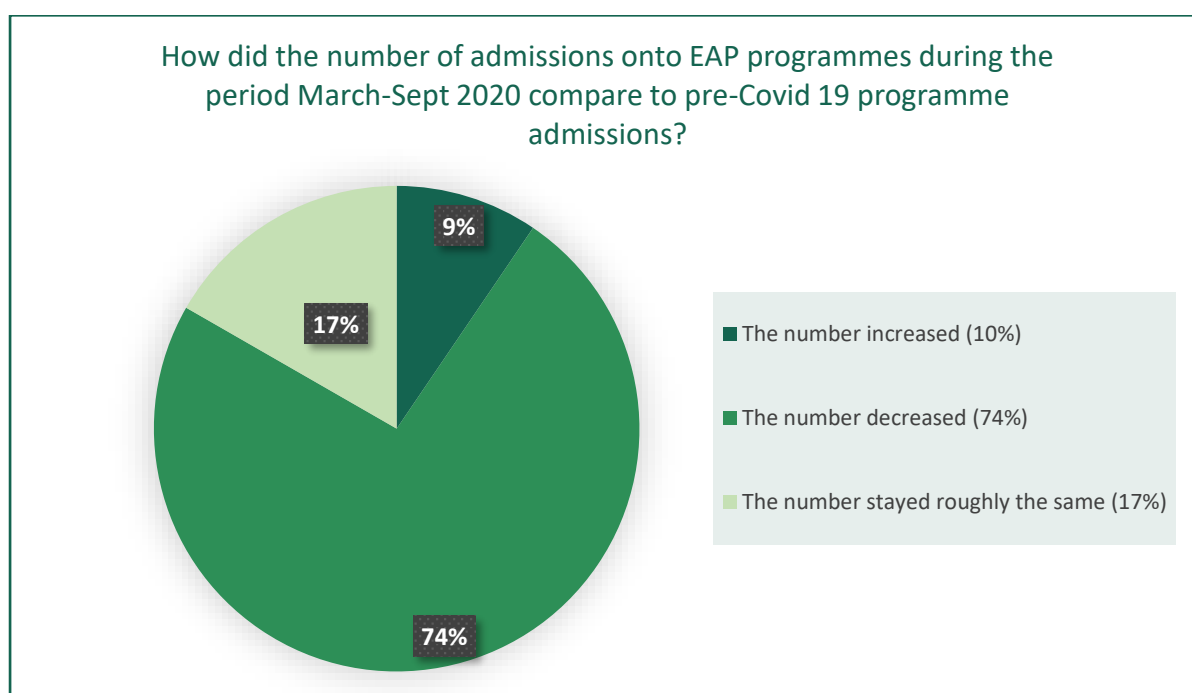


Figure 26: Number of student admissions

[Figure 26](#) displays the extent of the drop in numbers, and six of the fourteen interviewees indicated that the decrease was dramatic. An administrator (AF2) believed programme numbers ‘about halved’, while manager MM1 felt there was a ‘drop to about 70% of the normal numbers.’ A teacher (TM2) reported that the decrease equated to ‘over a thousand’ students fewer at his institution. Yet, this fall may have differed depending on the particular student population and their main programme of study, as suggested by one manager:

It’s usually 900 but we took quite a punch. It was only 550 this year. It was massive. The drop was all PGT. We got our UGs, we got our PGRs, we just didn’t get our PGT. (MF2)

The change for this institution came in terms of Postgraduate Taught programmes. Indeed, on closer inspection, [Bolton's report](#) (2021) refers only to undergraduate full-time students and therefore, it may not be revealing the full picture. It is therefore possible that postgraduate numbers on main degree programmes may have fallen also, but the UK-wide postgraduate data will not be available until January 2022, according to Bolton (2021).

Nevertheless, a number of questionnaire responses point towards potential explanations that might account for some of the drop in student numbers. One such explanation could have been universities' main course programmes lowering their entrance requirements in terms of language level, meaning students no longer needed to do the pre-session courses or other EAP programmes. [The EMN/OECD report](#) (2020) indicates many nations and their institutions made quick, temporary changes to admissions and visa criteria in order to avoid disrupting the flow of international students. This appears to have been the case with EAP programmes also, as 38.1% reported that criteria for admission onto EAP programmes was more lenient, in order to potentially reach a wider audience and mitigate the loss of students owing to the pandemic. Still, 55% reported that criteria stayed roughly the same (see [Figure 27](#)).

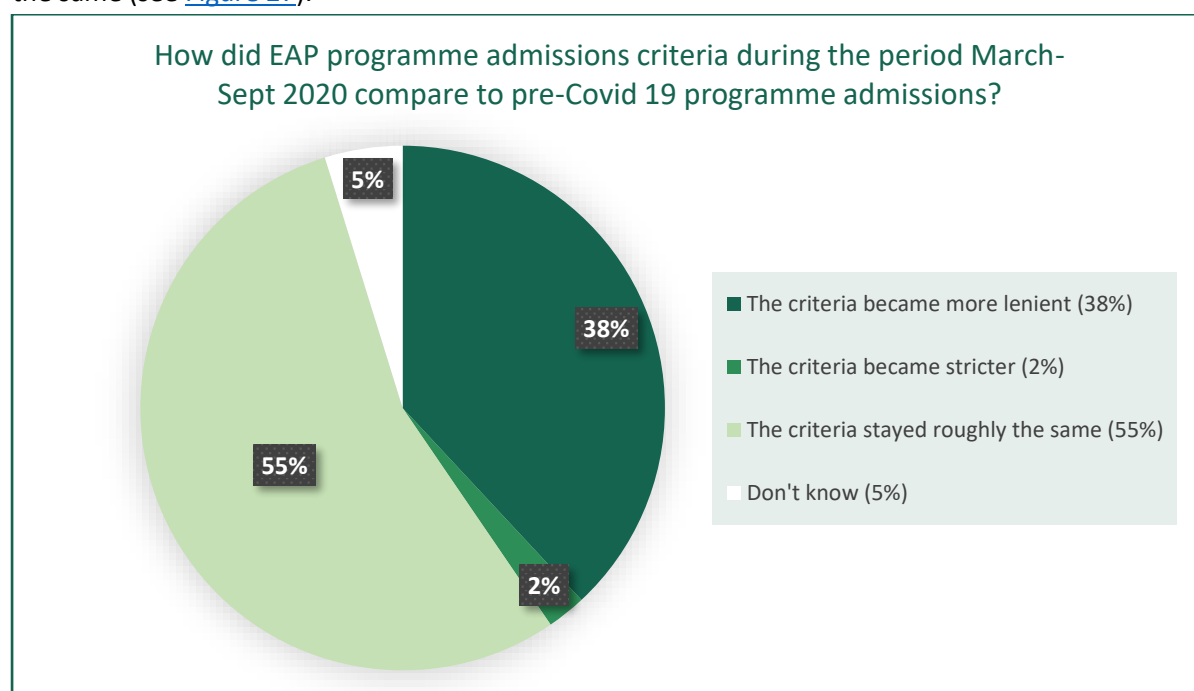


Figure 27: Changes to admissions criteria

This leniency regarding admissions criteria may have come about owing to the relaxation of UKVI rules and the fact that students studying online were not required to have a visa for entry into the UK. One questionnaire respondent celebrated this fact:

Freed from UKVI requirements as most students were not in the UK, we did not need to require SELTS for Student visa students - this was great. (QR)

Seven others also identified the eventual relaxation of government regulations as an opportunity since students remaining in their home country and joining the programme online were no longer required

to go through lengthy visa applications. In theory, this could have led to an increase in numbers, as opposed to a fall.

Another major challenge for admissions was obtaining proof of language level when many of the language testing centres were closed. 38% of respondents to this section referred to this, mentioning issues such as the lack of access to testing and the need to find alternative tests or even the decision to develop their own remote testing systems. Four other respondents also referred to a lack of clarity from the UK government and UKVI regarding visa regulations and language tests as adding to the complexity of the situation. Yet, the UK Home Office did respond with [guidance](#) published in April 2020, which does appear to have offered an increased level of flexibility. The guidance states specifically in terms of in-house testing:

Where students are required to take a SELT overseas but a test centre is unavailable, sponsors which are higher education providers with a track record of compliance will be able to self-assess students as having a B1 level of English, where progression on to the main course is dependent upon passing the pre-sessional course. (Home Office, 2021, p. 9)

This could explain why 27% of respondents reported using internal assessments for admissions. However, IELTS was still the main test with 77% of respondents reporting its use. Pearson, Duolingo and TOEFL were not too far behind, with 56%, 56% and 50% respectively (see [Figure 28](#)).

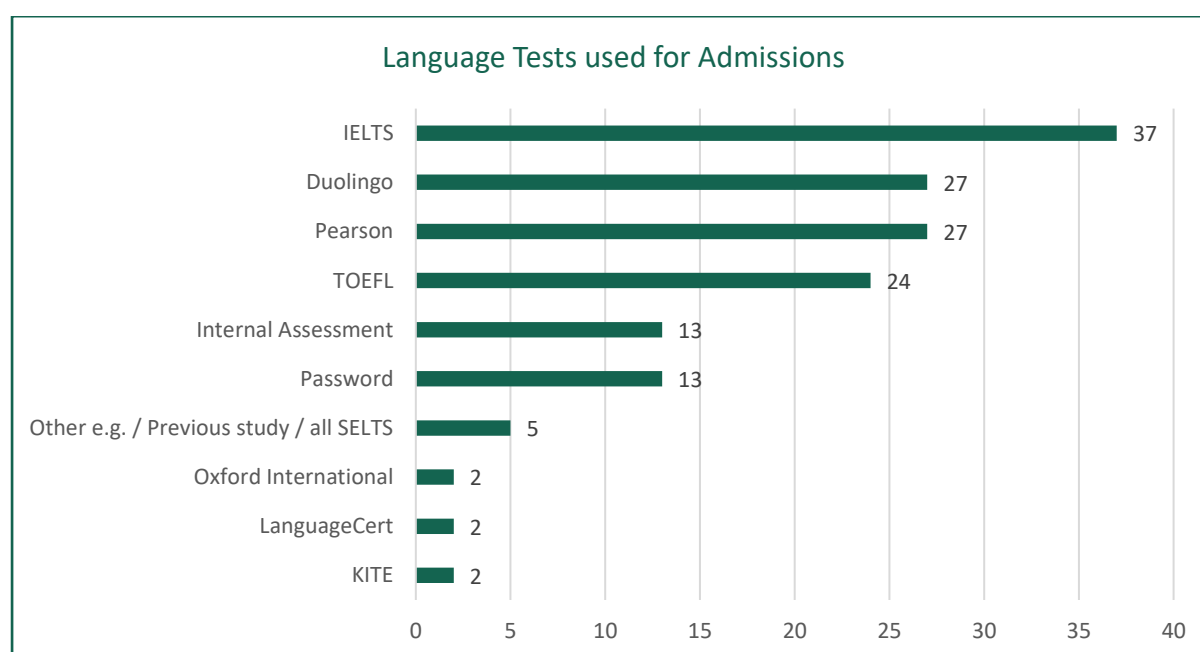


Figure 28: Language tests used for admissions

One questionnaire respondent acknowledges the UK government's relaxation of English language test requirements but fears this temporary move will be seen as something more permanent by leaders higher up the institution:

In initial stages, there were challenges with identifying English language quals that could be accepted, as many test centres had closed. This was helped when UKVI seemingly relaxed its

regulations for online study - however, the bigger challenge going forward is that there appears to be a belief from exec that this can continue beyond the temporary situation and that robust "online tests" are a realistic possibility that can be set up quickly. (QR)

There may be some concern from providers that learners will be admitted with lower language levels or that the EAP programme leaders themselves will now be expected to administer the testing. It appears that some providers experimented with tests they would not normally have used and there was some dissatisfaction, with some stating that they would definitely not be using those tests again. One administrator explained Duolingo's incompatibility with IELTS as being problematic.

One of my problems is our marks are benchmarked against our IELTS so I do a lot of analysis of entry and exit scores. Well, I can't do that with Duolingo. (AF2)

Nevertheless, there was also some optimism surrounding the 'increased number of possible online tests accepted', with another respondent stating that, 'Online entry testing has come on markedly and presents future opportunities.' In particular, some participants commented on the ability to move away from IELTS as being an opportunity, with one respondent explaining their optimism around being able to 'assess candidates' writing according to [their] own expectations rather than those imposed by IELTS.' A manager (MF1) went further, claiming that students were perhaps also a little more flexible in their learning because they had not been 'so IELTS-ed in terms of their thinking'.

5.5.3. Student Registration

Key findings

- 29% felt the process stayed roughly the same, which may indicate many were doing much of the registration process online pre Covid-19
- While 43% saw online registration as more difficult, 46% saw it as an opportunity for the future
- Later registration of students creates challenges for staff recruitment and student-teacher ratios
- Online student induction offers advantages and could be retained moving forward

Student registration became an online process for all UK institutions during the period March-September 2020, and data reveal the majority of respondents, 42.9%, perceived this process as being more difficult than processes used pre Covid-19. However, closer inspection of the qualitative data suggest that this perception may be clouded by the initial panic and chaos, as 46% of respondents in the open-ended questions determined that online registration was an opportunity that they would likely carry forward thereafter.

Twenty-nine per cent of respondents indicated that the process stayed roughly the same (see [Figure 29](#)), and some of the qualitative data suggest this is probably because some were already doing online registration prior to Covid-19, as highlighted by four questionnaire respondents and two interviewees.

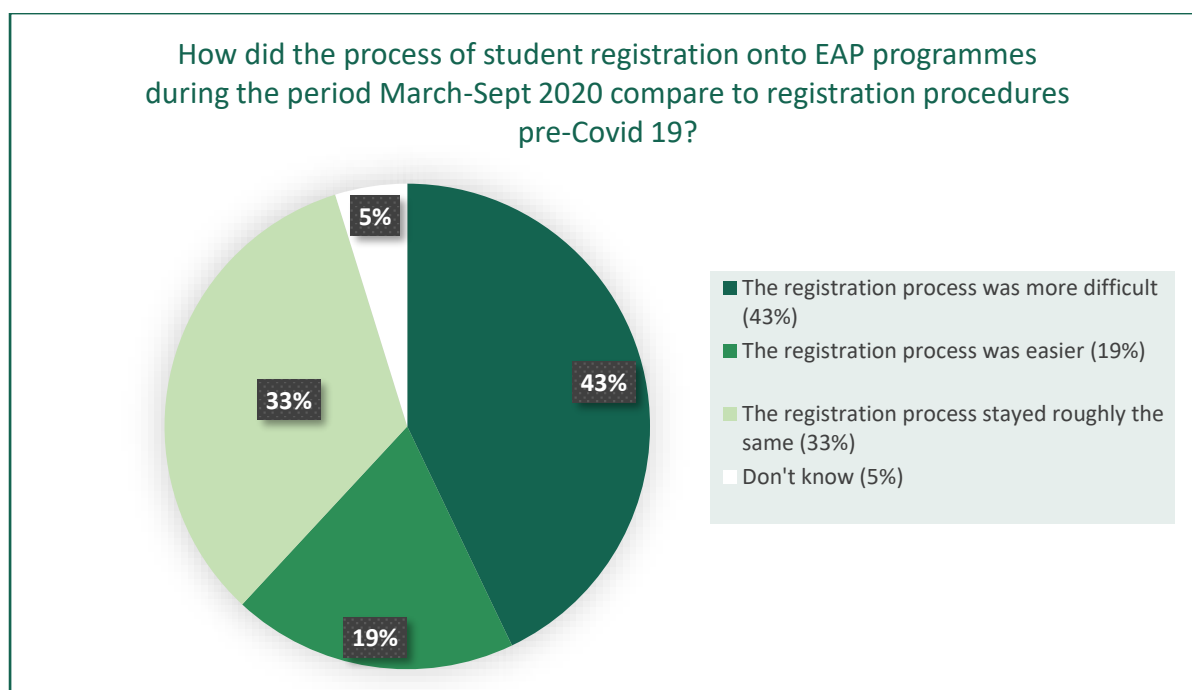


Figure 29: Change to registration process

Some of the challenges mentioned may account for the feeling of the process being more difficult. Ten per cent of questionnaire respondents referred to the difficulty experienced by students in registering online, possibly owing to lack of familiarity with the technology but also potentially owing to lower English language levels and the need to navigate 'lengthy instructions'. One questionnaire respondent explained this:

Some applicants with relatively low levels of English and/or tech skills had difficulty following instructions in the automated admissions & registration portal. (QR)

With students not being physically present to register on campus, 13% of respondents reported not being entirely sure who they had registered and who they had not. Ten per cent mentioned the challenge of checking students' identities online and one administrator revealed the confusion surrounding which students were actually registered and participating, as it was difficult to know when they were not physically present:

We did have management saying how many students have we got and I'd go, well that's a good question isn't it? I wasn't really sure who was there and who not. (AF1)

This lack of clarity around actual numbers registered may also have been influenced by the fact that students were registering much later than in a usual cycle, as mentioned by two interviewees and five questionnaire respondents:

If it's all online, they could apply the week before. Some of them pushed it and tried to apply really late which did send me slightly insane because the management said, yes, yes, accept them. (AF1)

Of course, accepting students late onto EAP programmes can have challenging consequences for those running the programmes in terms of staff recruitment and teacher-student ratios. One respondent, for example, stated that they 'could not guarantee work to colleagues on HPL contracts'. This increased level of precarity for EAP practitioners as a result of Covid-19 was something identified early on at the University of Leeds by Bee Bond and Alex Ding, and discussed in their one week event in May 2020 entitled [Practitioner Precarity and the Coronavirus](#).

Despite the uncertainty around recruitment, 8% of respondents highlighted the increased flexibility for recruitment owing to the potential to employ staff from outside the UK. It was felt that online interviews would continue in the future, owing to their convenience and money-saving nature:

Well, actually, this is also a thing that will make it all a lot easier in the fact that your staff don't all have to be in the country so especially with Brexit and people not needing visas to get here to teach because obviously a lot of our teachers aren't living here and aren't British. Some of them will find it easier to just teach in their home countries so they can do the online courses and some will be here in the UK, hopefully. (AF1)

The opportunities and challenges arising from online delivery in terms of staff recruitment is certainly an aspect that will need further attention, particularly if uncertainties around student numbers are to continue and if management higher up the hierarchy are going to continue to insist on accepting students very close to course start dates. One manager explained her dilemma in relation to this situation:

Because students were joining so late, because they were still doing tests two weeks into the course, there was no way I could have been certain about student-teacher ratios. (MF2)

As students were not physically in the UK, there was also the recognition that it was much easier for students to pull out of courses, particularly if they had achieved their required language scores partway into the course. One administrator highlighted this issue:

Some of them were dropping out because they'd then retaken IELTS or you know, whatever Duolingo or whatever and there wasn't that necessity to stay on the course because they hadn't come to the UK. (AF1)

This significant issue with attrition rates was discussed in four of the interviews and mentioned by four questionnaire respondents. Two interviewees related this to dissatisfaction with studying online, a notion supported by the literature as online courses tend to have around 10% higher attrition rates than traditional courses (Bawa, 2016). Other explanations related to the testing situation highlighted above. A consequence of students dropping out of the programme meant having to refund fees, a non-ideal situation mentioned by two questionnaire respondents and three interviewees. Two interviewees explained how they had made the conditions around dropping out of courses more flexible in order to attract more students to sign up but this flexibility created problems later on when it facilitated their withdrawal from the programme.

In contrast, a number of additional flexibilities afforded by online registration were acknowledged, particularly regarding the logistics of the process and student induction. Eight per cent of respondents mentioned the flexibility brought about in relation to fee payments:

We didn't have to chase for late payment fees this year, as we had the money before students started. (QR)

Comments included the sense that the registration process was more 'flexible' as well as 'easier', 'quicker' and 'smoother' for both students and staff. There was also some appreciation shown for the fact there was less 'paper-work' and fewer logistical challenges usually faced by processing students face to face on campus:

It avoided a heavily congested registration day on campus, allowing registration to be spread over a number of days. (QR)

Eight per cent of respondents appreciated the opportunity to revise and update somewhat outdated processes:

Gave us the chance to update quite creaky and bewildering enrolment systems. That work is ongoing. (QR)

Another prominent opportunity presented by online registration was the provision of an online student induction. Fifteen per cent of questionnaire respondents and four interviewees referred to this, with four interviewees explicitly stating that they will carry forward this online induction for future cohorts, even in the event of a return to face-to-face delivery. One respondent explained that the online induction was 'more efficient for students' and 'less labour intensive', as students could complete all necessary 'admin/enrolment procedures' prior to beginning their course. Another explained how the online induction served as an introduction to the course in general:

We actually created an online 'induction week' for students that they could do in their own time across a week. It was set up to look like our teaching materials so served as an induction to that too... (QR)

One of the managers explained in some detail the usual challenges of induction and her satisfaction regarding online induction:

Normally, it's the same with everyone, when you do pre-sessional student induction you have to do this kind of whole circus of like the mini university. You know you have to bring the university to them. They've gotta do online registration, they've gotta meet with the police, they've gotta meet with the banks, they've gotta meet with the NHS and it's a right palaver to coordinate the whole damn thing. Normally, we do it after they arrive and this year we did as much as we could, we did loads of it online in advance and I thought, oh, let's do that again. (MF2)

5.5.4. Section Summary

In response to the successful strategies employed, 21% of questionnaire respondents referred to an increased amount of communication with students prior to their arrival/starting the course as well as better communication between different sections of the institution in order to make processes more effective. Two participants stated that they were able to have more 'direct communication' with students before the course, which was seen as a successful strategy. This was an advantage identified also by Smyth and Lodge (2012) in Australia where they trialled an online orientation programme with university students and found it to be very successful for encouraging early engagement and creating a sense of belonging within the institution. Their report provides some helpful indications of what could be included in such a programme, in addition to the usual 'circus' of induction events, as mentioned above.

Although these more positive comments may appear to contrast with the quantitative data which indicated only 17% felt the registration process was easier online, it may be the case that those describing positive experiences also made up the 29% who felt the process remained roughly the same. In any case, it is clear that a number of opportunities have emerged from the sudden shift to online registration and it is expected that many of these processes will be retained moving forward, particularly regarding in-house testing for language levels and online student induction prior to arrival.

6. Future Directions

We've started talking about the vaccinated pre-session because that's the only way we could do it. We can't fly seventy teachers in and bring in 900 students together. We would be the source of an outbreak. Unless everybody's vaccinated, we are gonna be on the front page of the Daily Mail. And find enough classrooms around the university for everybody to have socially-distanced teaching. The more you think you start off going yeah, that's viable and then you end up going, that's not viable. (MF2)

Key findings

- There is scepticism and trepidation around the prospect of hybrid teaching, which involves simultaneously teaching students face-to-face and online
- Online teaching seems to offer more flexibility than face-to-face teaching in a Covid secure classroom
- Blended learning, in some capacity, is likely to be maintained in the post Covid era
- Institutions may need to offer both face-to-face and online programmes, according to market demand

Overview

Much of the qualitative data, in particular the interviews, gave a sense of looking forward and considering the scenario for 2021 and beyond. With the propagation of the virus worldwide and the subsequent cycle of regulations followed by easing of restrictions, as well as the hugely varying vaccination programmes worldwide, there was a definite sense of 'the unknown'. However, the data generated some themes that emerged that are worth noting.

6.1.1. Hybrid Learning

One of these themes is hybrid learning, which seemed to ignite a sense of trepidation amongst five of the interviewees. [The University of Edinburgh](#) defines hybrid learning as an environment:

Where no separation is made between digital and on campus student cohorts. Students are brought together by the way teaching is designed and students are able to move easily between digital and classroom-based learning activities. (University of Edinburgh, 2021)

In practice, what this means is that some students may be present face-to-face in the classroom alongside others in different geographical locations on the computer screen. One teacher, who had already experienced this at the time of interview, described the hybrid learning scenario:

You tell me how on earth can one teacher do this in one classroom in a couple of hours, in a language classroom, not a lecture. Again, lecture, that's fine and if you have a presentation to deliver, it's fine but in language classes where practice is really vital for learning, that's what we've learned, getting students to do all the work, student-centred, how are you going to do

this? So, imagine that you're teaching face-to-face. You've got students on Teams and students face-to-face ok, where are you going to look? And when you get them to work in pairs, let alone the worksheets that you have to prepare, so you have to print them off for the face to face and you have to upload them on Teams for the online students. That's fine, that's not the biggest issue but when you are communicating with them in one classroom, you've got to get those students communicating but how are you going to get the students online to work? Put them in channels, put them in breakout rooms? OK, how are you going to listen to them? Are you going to listen to the people in Group A in the channel or the people in the same class because if you turn to the online channel then everyone is gonna be distracted. But then how are you going to monitor them at the same time? Imagine, one human being, they've got one mind and two eyes. You can't really do it. (TM3)

This same teacher had been quite excited about the prospect in theory but in reality, he found it 'exhausting' and quite 'impossible' for one person to manage. He also explained that while one activity in a face-to-face classroom might take 20 minutes, in the hybrid scenario, with the requirement for two sets of instructions to two groups of students using two different sets of materials in two different spaces, this can take 40 minutes. The learning potential therefore possibly halves, while the teacher workload doubles. Thus, while hybrid learning may seem to provide a flexible solution in the immediate and post-Covid era, interviewees in this study were sceptical. They also regarded any decision to adopt this approach as driven by the institutions' financial priorities above all else. One manager felt very strongly about this:

[Hybrid learning] is ridiculous. It shouldn't be a thing. I remember my boss saying people are doing it because they have to. I know it's happening but it doesn't mean it should be a thing. However, there are market considerations here and if everybody else starts to do it, we'll have to. (MF2)

This hybrid learning scenario is of course further complicated by the fact that any students learning face-to-face will likely be doing so in a Covid-secure classroom. The [UK Department for Education](#) (2021) has issued guidance for this on their website, which includes the need for face coverings and, where possible, maintaining a distance of 2 metres between students in classrooms. This certainly complicates the typical collaborative or task-based approach to teaching that many EAP programmes adopted prior to the shift online. Again, one of the teachers described his experience of this and the challenges it brought:

For a lecture with the teacher just teaching and students just taking notes, that's fine but for language teaching, with all the activities that we used to do in our classrooms where it was communicative activities and they work together in groups and pairs, how are you going to do this? When you can't touch anything and students have to be two metres apart and how many students are you going to have and how big the classroom should be? Also, you had to monitor and listen to what the students were saying but you cannot do this, you can't listen to if they're making any mistakes. (TM3)

Potentially, returning to face-to-face delivery while Covid-19 regulations are still in place in terms of social distancing, means having to make large adjustments to materials once again, in order to possibly

remove the collaborative elements. Another way would be to make use of technology inside the classroom in order to enable students to interact and collaborate with materials that they are not able to physically share.

One teacher explains that if he has to choose between teaching face-to-face in a Covid secure classroom or online, as much as he would like to return to face-to-face, he would choose online:

I've been teaching face-to-face lately and because of the Covid safe rules, it's not as good as it used to be. It's more difficult and more stressful and you're just not able to do the types of activities that you are used to doing as being good communicative, interactive, task-based learning so I think, comparing Covid safe teaching with online teaching, online teaching wins every time. It's much more flexible, it's much more direct. (TM1)

The restrictions these regulations place upon the learning environment will certainly need to be considered as providers decide which mode of delivery to adopt for 2021. Some helpful research that has already been conducted into hybrid learning includes Kiddle et al.'s (2020) [survey](#) into attitudes to hybrid learning in language teaching organisations. Microsoft and YouGov also collaborated on research looking into the [acceleration of hybrid learning in UK schools](#), concluding that 'there is a notable gap in access to technology as well as the skills needed to be successful in a hybrid learning environment' (Microsoft & YouGov, 2020). What must not be forgotten here is that with hybrid learning comes hybrid teaching.

6.1.2. Blended Learning

Another theme regarding the future of EAP delivery which came through in the interviews was the expectation that course offerings will probably need to be more flexible post Covid-19, as there may be a need to move in and out of face-to-face teaching owing to breakouts of the virus. This scenario might bring about a kind of forced blended delivery, as explained by a curriculum designers who expressed a sense of fear regarding the amount of work that would be needed to redesign the course to facilitate this:

That would put a lot of design burden on us because at the moment you can see us running a face to face or running a face to face and an online or running the online and essentially making the live synchronous class either online or in a classroom so that at any moment you can pull back into self-isolation and go back online. (CDF1)

Blended learning has been defined as 'the integration of face-to-face and online instruction and also as 'the new normal' in Higher Education (see [Dziuban et al., 2018](#)). It is certainly an approach which interviewees viewed as a potential for the future in various guises. An element of blended learning was already present in some programmes pre-Covid, where students worked with material on the VLE or were using collaborative tools such as Google Docs and so on. However, an alternative approach to blended learning might involve delivering part of a programme online and part face-to-face, with students perhaps starting their studies in their own country and then continuing in the UK, as

suggested by one of the teachers (TM2). This suggestion seems to present a number of logistical issues, as highlighted by one manager:

Blended isn't really something that the UKVI visa regulations are set up to cater for. The students they start courses and they end courses and they then have particular qualifications that enable them to get a visa. You know a student would have had to meet certain criteria to get the visa. You would basically have to turn it into two courses. (MM1)

Another is that of staff recruitment, as highlighted by the curriculum designer:

You'd be looking at something really interesting because all the teachers are brought in so would you offer them accommodation for the whole course? Would you say to them you have to do it online from where you are but then you have to come on site and have accommodation for the final weeks? (CDF1)

6.1.3. Section Summary

Overall, there was the general sense that whatever the future holds, course offerings will need to be more flexible, perhaps resulting in the provision of separate courses, as suggested by one teacher:

I think the course will be much more flexible so there will be a contingent of people who want to study or teach it online, so we might have kind of three courses, one a traditional face-to-face course, one an online course and then a blended course so I think we're gonna be more flexible. (TM1)

Several interviewees acknowledged that there may be students and teachers who prefer the online option, as it offers more flexibility in terms of location and balancing other responsibilities, such as work or childcare. Whatever the case, interviewees expressed a desire to maintain some of the successful changes which had been implemented in the shift online and which they believed enhanced the learning process. They also did not want all the hard work to go to waste:

We're trying to think of things that we would keep. We can't have done all of this work and just scrap it and go back to normal and I think that's sort of the idea now we've seen that students can engage outside the classroom. (MF1)

One questionnaire respondent described the whole experience of EAP in 2020 as a 'game-changer' and we are inclined to agree. There may be no 'going back' to the same form of delivery pre Covid-19, even in the event of a return to 'normal' non-Covid-secure classrooms as we cannot unlearn what we have learnt. An online element of delivery is likely to stay in some form, and other options for blended programmes may also emerge. Whatever the approach, the 'human' and community aspects of EAP programmes will need to be at the core of curriculum design, staff and student support, and communication. We hope the move forward will be embraced with the same optimism shown by this questionnaire respondent:

It's been a challenging year, but also with many opportunities to learn. I think we will not go back to the old ways, but use what we have learnt to improve and redesign our delivery even if we return to f2f. (QR)

7. Conclusion

This section provides a summary of the main findings and seeks to offer potential answers to the three research questions:

- 1. What changes were made to the delivery of EAP provision to enable the programmes to proceed?**
- 2. How did key operations such as administration, admissions and progression change or adjust during this period?**
- 3. Were the changes considered successful? What key challenges and opportunities emerged?**

While the first two questions can be answered independently of each other, the response to the third question is woven in to the responses to questions one and two to provide an overall summary of the main challenges and opportunities which emerged as a result of moving EAP programmes and all their associated operations and processes online.

7.1. Research Questions 1 and 3

In order to proceed with EAP provision during the global pandemic, EAP programmes had to be shifted fully online as the lockdown after March 2020 in the UK prohibited all forms of face-to-face teaching.

Design and delivery

The shift to remote learning has been a forced pivot rather than a choice, yet despite the many challenges, especially in the very early days of makeshift ERT, it has sparked creativity, reflexivity and opportunity, and highlighted the importance of community. This research has shown that out of crisis and chaos, a renewed focus on pedagogy and the student learning process has been born.

The shift to new modalities has encouraged language educators to rethink and question the methods and resources of the status quo and experiment with more relevant, up-to-date and diverse approaches which better reflect students' lived experiences. As colleagues prepare for the post-Covid return to campus, many of the technologies which provided a lifeline, enabling classroom continuity during the pandemic, are likely to become a permanent feature of EAP programme delivery.

Research participants were generally positive about the opportunities to upskill and engage in CPD, whether in-house or external, yet there was a strong feeling that more training on the theory of online pedagogy, students' engagement in the online environment and adapting materials for remote delivery would have been useful. Around three quarters of participants reported adopting a flipped learning approach. Although some struggled with the change to their own role which this shift to more student-centred learning entailed, most welcomed the affordances it provided, such as student autonomy, synchronous and asynchronous interaction, recording lessons, enhanced feedback options, visibility of the students' learning process and increased sharing.

The most prevalent challenge was student engagement and this is corroborated in a study conducted by the [Economist Intelligence Unit](#) (EIU) (2020), which reported that 60% of faculty experienced a drop in engagement as students struggled to stay focused. According to Professor John Hattie, who contributed to the EIU research, 'One of the biggest factors that influences student engagement and performance is their sense of belonging in their higher education experience. This is what has suffered the most as a result of Covid-19' (p.10). The belief that a strong sense of community is important for academic performance is key when planning future delivery, especially since our data signalled a real sense of loss in terms of the human element of the learning experience. Nevertheless, as summarised by one of our participants in his reflective blog post about a summer of EAP at the University of Sheffield, 'there is no putting the genie back in the bottle' ([Longwell, 2020](#)) – some form of online learning is certainly here to stay.

Assessment and feedback

The shift online was a big disruptor for EAP exams and assessment, but at the same time proved to be a catalyst for EAP colleagues to rethink their formative and summative assessment offerings. With almost 70% of participants reporting that their programmes included live online exams, yet relatively few adopting remote proctoring solutions in the first six months of the pandemic, the widespread concerns around academic integrity are hardly surprising. In addition, technology issues such as bandwidth and connectivity added to the challenges of ensuring fair assessment practices, with the impact being felt most with the assessment of listening.

Colleagues adopted innovative and responsive measures to overcome the challenges and this has sparked an increase in the use of integrated assessments, more personalised or contextualised tasks, more frequent, lower-stakes assessments and a focus on the process of learning. This is all very positive for the future of EAP assessment which can hopefully build on students' lived experiences and acknowledge the importance of digital literacy. However, there was some concern surrounding the validity of online assessments in terms of changing constructs and perhaps even the threat of construct irrelevant variance arising from poor digital literacy. However, at the time of writing, six months further on, this may be less of an issue.

Many lessons were learnt in the period March to September 2020, but the message from those who reported the use of remote proctoring solutions, such as recording screen activity and lockdown browsers, was that technology is not a silver bullet for the academic dishonesty issues.

7.2. Research Questions 2 and 3

Although there may be a tendency to focus on the impact on the academic aspects such as delivery and assessment, the shift to remote delivery undoubtedly had far-reaching implications for key EAP operations, which are vital for the success of any programme.

Communication

The online medium offered many opportunities for increased levels of communication between staff, students and across the institution. There was an appreciation for the speed and ease with which meetings and communications could be conducted using tools such as Microsoft Teams or social media applications. Certain communications which were not possible face-to-face owing to lack of space and the logistics of bringing people together, actually became possible in an online environment and many felt they communicated more often and more successfully online than they did in person. The downsides of communicating online included the inevitable challenges with technology, mostly internet connectivity and access to VLE platforms, especially from China with the added obstacle of the Chinese firewall. Microsoft Teams appeared to be the preferred platform of use and whilst institutions tended to insist on VLEs, many programme leaders moved away from these in favour of Teams or Zoom, which allowed for better connectivity and access as well as a more sociable feel. However, this sometimes left managers and coordinators with the task of providing technology support to teachers and students because the software chosen was not supported by the institution.

Recruitment and training

Although the uncertainty around student numbers posed challenges for staff recruitment, remote working offered a number of benefits to both staff and the institution. Global recruitment eased the challenges posed by visas, Brexit and logistics of staff travel and accommodation. Conducting online interviews for recruitment purposes was also seen as convenient and is likely to be retained. Staff training, however, was more challenging, particularly for those programmes which had to switch online very rapidly at the beginning of the UK lockdown in March. For some, training was not possible, and this was especially the case for managers and coordinators who were tasked with providing training for others whilst often having had none themselves. Peers were seen to be the greatest resource for learning and a strong sense of community amongst colleagues was evident. Though respondents generally felt prepared to carry out their roles, many would have liked more input regarding online pedagogy and engaging students in a virtual environment. Some believed they had increased access to sharing practice, training and CPD due to the online nature as ordinarily they would need to consider time, cost, travel, childcare and other barriers to CPD and training. Most participants appreciated the opportunity to upskill and learn more about online teaching and technology. Overall, staff generally felt supported in their work, but there were concerns about health and wellbeing while working online, especially in terms of long hours spent in front of the screen and an increased workload.

Administration and admissions

Most operations underwent adaptations in the shift to online delivery. Apart from the fact that all operations had to be carried out virtually with all staff communicating at a distance from one another, one key aspect which changed in terms of admissions was student enrolment. Most programmes saw a fall in numbers with many noting the tendency for students to enrol late. This was challenging in terms of staff recruitment and managing staff-student ratios. It may also have been tempting from a financial perspective to make entry onto the programmes more lenient, particularly as many students were no longer required to meet UKVI rules regarding language level as they were not travelling to

the UK. However, the majority of programmes appear to have maintained the same levels of entry and instead, what changed was the type of accepted tests for proof of language level. A wider range of language tests were accepted and some institutions even developed their own in-house online tests. It was generally felt that this change in testing for entry onto the EAP programmes offered more flexibility and that this would hopefully be maintained in the future.

In terms of registration, the change was perhaps less noticeable as many institutions appeared to have been doing elements of registration online prior to the pandemic. Nevertheless, there was a feeling that the process was more difficult than previous years and this was often attributed to technological challenges with students facing difficulties accessing the various platforms. Another obstacle was the timing of online testing which could result in students making a decision to drop out once they received notification of their test score. Though a small majority highlighted the difficulties created by a fully online registration, qualitative comments pinpointed the online registration as an opportunity for updating outdated processes as well as streamlining procedures and moving to a paper-free process. Many benefits were also highlighted in terms of inducting students online, providing an introduction to everyday life and study in the UK as well as the programme, and connecting students with peers on their course. There was the sense that many institutions would not return to face-to-face registration in the future and that online student induction could be implemented prior to students' arrival on campus.

7.3. Recommendations

A number of practical recommendations can be made based on the findings highlighted in this report. Please note that techniques and strategies which were used during the period of March to September 2020 were in many cases interim measures and we have most certainly moved on and already learnt much more in the ensuing months.

EAP design and delivery

1. For effective online learning or even a blended approach, if time permits, a careful and principled approach to design should be followed, such as Gilly Salmon's 5-stage model.
2. In a true flipped classroom, asynchronous activities should: i) be bite-size; ii) include very clear instructions and a rough expectation of the time needed for completion; iii) be varied / multi-modal; iv) include some collaboration; v) provide opportunities for feedback; vi) include some interactive elements. See [Gilly Salmon's e-tivities](#).
3. Students and teachers benefit from an induction which simulates the real teaching and learning environment.
4. Teachers, coordinators and managers require some training in using the required technology / apps / digital tools / platforms. In addition, a basic understanding of theories of online learning and the role of the teacher is helpful.
5. Care needs to be taken to ensure that the synchronous and asynchronous provision allows for a balance of skills and does not neglect speaking in particular.
6. Teachers need to foster a sense of community in students through building their own online presence and providing opportunities for student-student interaction and student-teacher-

interaction. There are many practical tips, but establishing pre-course rapport is a good start. Teachers can send a link to a welcome pack and maybe include a Flipgrid video introducing themselves with an invitation for students to post their own.

7. Since documents such as Pdfs are not easily accessed on mobile devices, it is helpful to design materials with Google Sites to create a more user-friendly experience for students.

For further recommendations related to training and technology, see sections below.

EAP assessment and feedback

1. Rethinking assessment constructs and practices rather than attempting to merely adapt existing assessment practices may be the best solution.
2. Rather than turning to remote proctoring solutions to continue the delivery of traditional summative assessments, this is an opportunity to implement new forms of assessment which better reflect students' learning and real-world experiences, for example building a portfolio or recording a podcast.
3. The collection of multiple samples of student performance which includes a variety of tasks done in both timed and naturalistic conditions can increase reliability and fairness, allowing raters to make a more informed judgement, while exposing students to more humane testing practices (Bruce 2020).
4. Lower-stakes, collaborative assessments such as recorded reading circle discussions, task-based learning or problem-based learning can be implemented to build community, create meaningful dialogue and reduce instances of academic dishonesty.
5. The affordances of technology can be captured for enhanced, interactive feedback such as audio feedback, dialogic feedback on shared documents and so on.
6. Any new assessment practices must be accompanied by staff training which makes the rationale explicit.
7. Students must be given the opportunity to familiarise themselves with online platforms used for assessment delivery and also with task guidelines and instructions.

Admissions and registration

1. A wider range of tests (online and face-to-face) as well as in-house testing should be included in approved lists for demonstrating language levels for entry onto EAP programmes.
2. A majority of registration processes can be carried out online prior to students' arrival in the UK.
3. As far as possible, management and administrators should plan for students registering late and close to the programme start date.
4. An online student induction would be beneficial for introducing students to key aspects of UK academic and general everyday life as well as connecting students with peers before arrival.

Staff recruitment and training

1. The ability to recruit from a wider, potentially global pool of staff through online EAP provision should not be overlooked.
2. The logistics and affordances of working from home should be acknowledged, for example, no commute time and ability to work from other geographical locations.
3. Staff recruitment and interviews can be conducted fully online, reducing travel costs and time commitments.
4. All staff need substantial training, which has been designed specifically for the EAP programme they will be working on.
5. Online pedagogy theory and practice must be included in any training for teachers if provision is to be offered online.
6. Staff roles and job descriptions may need to be reconsidered in light of an online working environment.
7. Staff workload needs to be re-considered if provision is online, as it is felt that tasks and activities take longer online than face-to-face.
8. A strong sense of community should be established between staff.
9. Software such as Microsoft Teams and social media applications can be embraced to increase sharing practice and community-building, even when there is a return to face-to-face delivery.
10. Some CPD, training and sharing practice should be maintained online even in a return to face-to-face provision because this ensures accessibility for those who would not otherwise be able to participate.

Communication

1. Small groups can improve and increase communication between colleagues and also between students, such as assigning a small group of teachers to one coordinator, or limiting class size to ten students.
2. Using software such as Microsoft Teams can create a sociable space for asynchronous discussion and learning.
3. Regular, carefully planned meetings can help to establish a closer community and these may still be carried out online for convenience.
4. Regular communication through carefully considered written forms such as VLE announcements, Teams posts or email can help to keep staff informed of relevant matters.
5. Requiring students to communicate in forums and emails can help to improve their writing skills and valuable communication skills for their main courses.
6. Some meetings, which involve large numbers of staff and/or students, could be kept online, even in a return to face-to-face delivery, as logistically they are easier to manage online.
7. Boundaries and expectations should be set regarding appropriate forms and times of contact as well as response times.

Technology

1. Before deciding on any software or tools, they should be tested in terms of connectivity and accessibility for staff and students in different parts of the world.
2. The opinions of students and staff must be considered in the choice of software and applications and this may not necessarily be the same ones recommended by the institution.
3. Clear guidelines should be determined regarding which software or tools should be used for which purpose.
4. Clear specifications should be determined regarding minimum and preferable hardware requirements for staff and students.
5. The number of tools and software should be kept to a minimum.
6. Staff and students should be provided with training on how to use the various software and applications for the specific EAP programme.
7. IT support, specific to the EAP programme, is essential if programmes are to be delivered online.

Future directions

1. Hybrid teaching, if adopted, should be done with caution and with strong consideration of the pressures this places on teachers and the potential loss of learning for students.
2. If there has to be a choice between online delivery or teaching in a face-to-face Covid-secure classroom, online might be more flexible in terms of facilitating a collaborative, task-based, interactive course.
3. To capture market demands and appeal to a wider audience, in terms of both students and teachers, those institutions with the capacity to do so might consider offering multiple programmes, online and face-to-face.
4. A blended approach to learning is likely to be retained, even in the event of a full return to face-to-face delivery; the opportunities and flexibility it offers must now be harnessed and fully integrated into EAP programmes.

7.4. Limitations

This section provides some reflections on the limitations of this study.

1. The nature of the Covid-19 pandemic has been one of constant change and uncertainty, meaning that measures which may have been possible and appropriate one day may not be suitable the next. This presents difficulty in reaching firm conclusions on best practices for the future as it is not yet known exactly what the future will look like. At the time of data collection (December 2020 to January 2021), the March to September 2020 period, which is the focus of this research, had already passed. Further changes and adaptations had been undertaken by institutions in their timely responses to the changing landscape, so it may have been difficult for participants to clearly distinguish between the six-month period under investigation and the subsequent months. This was particularly the case with the two interviews which took place in January 2021 as the participants were perhaps already looking

forward to summer 2021 as opposed to looking back on summer 2020. As events unfolded rapidly and required urgent interventions, and with so many other external issues in the background, it may have been difficult for research participants to retrospect with absolute accuracy.

2. The questionnaire design presented many challenges as the questions had to cater for participants in a range of roles, including administrators, managers, coordinators and teachers. This resulted in certain questions being somewhat broader than intended and lacking the specificity we would have liked. An example of this are the items which include statements for agreement or disagreement using a Likert scale, such as 'My health and wellbeing were adequately considered'. We purposefully opted to use the passive voice for such statements, leaving them open to interpretation as the notion of *who* would have considered participants' health and wellbeing depended largely on a participants' role, i.e., institutional leadership, manager, coordinator or line manager etc.
3. We received very few questionnaire responses from administrators. This is likely owing to the fact that there are fewer administrators involved in EAP than there are teachers, but also because they may be less likely to be affiliated with BALEAP and EAP communities than teachers, coordinators or managers. For this reason, we had only 42 respondents answer the questions related to operations and administration, thus limiting the insights into these important aspects of the EAP programme delivery.
4. We potentially missed out on valuable data regarding the multiple programmes that participants may have worked on. We made the decision to specify that participants refer only to *one* programme for the main body of the questionnaire, so that programme specific questions, such as number of synchronous hours, generated meaningful data. Yet, to avoid respondents dropping out with questionnaire fatigue, we only included one open-ended question regarding any subsequent programmes they may have been involved in.
5. One area in which this study is lacking is in the range of the participants. The sole focus is on the opinions and experiences of *staff* involved in EAP provision during the period March to September 2020; student insights were not collected. The data collection instruments focussed predominantly on the staff experience of the responses to Covid-19. Any data on the student experience is filtered through this lens and based only on a perceived understanding of the student experience. To determine the true success or effectiveness of the move to remote EAP delivery, it is certainly necessary to obtain emic data from those who were on the receiving end of the instruction, namely the students themselves. With only staff as participants, we cannot evaluate online EAP programme delivery or procedures from the students' perspective.

7.5. Further Research

It would be interesting to find out where participants are and the choices they are making one year on from the initial disruption. Much has undoubtedly changed in this short period, not least the upskilling of all staff and students regarding technology and online work. With some in the UK now vaccinated against the virus and lockdown easing, colleagues may be returning to offices and classrooms and it would be interesting to discover which aspects of the shift to online delivery will be captured and embedded moving forward. Will the opportunities provided by technology be embraced or will they be forgotten in the hurry back to face-to-face working and teaching? Will there be a full return to face-to-face EAP operations and provision or will part or all of this remain online for some institutions? If there is a return to face-to-face teaching, will there be a blended provision, as indicated in the preferences for delivery in this study? Will hybrid teaching emerge, as feared by some participants? Will face-to-face working and teaching in Covid-secure spaces offer the same flexibility as the online space did, and which mode will be preferred? Most importantly, what is the students' response to the changes that have occurred since the start of the pandemic and which aspects of these changes would they like to maintain moving forward? These are all questions we would certainly like to answer and we remain open to a return to this research to provide a longitudinal perspective a year on from when Covid-19 first disrupted the UK EAP sector.

7.6. BALEAP 2021 Conference Q & A

For those who attended our presentation at the BALEAP conference, first of all, thank you for your support, and secondly, thank you for posting such important questions. If you have reached the end of this report, you may already have some of the answers to your questions but in order to respond directly, we have included all of your questions from the Zoom chat here and will respond to each one and in some cases refer you to the relevant section(s) of the report. We hope also that you will continue the discussion around this report on the forum where we will begin a thread for your questions/comments arising from this report.

Q: 'Will there be a follow-up report to see if any longer term impact?'

A: This is something we would very much like to do if we can secure funding. Even throughout the research process we were aware of just how quickly the landscape was changing and it would certainly be interesting to see how things have evolved throughout the period of online programme delivery and what will be maintained/discarded/adapted for this year's provision and beyond. We would also like to know how EAP colleagues are feeling one year on and whether their initial optimism or pessimism regarding EAP online has changed. Finally, it would be fascinating to capture the decisions in terms of 2021's mode of delivery now that a fully online provision might not be the only possibility available. In terms of whether there has been any long term impact, we think it is safe to say that those of us who experienced the EAP shift to online delivery in 2020 might never fully 'get over it' - for both good and bad reasons!

Q: ‘Did anyone talk about what they meant by a flipped approach?’

A: Yes, four interviewees commented at length on the approaches they adopted, which all align with the definition provided in section 5.1.6 of this report. One interviewee specifically mentioned how colleagues used to use the term to refer to just setting homework but that their understanding had changed. Some questionnaire respondents referred to flipped learning and this was specifically mentioned by 12 participants as an opportunity of online delivery. However, there was no space in the questionnaire for participants to elaborate on their understanding of this term and as such we are unable to ascertain whether there is a consensus among respondents as to what this really means.

Q: ‘For materials delivery in flipped learning, did you find much use of tools like Perusall?’

A: Of the 240 respondents, nobody specifically referred to Perusall.

Q: ‘What strategies do you think could possibly be made use of to improve student engagement in asynchronous activities towards the end of a course?’

A: We did not specifically collect data on strategies employed towards the end of a course, although we tend to feel that a principled and staged approach should be followed for the duration of a programme as early buy in from students is crucial. Some suggestions are Gilly Salmon’s e-tivities and 5 stage model.

Q: ‘Thinking about a blended or online approach, I wonder what it means for contact hours and the number of teachers required to cover a PS. I imagine it would be popular with administrations at universities, but would be difficult for teachers in precarious positions?’

Regardless of the number of synchronous hours, an EAP programme should still be the same number of teaching hours per week. The difference in an online environment is that these teaching hours may come in the form of asynchronous delivery such as moderating forums, monitoring engagement and providing feedback.

Q: ‘I wonder whether there may be differences between teachers' perceptions and the students'? E.g., Were the students happy with fewer hours of synchronous teaching?’

Unfortunately we did not collect student data but the perceptions from teachers based on feedback they received and their interactions with students is that on the whole students were satisfied with the online delivery. Just as the teacher data shows, trends can be observed but there are of course individuals whose preferences do not conform to these trends.

Q: ‘Are there any insights on how group size affects student (and tutor) satisfaction and attainment?’

A: Respondents tended to favour relatively small classes, although we did not collect data from students (see section 5.1.7).

Q: ‘Did you find anyone was actually positive about the logistics of hybrid teaching? (teaching online and in a classroom together)’

A: This was only really mentioned in around five of the interviews, particularly as some of the teachers had experienced it by the time the interviews took place in December 2020 and January 2021. Unfortunately, the overwhelming feeling they expressed was not a positive one, describing it as extremely stressful and potentially very ineffective also. This dual demand of having students

physically in front of you as well as some online was further complicated by the fact that the students physically present were in a Covid-secure classroom, which meant teachers and students wearing masks, all students 2m apart and no sharing of materials. The teachers commented that, as much as they would like to go back to face-to-face delivery, if they had to choose between hybrid, face-to-face in a Covid-secure classroom or online, they would choose online as it offered more flexibility and the ability to do collaborative activities. It is worth mentioning the two comments related to hybrid teaching that were also posted in the presentation chat:

'I have not done that 'blend' but an excellent and highly skilled colleague of mine mentioned that she was operating at the edge of her capabilities.'

'Never even met anyone who had a positive experience of hybrid teaching, student or teacher.'

Q: 'Did teachers say they would prefer online teaching or Covid-secure face-to-face?'

A: For the few teachers in the interviews who had experienced both online and face-to-face teaching in a Covid-secure classroom, their clear preference was for online. Though they were keen to get back to face-to-face, they realised that working with students who have to remain 2m apart, wearing masks and not sharing materials meant that very few interactive or collaborative activities could be successfully carried out, activities which are often core to EAP programmes. For these reasons, they commented that online delivery offered more flexibility and at least the option for students to participate in pair and group work.

Q: 'Sometimes students are Zoomed out. How do we manage it?'

A: To some extent this can be managed through shorter synchronous lesson time (e.g. 45 minutes was seen to be very effective) and fewer synchronous sessions per week.

Q: 'Did any of the respondents mention online teaching fatigue?'

A: Yes, a good number! Many felt that working online resulted in longer hours and a great deal of time in front of the screen, which then led to other health issues like dry eyes, headaches etc.

Q: 'From the perspective of trying to find work, though, it has been challenging. Has there been any consideration of hiring/letting instructors go etc. during this time?'

A: 2020 must have been challenging both for managers and for teachers in this respect. Managers expressed the paralysing situation the pandemic put them in with regard to recruitment, with some institutions keen to rein in finances because of fears of low student intakes. With such uncertainty around the prospects for international travel, managers had little to no idea of the number of students to expect, or indeed in some cases, even how many were actually enrolled once the programme began. Planning for staff-student ratios was therefore practically impossible for some. This, understandably, will have put teachers in a very precarious situation. The managers we interviewed stated that they tried to honour the contracts that had been offered, even if it meant a loss of income when there were fewer students on the programme. Some also, unfortunately, mentioned that it became quite apparent early on that some teachers were just not grasping the ability to teach online and therefore, they had to let them go or they themselves dropped out. Others soldiered on, but to the possible detriment of the students and to the coordinators who had to support them.

Q: ‘Did anyone mention that they were fed up with working from home?’

A: Yes, there was a sense that whilst some really appreciated the flexibility of working from home and not commuting, others found home working conditions challenging in terms of space, internet, hardware, and caring responsibilities. People reported finding it very difficult to ‘switch off’ as work and home life merged into one. It also had an impact on mental health and wellbeing with some feeling isolated and stuck inside all the time, which was probably also a reflection of lockdown.

Q: ‘We had students who were trying to work full time (mainly from China) and study on an intensive, pre-session course which made their engagement and preparation difficult. I feel this could always be an issue if they don't have to be here. Any thoughts?’

A: Yes, we believe this to be an issue also. Many respondents referred to the sense that when studying online there are other distractions, particularly when working from home. There is the temptation to multi-task and yes, even attempt to juggle full time work and full time study. Perhaps a clearer sense of the amount of work that will be involved in an online pre-session, as well as the importance of students’ full engagement with the course will need to be more deeply impressed upon students prior to enrolment.

Q: ‘For those teachers who have had to teach in-class and online simultaneously, how much training/support did they receive? Had their managers taught this way themselves?’

A: This hybrid approach was only mentioned by several interviewees and no, they did not receive any training/support in how to manage this. Their managers had not taught this way before either.

Q: ‘Another key area is whether teachers received training in developing effective online learning where possible or assistance in creating the courses?’

A: The feeling was that curriculum designers, materials writers, coordinators and managers received little or no training in developing effective online courses. Please refer to section 5.4 of this report. Many admitted themselves that they went into the transition to online delivery blind, and some acknowledged that if the course was successful, it was mostly down to a lot of luck and extremely hard work by teachers and the team as a whole.

Q: ‘Did teachers have the opportunity to receive instruction on technology?’

A: Yes, a high percentage of teachers did receive training, despite the hurried move online, and this was appreciated (see section 5.4). The focus of training did though tend to be on technology whilst many stated they would have liked more of a focus on online pedagogy. See section 5.4 of this report.

Q: ‘Did overseas universities/programmes respond?’

A: No. The research brief stipulated that the focus be on UK EAP provision only, since the project was being funded by BALEAP and conducted primarily for UK BALEAP members.

Q: ‘Perhaps we’ll come out of this as a stronger community of practitioners?’

A: Absolutely! We are sure this is what has happened and hopefully, this report is testament to that.

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9. Appendices

9.1. Appendix 1: Questionnaire

The impact of Covid-19 on the UK EAP sector

Our research aims to produce a report to be disseminated amongst BALEAP members, informing of the impact of Covid-19 on the UK EAP sector in the initial six months of the pandemic. If you were involved in UK EAP provision at some point during the period March- September 2020, we would very much appreciate your participation in this online questionnaire and also, if you are willing, a short online interview.

Your data will of course be confidential and anonymity guaranteed. Please read the information sheet provided in the link below to find out more about how this will be managed and contact Emma and Heléna at covidresearch@baleap.org if you have any questions.

Link to information sheet: <https://www.baleap.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/12/BALEAP- Information-sheet.docx>

*Required

1. I confirm that I was involved in UK EAP provision at some point during the period March – September 2020. *

Mark only one oval.

Yes

2. I confirm that I have read and understood the information provided and agree to participate in this online questionnaire. *

Mark only one oval.

Yes

3. I am willing to participate in a 20-30 minute online interview. *

Mark only one oval.

Yes No

4. My email address to be contacted for the interview is:

Instructions

We refer to EAP throughout but this may also apply to foundation courses and any other form of UK provision teaching student academic skills for university.

We recognise that particularly ADMINISTRATORS, MANAGERS and CO-ORDINATORS may have worked on multiple programmes during the period March-September 2020. For the purpose of this questionnaire, we ask that you try to answer IN GENERAL for the EAP programmes you were involved in, though we acknowledge that the experiences attached to each may have differed. We hope that some of the open questions and interviews will help to capture any variances.

For TEACHERS also, we appreciate that you may have been employed on more than one contract and/or at more than one institution. For this reason, we ask that you answer the questions in relation to THE FIRST PROGRAMME you were involved in during the period March-September 2020. There will be a brief opportunity at the end of the questionnaire to report on any other courses.

4. I have read and understand the instructions. *

Mark only one oval.

Yes

Background Information

6. Please state the name of the institution and/or company you worked for during the period March-September 2020. This will be used for interview sampling purposes only.

7. Which programme(s) were you involved in during the period March-September 2020? (Tick all that apply)

International foundation programme, International year one, Level 6 pathway, EAP pre-sessional, EAP in-sessional, ESP programme, Other:

8. What was your principal role during the period March-September 2020? * *Mark only one oval.*

Administrator Manager Co-ordinator Teacher Other:

9. Were you involved in student registration and admissions? * *Mark only one oval.*

Yes

No Skip to question 17

Student Admissions and Registration

10. How were students' language levels assessed for admission onto EAP programmes during the period March-September 2020? (Tick all that apply) IELTS

TOEFL

Pearson

Duolingo

EAP programme internal assessment Password test

Don't know Other:

11. How did the number of admissions onto EAP programmes during the period March-September 2020 compare to pre-Covid-19 programme admissions? *

Mark only one oval.

The number increased

The number decreased

The number stayed roughly the same Don't know

12. How did EAP programme admissions criteria during the period March- September 2020 compare to pre-Covid-19 programme admissions? *

Mark only one oval.

The criteria became more lenient The criteria became stricter

The criteria stayed roughly the same Don't know

13. How did the process of student registration onto EAP programmes during the period March-September 2020 compare to registration procedures pre-Covid- 19? *

Mark only one oval.

The registration process was more difficult

The registration process was easier

The registration process stayed roughly the same Don't know

14. Can you list up to three challenges you or your employer faced with online student registration and admissions onto EAP programmes during the period March-September 2020?

15. Can you list up to three successful strategies you or your employer adopted to face these challenges?

16. Can you list up to three opportunities that online student registration and admissions presented?

When referring to communication we mean everyday interactions with staff and students, not teaching specifically.

Technology in relation to teaching will be covered in a separate section.

Technology and Communication

17. What did you use for everyday communication with staff and students during the period March-September 2020? (Tick all that apply)

A VLE e.g. Blackboard, Moodle, Duo Microsoft Teams (or equivalent) Email

Zoom

Skype

Padlet

Telephone

Social media e.g. WhatsApp, Facebook

Other:

Please choose the extent of your agreement or disagreement using the following scale: 1 = definitely disagree; 2 = mostly disagree; 3 = mostly agree; 4 = definitely agree

18. In the absence of face-to-face communication, online communication was successful during the period March-September 2020. *

19. Can you list up to three challenges everyday online communication presented?

20. Can you list up to three successful strategies you or your employer adopted to face these challenges?

21. Can you list any opportunities everyday online communication presented for staff and/or students?

Please choose the extent of your agreement or disagreement using the following scale: 1 = definitely disagree; 2 = mostly disagree; 3 = mostly agree; 4 = definitely agree

Preparation and Support

22. I felt adequately prepared to carry out my job online. * *Mark only one oval.*

23. I felt my health and well-being were adequately considered. * *Mark only one oval.*

24. I felt students' health and well-being were adequately considered. * *Mark only one oval.*

25. I had adequate opportunity to engage in CPD (e.g. observations, peer observations, appraisals) online. *

26. I felt part of a community online with colleagues. * *Mark only one oval.*

27. Which aspects were included in any training you had during the period March- September 2020? (Tick all that apply)

I didn't receive any training

Use of VLE (e.g. Moodle, Blackboard, Duo)

Use of communication tools (e.g. Teams, Zoom, Padlet) Processes for online EAP registration

Determining criteria for online EAP admissions

Ensuring academic integrity of online assessment

Carrying out online assessments

Adapting face-to-face classroom materials for online delivery Theory of online pedagogy

Encouraging student engagement online

Promoting online collaboration

EAP programme orientation

Time management

Where and how to seek support

Health and well-being when working online

Other:

28. Which aspects of training would you have liked more input on? (Tick all that apply)

I didn't receive any training

Use of VLE (e.g. Moodle, Blackboard, Duo)

Use of communication tools (e.g. Teams, Zoom, Padlet) Processes for online EAP registration

Determining criteria for online EAP admissions

Ensuring academic integrity of online assessment

Carrying out online assessments

Adapting face-to-face classroom materials for online delivery Theory of online pedagogy

Encouraging student engagement online

Promoting online collaboration

EAP programme orientation

Time management

Where and how to seek support

Health and well-being when working online

Other:

29. Which other sources of support did you make use of? (Tick all that apply)

Central organisation IT/ technical support service Institutional/ company forums

Institutional/ company training programmes Online internet forums

Colleagues

Institutional/ company health and well-being support services Free online training programmes

BALEAP mailing list

Other

30. Is there anything else you would like to comment on regarding preparation and support?

31. Were you involved in the academic delivery of the EAP programme (e.g. teaching, co-ordinating, managing, course design, teacher training)? *

Mark only one oval.

Yes

No *Skip to question 61*

Please remember when answering questions specific to a programme to refer to the FIRST EAP programme you were involved in during the period March-September 2020.

For the purposes of this questionnaire, synchronous refers to teaching/learning activities in which the teacher and student(s) were engaging online at the same time. Asynchronous refers to teaching/learning activities which were uploaded for the student(s) to access in their own time.

EAP Delivery and Design

32. Which modes of delivery/materials/tools were included in the EAP programme? (Tick all that apply)

Synchronous whole class lessons, Synchronous small group lessons One-to-one tutorials
Synchronous pair/groupwork, Asynchronous pair/groupwork, Breakout rooms, Discussion forums (e.g. in Microsoft Teams channels), Live webinars/lectures, Pre-recorded presentations/lectures (e.g. PowerPoint, Panopto), Quiz tools (e.g. Kahoot/Google Forms), Online social events, Short student/teacher videos (e.g. on Flipgrid), Wiki or collaborative writing space (e.g. Microsoft OneNote), Flipped learning (e.g. asynchronous preparation for synchronous sessions), Word/PDF materials/course book, Other:

33. Approximately how many hours of synchronous provision (e.g. teaching, tutorials, webinars, live lectures etc.) did a student typically receive per week? (Please provide the answer in numerical form e.g. 10) *

34. Approximately how many hours of synchronous provision (e.g. teaching, tutorials, webinars, live lectures etc.) was a teacher involved in per week? (Please provide the answer in numerical form e.g. 10) *

Please choose the extent of your agreement or disagreement using the following scale: 1 = definitely disagree; 2 = mostly disagree; 3 = mostly agree; 4 = definitely agree

35. The amount of synchronous provision was appropriate in terms of student learning.

36. The amount of synchronous provision was appropriate in terms of teacher workload.

37. The tasks associated with asynchronous provision (e.g. preparation and feedback) were appropriate in terms of teacher workload. *

38. Approximately how many students were in a class? (Please provide the answer in numerical form e.g. 10)

39. The number of students in a class was appropriate. *

40. Students were adequately prepared for learning and participating in the EAP programme online. *

41. The students had adequate opportunity to practise their listening skills.

42. The students had adequate opportunity to practise their reading skills.

43. The students had adequate opportunity to practise their writing skills

44. The students had adequate opportunity to practise their speaking skills.

45. Overall, students were adequately prepared for their UK university degree courses.

46. Overall, I felt satisfied with delivering the EAP programme online.

47. Can you list up to three challenges EAP online delivery presented?

48. Can you list up to three successful strategies you or your employer adopted to face these challenges?

49. Can you list any opportunities EAP online delivery presented for staff and/or students?

50. For future post-Covid-19 EAP programmes, which do you think would be the optimum mode of EAP programme delivery? *

Mark only one oval.

Fully online

Fully face-to-face

Blended (e.g. some classes online, some face-to-face) Other:

Please remember when answering questions specific to a programme to refer to the first EAP programme you were involved in during the period March-September 2020.

For the purposes of this questionnaire, the term assessment refers to summative assessment used for evaluative purposes to determine students' progression onto university degree courses.

EAP Assessment and Feedback

51. Which skills were assessed for progression onto university degree courses? (Tick all that apply)

Listening Reading Writing Speaking

52. Did the EAP programme include online live exams? * *Mark only one oval.*

Yes

No

Don't know

53. Did the EAP programme include assessed coursework? * *Mark only one oval.*

Yes

No

Don't know

54. Which measures were taken to ensure academic integrity of live online exams and/or coursework assessments (i.e. to ensure cheating did not occur)? (Tick all that apply)

ID verification

Scanning test-taking environment for external aids/contraband items/assistants Mirror/phone camera to show computer screen

Lockdown browser

Only use of whiteboard for notes

Monitoring students' screen activity

Viva style oral defence of work

Plagiarism checker software (e.g. Turnitin)

None of these

Don't know

Other:

55. Which forms of feedback were used on the EAP programme? (Tick all that apply)

One-to-one verbal feedback

One-to-one written feedback

Class verbal feedback

Class written feedback

Checklists/marking criteria grids

Correction coding scheme to annotate work Online mark-up (e.g. through Turnitin)

Peer feedback (verbal) Peer feedback (written) Don't know

Other:

Please choose the extent of your agreement or disagreement using the following scale: 1 = definitely disagree; 2 = mostly disagree; 3 = mostly agree; 4 = definitely agree

56. Measures to ensure academic integrity online (e.g. plagiarism, cheating in exams etc.) were adequate.

57. Methods of online feedback were adequate for student learning and progression.

58. Can you list up to three challenges online assessment presented?

59. Can you list up to three successful strategies you or your employer adopted to face these challenges?

60. Can you list any opportunities online assessment presented for staff and/or students?

Final Comments

61. Were you working on the EAP programme in March when delivery moved online? If yes, could you briefly describe the overall effect this had on the staff and/or students?

62. Were you working on more than one EAP programme during the period March- September 2020? If yes, could you briefly describe how later EAP programme(s) compared to earlier EAP programme(s) in this period?

63. Is there anything else you would like to comment on about your experience of working on the online EAP programme(s) during the period March-September 2020?

9.2. Appendix 2: Information Sheet and Consent Form

INFORMATION SHEET AND CONSENT FORM

Project Title: The impact of Covid-19 on the UK EAP sector: An examination of how organisations delivering EAP were affected and responded in terms of academic delivery and operational procedures

Name of Researchers: Dr Emma Bruce and Ms Heléna Stakounis

Email: covidresearch@baleap.org

The Covid-19 pandemic prompted an emergency response from EAP providers with many having to move their provision online within a short space of time. Our research aims to produce a report to be disseminated amongst BALEAP members, informing of the impact of Covid-19 on the UK EAP sector in the initial six months of the pandemic. The research will provide an overview of the changes made to academic delivery and operations through quantitative data, as well as some detailed insights of individual experiences through qualitative data. The report will be useful for informing future decision-making, planning and strategy.

We are looking for participants who:

- were working in UK EAP provision (in any capacity E.g. teacher, co-ordinator, manager, administrator) at some point during the period March – September 2020
- are willing to participate in a 20 minute online questionnaire to share their experiences of what occurred in their EAP provision during the period March-September 2020
- may also be willing to provide their email addresses to be contacted for a 30-40 minute online interview to elaborate on these experiences

Our research has been reviewed and accepted by University of Reading Ethics Committee. We commit to keeping your personal information confidential and to presenting data anonymously. We ask you to disclose the name of your institution only for sampling purposes and to ensure we have a fair distribution of data across UK EAP providers.

If you have any further questions do please contact Heléna or Emma using the email address provided.

Please tick the boxes that apply.

1. I confirm that I was working in EAP provision (public or private sector) at some point during the period March – September 2020.	<input type="checkbox"/>
2. I confirm that I have read and understand the information for the above study. I have had the opportunity to consider the information, ask questions and have had these answered satisfactorily.	<input type="checkbox"/>
3. I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw at any time during my participation in this study without giving any reason. However, I also understand that 4 weeks after the end of the study, it will be impossible to remove data contributed through my participation.	<input type="checkbox"/>

4. I understand that any information given by me may be used in the proposed report, future reports, academic articles, publications or presentations by the researchers, but my personal information will not be included.	<input type="checkbox"/>
5. I understand that any interviews will be audio-recorded and transcribed and that data will be protected on encrypted devices and kept secure.	<input type="checkbox"/>
6. I understand that data will be kept according to University guidelines for a minimum of 10 years after the end of the study.	<input type="checkbox"/>
7. I agree to complete the online questionnaire as part of this study.	<input type="checkbox"/>
8. I am happy to be contacted to participate in an online interview and provide my email address to enable this. _____	<input type="checkbox"/>

9.3. Appendix 3: Interview Schedule

Interview schedule for administrators/managers/coordinators

This document provides a list of potential questions for the semi-structured interviews to be carried out with staff involved in the administering/ managing/ co-ordinating of EAP programmes.

EAP Programme Information

1. Can you describe the EAP programmes you were involved with during the period March-September 2020?
2. Can you describe your role in relation to the EAP programmes you were involved with during the period March-September 2020?

Student Admissions and Registration

3. Were student admissions onto the EAP programmes affected as a result of Covid-19?
4. Was student registration onto the EAP programmes affected as a result of Covid-19?

EAP Assessment for Progression

5. Did EAP assessment for progression change as a result of Covid-19?
6. Was the academic integrity of EAP assessments for progression affected as a result of Covid-19?

Online Communication

7. Was communication with EAP staff affected as a result of Covid-19?
8. Was communication with EAP students affected as a result of Covid-19?

Overall Experience and Support

9. What was your overall experience of administering/ managing/ co-ordinating EAP programmes during the period March-September 2020?
10. Did you feel supported in your role of administering/ managing/ co-ordinating EAP programmes during the period March-September 2020?

Interview schedule for EAP teachers and those involved in EAP course delivery or design

This document provides a list of potential questions for the semi-structured interviews to be carried out with staff involved in the administering/ managing/ co-ordinating of EAP programmes.

EAP Programme Information

1. Can you describe the EAP programmes you were involved with during the period March-September 2020?
2. Can you describe your role in relation to the EAP programmes you were involved with during the period March-September 2020?

Online Interaction

3. Was student engagement affected as a result of delivering EAP online?
4. Was general interaction between students and between teacher and students affected as a result of delivering EAP online?

5. Was interaction between staff affected as a result of delivering EAP online?

Online Assessment and Feedback

6. Was EAP assessment affected as a result of delivering EAP online?
7. Was feedback affected as a result of delivering EAP online?

Overall Experience and Support

8. What was your overall experience of teaching EAP online during the period March-September 2020?
9. Did you feel supported in your role of teaching EAP online during the period March-September 2020?

9.4. Appendix 4: Design and Delivery: Challenges

Theme	No
Student engagement: easily distracted / motivation, skipping asynchronous activities, not joining in forums / not prepared / participation e.g. logged on but not joining in	84
Technical issues, connectivity, (Lack of) training / prep / support for teachers i.e. creating VLE / adapting materials / online pedagogy / lack of technical expertise / becoming familiar with tech / lack of knowledge of digital pedagogy / self-reliance	80
Increased workload: online admin e.g. setting up Teams, adapting materials, producing asynchronous materials, responding to forum, marking work done in asynchronous sessions, designing course	51
Assessments / exams – change of format / difficult to administer / integrity / authenticity of student work / standardisation	28
Time zones	19
Building rapport / relationships / community (T-T, T-S, S-S)	19
Reduced opportunity to speak / interact / ask questions / communicate	17
Can't 'see' students / cameras off	16
Asynchronous materials and activities – time-consuming / demanding / need for clarity of instructions	16
Socialisation / lack of natural interaction / language immersion	15
Difficult to gauge understanding / progress	12
Initial 'deskilling' of teachers e.g. not teaching anymore / prescriptive course design / mechanistic / not allowed to deviate / tedious design / adapting to online teaching / learning / new environment / teacher-led synchronous delivery / teacher talking time	26
Difficult to monitor / ensuring all Ss are engaged / managing group discussion	11
Feedback – not easy to: support weaker Ss / offer advice while Ss write / provide formative feedback / offer 1-on-1 feedback in synchronous sessions / time consuming to write feedback	10
Soulless / lack of human contact / isolation / feeling disconnected / well-being	10
No chance to adapt to UK life / uni campus / city / culture / academic culture	9
Listening – hard to assess / availability of materials / lack of practice	9
Expectations / preconceived ideas about online learning (T and Ss)	9

Time management – activities take longer online	8
At-home environment / juggling responsibilities	8
Not enough synchronous time (e.g. reduced from 21 hrs per week to 3 hrs)	7
Screen fatigue / eye strain	7
Break out rooms – not speaking English, silence, cameras not on	6
Creating / providing (tech) support / training to Ss and colleagues	6
Lack of technical expertise (Ss) / becoming familiar with tech	5
Large classes	5
Lack of student community / class dynamic	5
Lack of understanding from senior staff of differences with face-to-face learning	4
Ensuring all skills / aspects of curriculum covered	4
Marking- difficult to check asynchronous work / chasing students for work	4
No non-verbal clues to aid understanding	4
Doesn't account for different types of learners e.g. kinaesthetic	3
Appropriate devices	3
Pace of lessons – slow / fast / challenging	3
Lesson observation	3
Synchronous lessons too long	3
Need for student autonomy	2
Materials not designed for online delivery / poorly designed	3
Recording – reduces interaction?	2
Teacher resistance / scepticism	2
Using L1	2
No chance to trial materials / assessments	2
Finding research resources to inform pedagogy Not knowing what to prepare students for Hard to address student concerns	1 each

Anxiety from pandemic Is 'internet problems' a bona fide excuse? Pairwork Students less likely to ask for help Oral presentations Free riders in groupwork → resentment Sharing documents Recruitment of teachers Online communication takes longer and much more preparation/planning Decisions coming from above	
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9.5. Appendix 5: Findings from Questionnaire Items on Training (Overall)

27. Which aspects were included in any training you had during the period March-September 2020? (Tick all that apply)

n=240	No of respondents	%
I didn't receive any training	23	9.6%
Use of VLE (e.g. Moodle, Blackboard, Duo)	134	55.8%
Use of communication tools (e.g. Teams, Zoom, Padlet)	188	78.3%
Processes for online EAP registration	14	5.8%
Determining criteria for online EAP admissions	15	6.3%
Ensuring academic integrity of online assessment	86	35.8%
Carrying out online assessments	109	45.4%
Adapting face-to-face classroom materials for online delivery	102	42.5%
Theory of online pedagogy	59	24.6%
Encouraging student engagement online	115	47.9%
Promoting online collaboration	80	33.3%
EAP programme orientation	82	34.2%
Time management	29	12.1%
Where and how to seek support	103	42.9%
Health and well-being when working online	92	34.2%

9.6. Appendix 6: Findings from Questionnaire Items on Desire for More Training

28. Which aspects of training would you have liked more input on? (Tick all that apply)

OVERALL

n=240	No of respondents	%
Use of VLE (e.g. Moodle, Blackboard, Duo)	29	12.1%
Use of communication tools (e.g. Teams, Zoom, Padlet)	47	19.6%
Processes for online EAP registration	15	6.3%
Determining criteria for online EAP admissions	18	7.5%
Ensuring academic integrity of online assessment	76	31.7%
Carrying out online assessments	70	29.2%
Adapting face-to-face classroom materials for online delivery	97	40.4%
Theory of online pedagogy	122	50.8%
Encouraging student engagement online	102	42.5%
Promoting online collaboration	84	35%
EAP programme orientation	18	7.5%
Time management	41	17.1%
Where and how to seek support	23	9.6%
Health and well-being when working online	63	26.3%

28. Which aspects of training would you have liked more input on? (Tick all that apply)
BY ROLE

	Coordinator (n=37)		Teacher (n=30)		Manager/ director (n=47)	
	No	%	No	%	No	%
Use of VLE (e.g. Moodle, Blackboard, Duo)	4	10.8%	18	13.9%	5	10.6%
Use of communication tools (e.g. Teams, Zoom, Padlet)	11	29.7%	21	16.2%	9	19.2%
Processes for online EAP registration	2	5.4%	5	3.9%	7	14.9%
Determining criteria for online EAP admissions	3	8.1%	9	6.9%	7	14.9%
Ensuring academic integrity of online assessment	13	35.1%	31	23.9%	21	44.7%
Carrying out online assessments	17	46%	30	23.1%	19	40.4%
Adapting face-to-face classroom materials for online delivery	17	46%	55	42.3%	18	38.3%
Theory of online pedagogy	22	59.5%	70	53.9%	18	38.3%
Encouraging student engagement online	17	46%	59	45.4%	17	36.2%
Promoting online collaboration	16	43.2%	47	36.2%	15	31.9%

9.7. Appendix 7: Design and Delivery: Strategies

Theme	No
Formal support e.g. coordinators support Ts / tech support on hand during lessons / digital leads / team teaching / buddy system / Whatsapp group / virtual staffroom / teacher forums / coordinators send regular emails / video guides on how to use the tech / mock lessons	52
Informal / peer support e.g. discussion / sharing / learning from colleagues	24
Tools / apps / ideas to encourage engagement e.g. chat / thumbs up / polls / quizzes / emojis / apps	17
Extra support for weak or absent students e.g. emails with extra tasks / mechanisms to identify students at risk of not achieving targets / targeted co-ordinator interventions / conversations with 'problem' students / additional skills workshops / forms to monitor students with issues	16
Amendments to assessments / processes: take home assessments instead of invigilation of controlled exams / integrated assessment / continuous assessment / collect synchronous writing samples / lockdown browsers / amend deadlines / Ss sign 'honesty' declaration	15
1 to 1 tutorials	12
Async chats with ss to develop community / social events / informal activities e.g. conversation clubs / discussion forum	12
Flipped learning (e.g. Articulate Rise / Storyline / H5P)	12
Small groups / classes	11
Breakout rooms	11
Good induction for students	11
Flexibility in formats and material / lesson content / adapt content of classes to respond to students' questions / having a plan B	11
Collaborative work - in and out of class / student-centred	9
Nomination / focus on diff ss in each lesson / assign roles / change pairing	9
Short lessons / make synch sessions lighter / reduce to bare essentials	9
Recorded lessons to watch post lesson / all materials available	8
Pastoral support / once weekly coordinator - student reps meetings / drop in q&a sessions	8
Change platform (e.g. some Ss prefer Zoom)	7
Institutional technical support	6
CPD e.g. BALEAP / in-house	6
Adapted attendance system e.g. graded approach rather than binary option / engagement in asynchronous learning / track completion / present but not participating	6
Humanise teaching and learning: laugh with students / make jokes / make lessons human and fun / small talk / show empathy	6
Shared writing e.g. OneNote / use chat for short writing tasks / screen share to see writing progress / shared word docs	6
Explanation e.g. importance of camera on / participation / using English	6
Adapt materials to maximise participation/ fully rewrite course / staging / pacing /	6
Monitoring / keeping a check on communication / visiting breakout rooms	5
Clear lists of asynchronous activities for ss to do each day / making instructions clear and consistent / workplan	5

Encourage autonomy / study skills	5
Hard work (e.g. individuals or coordinators before course)	4
Off screen breaks / longer lunch break / regular breaks	4
Adapting T schedule / reduce teaching hours / allocated more time in the workload for each tutor for asynchronous delivery prep	4
Reflective tasks e.g. recorded group discussions plus reflection (written or audio format)	4
Hardware e.g. provide a dongle for connectivity / VPN / adoption of adaptive tools requiring lower bandwidth and tools available on a range of devices / compress videos	4
Online culture trips / virtual tour / employing staff already familiar with the city and cultural context / using examples from the city in course material and in classes	4
Workplan for teachers / prescriptive schemes of work / lesson plans for online delivery	4
Monitor progress through regular submission of work / online monitored tasks / monitoring VLE / submit presentations	4
Ongoing feedback on weekly work / Reduce written feedback / audio feedback / no feedback	4
Regular timetable / repetition	4
Patience (tech probs)	3
Flipgrid	3
Keep it simple - no breakout rooms, polls, quizzes / low tech approach	3
Reduce sync time and have more async	3
Concept checking-questions / mini summaries	3
Reduce async work / shorter tasks / bite size materials e.g. presentations	3
Advise students which parts to skip / review asynch content to make it achievable / more/better asynchronous work tied to lesson content	3
Experimenting with different pedagogy and tools to see what worked better/didn't work / vary lessons	3
Well edited and double-checked material / planning	3
Taking time for ss / build trust or confidence	3
Conducting research about student engagement with asynchronous materials / base design on theory / research-informed practice	3
Materials designed around issues arising in group work e.g. freeriding / integrity	2
Observations	2
Turnitin	2
Open door policy	2
VLE - make some tasks compulsory / clear design on VLE	2
Student buddy system /helping each other	2
Remind staff to take care of wellbeing / keep staff and students relaxed	2
Moving timetable to earlier start and finish	2
Increase synch teaching	2
Course design to take into account workloads/screen time	2
Promote good working practices / establish routine	2

Office hours	1 each
Careful standardisation and moderation	
Getting used to pauses before stepping in	
Liaising with departments: how to support better student engagement	
Admin support	
Draw on students' knowledge of tech	
Read on screen faces	
Take time out when needed	
Divide students into 2 groups - those who did the prep and those who didn't	
Insisting students turn cameras on	
Give ss list of tech requirements	
Digital access and hardship fund	
No sync work without T present	
Meetings with programme leads/academics/current students / access to lectures recorded on campus	

9.8. Appendix 8: Design and Delivery: Opportunities

Theme	No
Chance for teachers to upskill / Experimentation with new media / tools	72
Forced reflection on pedagogy / improved materials and assessments / new approaches	19
Flexibility for teachers and/or students	18
Student autonomy	18
Teachers can be based anywhere / no need to commute / easier for recruitment	18
Collaborative work e.g. shared documents / interactive tools / text analysis	18
Students can be based anywhere / accessibility	14
Chance for quiet / shy students to participate through different channels / less exposed / time to think before responding	13
Flipped learning, more control over input, easier to teacher difficult content, maximise class time, students more prepared	12
Feedback – iterative, immediate, individual, easier (screen share), personalised, audio	11
Better relationships / bonds: teacher-student / teacher-teacher / student-student	8
Teacher support network / online community	8
New way of teaching / blended learning – good for the future	7
Admin – no room bookings, no paper, merge / collapse classes	7
Access to CPD e.g. conferences / webinars	6
Monitoring progress, easier to ‘see’ learning e.g. One Note, mini tests	5
Consultations, easier, more immediate	5
Shorter / more engaging activities	4
Small classes	4
Recorded lessons / discussions etc / more data	4
Authenticity / fit for purpose	4
Exemplar of practice to colleagues in the wider uni / offer advice / support	3
Students can focus on learning rather than adapting to life in UK	3

Partner / team teaching	3
Communication – faster / more often	2
More comfortable / less stress	2
Colleagues sharing more	2
Better attendance	2
Enhanced digital literacy for students	2
More speaking practice	2
Students can practice / have a number of attempts	2
Easier teacher observation Less ongoing prep as all materials already online No teacher absence Humanised learning / level playing field Quicker marking No discipline issues Reflective journal Richer learning experience Teacher is facilitator More inclusive provision Chance for action research Larger classes Developing writing skills Everyone learnt to be more sensitive and sympathetic More interaction between students Interaction more civil and considered Less expensive for students Recognising contributions of colleagues	1 each

9.9. Appendix 9: Assessment and Feedback: Strategies

Theme	No
Clear instructions or learner training e.g. on plagiarism / expectations	25
Measures to ensure security e.g. cameras on, lockdown browser, proctoring software, recording screen, live invigilation, scanning room, ID check, phone off, declaration	19
Practice exams / mocks / rehearsal / model answers	16
Turnitin	14
Staff training / standardization	13
Portfolios / drafts / process writing / continuous assessment e.g. small asynchronous writing samples / weekly formative assessment	12
Viva	11
Design bespoke assessments which are difficult to reproduce by 3 rd party e.g. include reflective or personal element / link to content	6
Amend time allowances e.g. stricter so no time to cheat or script discussion / more time	6
Reduce no of summative assessments / cancel (Listening) exams	5
Provide tech help to students e.g. through IT support / chat services	4
2 nd or 3 rd marking	4
Communicate with students to reassure them e.g. weekly focus group / change mindset or culture	4
Feedback – give less / copy and paste / get more manpower	3
Amend assessment criteria e.g. simplified / use tick boxes	3
Multiple invigilators e.g. to deal with tech issues	3
Feedback: formative to ensure consistency / variety e.g. tutor and peer feedback / self-assessment / monitor own progress	3
Vary question order / change essay topics / different version for different time zones	3
Moderation / use substitute grade (e.g. if system crashes)	2
Recording speaking exams to review later	2
Backup exams for resits (e.g. if tech issues)	2

Integrate tasks e.g. listening to speak / take home RTW essay	2
Submissions: hand in late work to admin (not teachers) / extend deadlines if tech issues	2
Administration: send hard copies of criteria sheets to staff so not juggling so much on screen / provide laptops e.g. to refugees	2
Check summative work against earlier writing Automatic marking Reduce work count 2-stage assessments Groupwork Collaborate with data protection team to manage privacy and security Trials of new assessments / exams Collaborate with other HE institutions Hard work Individual presentation (not group) Synchronous timed writing in live session	1 each

9.10. Appendix 10: Assessment and Feedback: Opportunities

Theme	No
Improvements: Chance to change / re-evaluate (outdated) assessments OR implement new / innovative modes e.g. viva / virtual poster / narrated PPT / PBL / rethink teaching and question LOs	17
CPD opportunities / upskilling e.g. online feedback / digital literacy / video recording	11
Recording speaking tests: easier administration e.g. paired speaking / marking	10
Automated marking: easier / reduced marking load	8
Less stress for students (e.g. portfolio / open book / own home / recording alone)	6
Ease of marking: blind / second / triple and elimination of errors	5
More authentic / realistic: working at home / students allowed to do research as long as they provide references - better washback	5
Electronic feedback – easier / quicker	4
Focus on process / developmental / assessment for learning / more reflective assessment on process of learning	4
Portfolio assessment	3
Increased student autonomy	3

No need to book rooms	3
Inclusivity – students with dyslexia / disability easily catered for / able to take students from diverse backgrounds (not normally allowed)	3
No commuting to exam venue / take assessments anywhere in world	3
Scaffolding collaboration between students	2
Higher marks	2
Colleagues sharing ideas / collaboration	2
Students can record and practice and re-record based on feedback	2
Impetus needed to move assessment online (long overdue) Easier standardisation Highlight need to invest in lockdown browser to university Flexibility for staff and students Highlight language as an issue across institution Students views / voice taken into account Easier data analysis Cheating Fewer no shows Staff more involved in assessment / more responsibility Interesting to see what students are doing in tests Some students submitted early – spread marking load Integrated assessment	1 each