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The Impact of COVID-19 on the Well-Being of University Lecturers in Slovakia and Norway - Best Practices

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**FACULTY
OF ECONOMICS**
MATEJ BEL UNIVERSITY
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Foreword

The COVID-19 pandemic affected schools and universities around the world almost overnight, affecting 1.57 billion students in 191 countries. This unprecedented situation significantly impacted on the lives of students, whether they were pursuing studies abroad or in their own country. Distance education, which was immediately introduced as a measure to safeguard against the spread of the COVID-19 pandemic, resulted in educational institutions and their staff having to become rapidly familiar with new methods of teaching via an electronic medium. Higher education was also a part of these changes, and it is at this level that digital technologies have had their most far-reaching impact in recent decades.

This report has been prepared by a Slovak-Norwegian team of university lecturers based on an online bilateral initiative entitled: 'Exchange of Experiences Between University Lecturers from Norway and Slovakia During the COVID-19 Pandemic and the Impact on Their Well-Being'. Supported by Iceland, Liechtenstein and Norway through the EEA and Norway Grants (www.eeagrants.sk www.norwaygrants.sk), the purpose of the initiative is to promote the development of closer co-operation between Slovakia and Norway. This kind of initiative is a very good way of exchanging experiences in the pedagogical and scientific areas, and additionally deepening co-operation in future common areas of interest. In the period of dynamic changes during the COVID-19 pandemic, it was necessary to react quickly to sustain competitiveness and to prepare students for the labour market. This initiative is aimed at raising concerns about the high workload of university lecturers during the COVID-19 pandemic, an important area of study since data on university lecturers and their workload is largely absent. The report starts by highlighting the immediate impact of the pandemic on the higher education sector, the specificities of post-secondary education in Slovakia and Norway, and some areas of impact that are not immediately visible but are very significant and will manifest themselves in the medium and long term.

The merit of this report is in its identification of the common challenges faced by university lecturers during the COVID-19 pandemic, its sharing of real experiences, its exchange of best practices, and its suggestions for a development of common strategies to bring improvement. We hope that the results of this report can increase awareness of the workload and well-being of university lecturers in Slovakia, within the specific conditions of the COVID-19 pandemic. Information from the Norwegian system of teaching at universities, and the inspiration and application of the acquired knowledge from both countries, will be a helpful and beneficial contribution to the Slovak education system and its universities.

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The EEA and Norway Grants represent the contribution of Iceland, Liechtenstein and Norway towards a green, competitive and inclusive Europe. There are two overall objectives: reduction of economic and social disparities in Europe, and to strengthen bilateral relations between the donor countries and 15 EU countries in Central and Southern Europe and the Baltics. The three donor countries cooperate closely with the EU through the Agreement on the European Economic Area (EEA). The donors have provided €3.3 billion through consecutive grant schemes between 1994 and 2014. For the period 2014-2021, the EEA and Norway Grants amount to €2.8 billion.

The priorities for this period are:

#1 Innovation, Research, Education and Competitiveness

#2 Social Inclusion, Youth Employment and Poverty Reduction

#3 Environment, Energy, Climate Change and Low Carbon Economy

#4 Culture, Civil Society, Good Governance and Fundamental Rights

#5 Justice and Home Affairs

Eligibility for the Grants mirror the criteria set for the EU Cohesion Fund aimed at member countries where the Gross National Income (GNI) per inhabitant is less than 90% of the EU average. The EEA and Norway Grants scheme consists of two financial mechanisms. The EEA Grants are jointly financed by Iceland, Liechtenstein and Norway, whose contributions are based on their GDP. Norway Grants are financed solely by Norway.

Executive summary

This report *The Impact of COVID-19 on the Well-Being of University Lecturers in Slovakia and Norway - Best Practices* delivers details about practice experience between university lecturers and professors and the impact on their well-being. The project 'Exchange of Experiences Between University Lecturers from Norway and Slovakia During the COVID-19 Pandemic and the Impact on Their Well-Being' was a unique opportunity to collect and analyse reliable information about the teaching process in Norway and Slovakia.

The consequences of the COVID-19 pandemic which we are now experiencing in higher education are well documented, but it is debatable which of these will leave a mark on the various institutions in the medium and long term. The lack of references to similar crises in the past makes it impossible to predict what may happen in the immediate future. Lecturers and teachers were significantly affected in the workplace and professionally, the most obvious impact being the requirement to move the teaching to a virtual environment. Almost overnight, students decamped from their classrooms and returned to their homes, to where online classes were streamed in the following months. Students spent most of their learning hours having lessons via their computer, as well as spending additional time on virtual platforms. The closure of schools and the severe restrictive measures meant there were immediate economic, social and psychological consequences on the lives of university students. As part of our initiative, we conducted four workshops involving the students themselves, emphasising the importance of the students' opinions.

This report, prepared by an international team of lecturers from the higher education sector, begins by highlighting the immediate impacts of the pandemic on the university sector, both in terms of the specifics of online teaching, preparation, use of various communication platforms and experiences with implementation. The report focusses on areas such as student motivation, communication platforms used during the COVID-19 pandemic in Norway and Slovakia, tips and good practices to aid troubleshooting, psychosocial consequences such as Zoom fatigue and – especially – the impact on well-being among university lecturers.

The present report focusses on the specificities of online education during the COVID-19 pandemic in Slovakia and Norway. It is a unique opportunity to collect, analyse and compare reliable information about the teaching process in Norway and Slovakia, which we hope will be inspiring.



Photo: Matej Bel University, Faculty of Economics, Slovakia (2022)



Photo: Kristiania University College, Norway (2022)

Introduction

Education officials were forced to cancel classes and close the doors to campuses across the world in response to the growing coronavirus outbreak. One of the major consequences of COVID-19 in educational settings was the transition from face-to-face instruction to emergency remote teaching to maintain teaching and learning quality standards (United Nations Educational Scientific Cultural Organization, 2020; Garcia et al., 2021). This put unprecedented pressure on lecturers and teachers around the world, raising significant concerns about their workload and well-being. Studies have shown a marked increase in stress and burnout in schoolteachers (Pellerone, 2021) and technostress among university lecturers during the pandemic due to a variety of subjective and objective reasons (Penado-Abilleira et al., 2021). The most effective tool in keeping student retention and maintaining access to learning has been online courses and most teachers and lecturers moved to online modes of teaching in a matter of days, although with only limited external support (Clinton, 2020; Norman, 2020). The pressure to adapt to online teaching and learning, in trying circumstances, challenged teachers' and lecturers' confidence in their teaching. According to Fray et al. (2022) despite working incredibly hard for their students, they felt dispensable and unappreciated.

There is no doubt that this difficult and unprecedented period has had an emotional impact on the whole of society in general (Wang et al. 2020). In this regard, several investigations have pointed out that the greatest impact on students has been on their mental health and mental well-being; depression and stress have become worldwide pandemic issues (Rutkowska et al. 2021.) The available literature highlights the multifaceted issues that have affected the lives of not only students but also teachers and lecturers since the pandemic began, including the changing government recommendations, increased workloads, and increased psychological challenges to the well-being of both students and teachers. The move to distance learning caused a decline in feelings of achievement (Kraft et al., 2020), increased emotional exhaustion (Chan et al., 2021) and reduced teacher well-being (Hascher et al., 2021; Alves et al., 2021). With the current educational situation, we must reflect upon how to promote teachers' and lecturers' psychological well-being both in the present day and post-COVID-19 environment.

One of the primary aims of this report is to showcase best practice from both countries. The report is comprised of four chapters with accompanying illustrations, supplementary tables and electronic visualisation components, and concludes with policy recommendations on actions to be taken at the level of higher education systems and by higher education institutions themselves. This report provided a synthesis of experiences in the areas of education and science among university lecturers from Norway and Slovakia during the COVID-19 pandemic, and the impact on their well-being.

SPECIFICS OF ONLINE EDUCATION IN NORWAY AND SLOVAKIA

In this section, we describe the specifics of online education in Norway and Slovakia, including the seven different points in teachers' learning design and the transition from full-time teaching in-person to teaching in an online space.

Norway

Online education is a form of education where students use their home computers connected to the internet. Computer-based training, web-based training, internet-based training, online training, e-learning (electronic learning), m-learning (mobile learning), computer-aided distance education - online education goes by many names and comes in a variety of styles.

Kristiania University College (KUC) has established a professional-administrative department (PedTek) under the vice-rector of education and consists of the Center for Educational Development and the Learning Technology Center. The department assists Kristiania University College's academic environment in the development of teaching quality as well as in the use and development of digital learning resources.

The PedTek department's areas of responsibility are:

- the college's pedagogical development work, college pedagogy and technology-supported learning.
- initiating and leading innovative projects to raise the quality of education
- facilitating increased research on their own teaching practice in collaboration with the academic communities.
- contributing to raising competence among subject staff within college pedagogy, and to assist in the pedagogical use of technology in teaching through counselling, guidance, and training.
- contributing to quality improvement in higher education through self-initiated development work, evaluation of teaching and other professional activity, and teaching communication (KUC, 2022).

PedTek offers various tools, courses, projects and supervision in connection with education. One of those offers is *PedPrat*; PedPrat is a learning arena for the informal sharing of ideas and knowledge about pedagogy and teaching. PedPrat is an arena where the teacher or lecturer can share ideas and experiences, as well as discuss teaching-related challenges and the questions they face when meeting with their students. This is an arena for knowledge sharing for everyone who works with or is interested in educational issues (KUC, 2022). PedTek have developed a form that can be useful for the teacher when he/she starts planning and designing individual sessions.

Table 1 The 7 different points in teachers' learning design

1. Duration and location in time	How many minutes, and should the activity take place before, during or after the session you are now planning?
2. Intended learning outcome	Which learning outcome (or sub-learning outcome) should the activity focus on? This is used where the activity has a clear goal.
3. Contents	A brief description of the activity and its content with reference to any syllabus.
4. Asynchronous activity and tools	Asynchronous activities are not performed simultaneously by everyone, but when it suits the student best. Which, if any?
5. Synchronous activity and tools	Synchronous activities require all students to be online, simultaneously, and in the same application. Which, if any?
6. Expectations for the students	What are the rules for discussion and collaboration, and what is expected as regards effort and learning?
7. Formative evaluation activity	Any activity where students are evaluated (short checkpoints controlled by you, not by the school).

Source: Own elaboration

Slovakia

Online teaching at higher education institutions in Slovakia was not common before the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic. However, online education itself is not a novelty. Even before the pandemic, a number of companies offered online courses; these, however, were not traditional educational institutions, but commercial enterprises and commercially offered educational courses. Their role was primarily to increase the readiness of individuals for the labour market, and to provide start-up entrepreneurs with basic information on health care, social security, the tax system, etc. Online courses focussed on training related to changes in legislation (value-added tax, accounting, amortisation, etc.) were quite widespread.

In higher education institutions, the face-to-face/in-person form of teaching was the basis of both full-time and part-time studies in the period before the COVID-19 pandemic. Only a few universities offered selected study programmes that could be taken in a combined or purely online form, and these were almost exclusively part-time. For example, in 2015, The School of Management (Vysoká škola manažmentu), was the only higher education institution in Slovakia offering the possibility of completing a bachelor's degree online (Melicheríková, Piovarci, 2015). At several colleges, attempts to create online educational courses had already been made before the pandemic (either on the college's own initiative or as part of various projects), but these attempts failed in most cases. The main reasons for the failure of online courses at Slovak higher education institutions have been identified by several studies, and are mainly the result of following circumstances: inadequate structure of the online course, insufficient support and technical support from the college, insufficient experience with online learning, both from the students and the lecturers themselves, insufficient student access to the necessary technology, etc. (Melicheríková, Piovarci, 2015).

The COVID-19 pandemic represents a significant external factor that has significantly affected the educational system in Slovakia. Despite previous, rather negative experiences with online courses, higher education institutions have had to introduce online learning due to state-wide measures to prevent the spread of COVID-19. The transition to online teaching was highly differentiated across universities and depended mainly on the nature of the study programmes (theoretically-oriented study programmes were easier to transition to online teaching than study programmes based on field exercises, laboratory experiments, physical fitness tests, or the necessity to gain practice by treating patients), and on the existing technical equipment of the college/faculty (technically-oriented colleges were better prepared to start online teaching than the social science and/or humanities-oriented colleges). In addition, the readiness of students and university lecturers themselves was a key factor in the successful introduction of online education into the practice of Slovak higher education institutions.



Computer room of Matej Bel University, Faculty of Economics (Slovakia), 2022

1.1 Digital learning templates

A digital learning template can help the teacher or lecturer make planning more explicit. It is a tool and a method for planning and designing learning activities and teaching, enabling a greater focus on what the student is doing, their learning experiences and their activities. A digital learning template helps the teacher or lecturer to break down the teaching process into small modules, make student activity visible, and match the learning activities to learning outcomes. Teachers and lecturers are used to preparing teaching and learning materials, activities, and assessments, and with this resource they have materials which give structure to their work. When the teacher or lecturer is going to teach online, he or she may want to think carefully about what type of template to use for a particular type of teaching; which tools should be used and how should they set up the sessions so that the students get the best possible learning outcomes?

Before starting the actual online teaching, it is important that the following helpful steps are completed:

1. Teachers and lecturers should be given clear instructions on how to implement distance learning.
2. Staff must be aware of what technologies (hardware and software) are at their disposal to facilitate distance learning, and the IT department needs to be ready to support the teachers whenever necessary.
3. Teachers should be provided with tutorials and online training.
4. Workplaces need to be equipped with appropriate modern technology to facilitate distance learning.
5. Processes should be adjusted and adapted across the university to meet the needs of operating in an online space (accelerate digitalisation).

Some frameworks have already been set for the teaching in the semester. There is a three-part division of teaching activities in place, where something must be pre-recorded, something must take place synchronously and something must take place in groups on campus. In this module, the main focus is on what is to take place digitally. What happens digitally can and does help to facilitate the teaching that will take place in groups on campus later.

When a teacher or lecturer is going to teach digitally, it is of paramount importance that he or she is familiar with, and has an understanding of, the digital tools they will be using. Kristiania University College (KUC) uses Zoom as a standard tool for digital teaching and recording. It is important to familiarise oneself well with the software, so the teacher or lecturer knows the opportunities and limitations of their own learning template. It is a good idea to start with the tools that the teacher or lecturer is already familiar with; as their confidence grows, they can use more of the features available to them through this particular software. It is possible to combine different tools to compose reliable resources which offer a substitute to auditorium and classroom teaching. There should not be too many activities, and they should not be too long; as with all teaching, variety and participation are important.

There are three helpful tips:

- be aware of the learning outcomes the session will build on when you make your plans
- use both dissemination and student activities for each intended learning outcome
- run short sequences (5 to 10 minutes) where you, as the teacher, vary between dissemination activities and varied student activities.

1.2 A brief overview of the central terms relevant to online teaching

Synchronous communication

With synchronous communication we think of a 'live' communication situation where the communicator and recipients meet in real time and experience the same thing at the same time. This gives the communicator an opportunity to adjust their own communication there and then, go a little deeper into certain points, use the whiteboard to draw and explain any particular points, and so forth. Synchronous communication also opens up the lessons and allows for more spontaneous activities, such as the opportunity for students to ask questions along the way, being able to 'ask for the floor', convey questions via Chat, substantiate and exemplify questions by sharing their own screen with the other participants, and so on. All such activities should take place in accordance with the 'house rules' which should already have been communicated.

The disadvantage is that our students may be prevented from following a scheduled synchronous session, usually because of technical problems or problems with the Internet. Furthermore, there are challenges related to privacy and the GDPR. These can be taken care of by making all or parts of the dissemination and interaction asynchronous - 'asynchronous dissemination' and 'asynchronous student activities'.

Synchronous student activities

Synchronous activity is a 'live event' where everyone participates in the same activity at the same time. Here are some examples of the types of tools and activities available:

- student response systems such as Mentimeter, Kahoot, Learning Catalytics and others, including 'Polling' in Zoom
- plenary discussions in Zoom where the lecturer or teacher acts as chair and keeps track of those who have 'hands up' (Raise Hand), at the same time following the Zoom Chat (in large classes an assistant can be used to control the list of speakers)
- group discussions and other activities that take place synchronously using Breakout Rooms in Zoom
- student presentations, where the presenting student can be given a role as a co-host in Zoom
- role-playing games in Zoom; student groups have their own meetings where they do a role-play and make a video recording of it
- in Slovakia (Matej Bel University) we use the e-learning portal: LMS Moodle, and the online communication platform: MS Teams
- Prezi is another platform available for creating more interactive presentations
- Office 365 includes other digital tools available for learning (e.g., Whiteboard, Excel, etc.)
- Slido is ideal for increasing student interaction and engagement during lessons (especially with larger numbers of students)
- Camtasia, OBS, and Prezi Video are all useful for creating video content with educational material



Asynchronous communication

Asynchronous communication is a communication situation where the recipient can retrieve and use preprepared materials whenever and wherever it suits. Asynchronous communication thus gives the recipient a great deal of freedom; the means of communication includes videos (more effective when short), podcasts, slide shows with a superimposed voice, and other types of materials made available through the learning platform. This gives the individual student an opportunity to experience the academic content that is conveyed at a time that fits into the individual's life situation.

The disadvantage lies in the lack of opportunity for the participant to communicate directly with the mediator. This can be compensated for by allowing fixed times where the lecturer or teacher is available online, and in other ways to facilitate supervision situations adapted to the activity of the individual subject.

Asynchronous student activities

An asynchronous activity is an activity in which not all participants, e.g., in a class, need to be present at the same time. This does not prevent parts of a group from collaborating between two synchronous sessions; based on the class as a unit, we will consider a group meeting as an asynchronous activity, even if it is synchronous for the group as a unit. Examples of types of tools and activities are:

- **student-run groups (such as The Student Colloquium, and others), often established and operated in Zoom**
- **co-writing in common documents, for example Office 365, Google Docs, Canvas, and more**
- **digital sharing via tools such as Wikis, blogs, and various digital sharing rooms, including Chat**
- **fellow student assessment using Peergrade (<https://www.peergrade.io/>)**
- **video reflections from students, for teachers and lecturers only or for class sharing**

PREPARATIONS FOR ONLINE EDUCATION IN SLOVAKIA AND NORWAY

This section highlights the communication and digital learning environment in Norway and looks at the implementation and preparation of online education content in Slovakia. The introduction of online teaching required an adaptation of the course content to take into consideration the conditions of distance learning, which was without the possibility of direct interaction between the teacher/lecturer and the student.

Considering the nature of the courses provided at the Faculty of Economics at MBU, we can distinguish between:

- (a) lectures
- (b) seminars/exercises

The content modification of lectures was simpler, both in terms of the necessary time and in terms of the change of form. Most of the lecturers had already prepared lecture materials in electronic form (usually ppt presentations) before the pandemic. As lectures at the Faculty of Economics at MBU are based primarily on the lecturer's explanation of a new topic, direct student involvement is not necessary. The main role of the students is to actively listen to the explanation of the lecturer and to get involved in the form of questions if further explanation or clarification is sought. For this reason, the content of the lectures did not cause a significant problem for the lecturers in the transition to the online form of teaching.

The content of seminars and exercises was significantly more complicated. Seminars and tutorials are based on the interaction between lecturer and student and/or the interaction and collaboration of a group of students. This interaction was more difficult to ensure in the conditions of the online environment, and therefore it was necessary to modify the standard procedures used during seminars and exercises and adapt them to the new conditions. Former teaching methods such as the use of role play, discussion between two or more students, working in teams to solve an assigned problem, and other activities involving face-to-face contact were - at least in the initial months of the online education - replaced by individual student work (seminar papers and individual presentation of individually assigned tasks). On the one hand, this allowed the development of students' individual presentation skills; but on the other hand, it limited the development of teamwork and team problem-solving. Over time, as lecturers' and teachers' digital skills developed and improved and with the use of more technical possibilities (several plug-ins in the LMS Moodle, MS Team, online applications, and other methods), conditions were created which enabled the students to take part in groupwork and teamwork; however, in purely online education the predominant form of student activity in seminars and exercises remains individual presentations.

At Kristiania University College effective communication is important for the digital learning environment and for ensuring that the student remains motivated, even while they are sitting alone at home and studying. There are several tips on how to improve communication for digital learning between students and teachers.

Digital meeting places:

- create regular meeting places for questions, discussion, and collaboration online
- assess whether it is appropriate to divide the students into regular groups throughout the semester; the groups are welcome to collaborate in discussion threads on Canvas before, during or after the lesson
- tell students what you want them to do in between; you can encourage them to organise themselves in the way that suits them best

Clear messages:

- effective communication means being clear and giving simple instructions
- clear deadlines allow students to keep track of their work and be prepared
- tell students about your expectations for the learning outcomes of digital teaching, and what you expect from independent work
- provide information on how you want students to contact you, and how quickly and frequently they can expect a response

Caring:

- be friendly and caring, and remember that students' learning is in focus
- a friendly and caring tone invites the students to communicate in the same way, including communication with each other
- for some students, the transition from being taught in an auditorium to sitting alone at home is a large uncomfortable step. You can show consideration for them by including them in digital teaching plans and creating inclusive, digital meeting places

Universal Design:

- it is important to think about how you can make it easier for all students to participate
- good sound, legible writing and clear messages are at least as important in digital teaching as in a regular teaching session.



Photo: Matej Bel University, Faculty of Economics (Slovakia), 2022

IMPLEMENTATION OF ONLINE EDUCATION DURING THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC

This part of the report explains the implementation of online education during the COVID-19 pandemic; its focus is first contact with students, student motivation, and tools for encouraging the students to be more active.

Slovakia

At Matej Bel University (Slovakia) as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic, the full-time form of teaching was interrupted on 9 March 2020 from 12:00 (originally until 22 March 2020). During this time no teaching at all took place, except in the form of self-study. At the Faculty of Economics of MBU, the Dean of the Faculty took the following measures to ensure the pedagogical process:

- (a) where a subject was taught by more than one lecturer, the lecturer who was listed first on the subject information sheet began to act as the guarantor (coordinator) for the subject
- (b) the guarantor determined, in agreement with the other course lecturers, the conditions for the students' self-study
- (c) by 11 March 2020, the guarantor had informed the students by email of the self-study arrangements for the course

The main communication platform between lecturers and students was email (the university email account was available to all lecturers and all students) and LMS Moodle. Due to the ongoing state measures, the resumption of teaching was not possible, and so the Faculty of Economics, as well as the entire Matej Bel University, had to proceed to a distance, online form of education. On 18 March 2020 the technical support department informed all lecturers about the creation of courses/teams for each taught subject in the MS Teams platform. In addition to these courses, short instructional videos were made available to the lecturers in LMS Moodle, including a manual on how to work with MS Teams. At the same time, a special team was created in MS Teams just for lecturers, where they could exchange experiences using MS Teams and LMS Moodle. Support was also provided to lecturers in the form of a helpdesk (via email communication). Furthermore, technical and instructional support for working with LMS Moodle was strengthened. In this way, online teaching at the Faculty of Economics at MBU was officially launched. To date, MS Teams and LMS Moodle represent the basic tools of distance and hybrid education at Matej Bel University (Slovakia).

3.1 First contact with participants – preparatory phase

Distance education at the Faculty of Economics MBU was held through MS Teams. For this platform, the university department Institute of Automation and Communication MBU provided daily technical support, to both lecturers and students. To enable online teaching and connecting via MS Teams, all users had to install this application on their devices - preferably on personal computers or laptops equipped with audio accessories (microphone and camera). In this context, there was some pressure on all users to equip themselves with suitable technology and a sufficiently strong internet connection. Any technical complications that arose during online education had to be tolerated by the lecturers and, many times, by the students. When it was possible (given the actual pandemic restrictions) lecturers were able to use faculty technology. Each classroom was already equipped with a computer or laptop before the pandemic.

A significant advantage of the Faculty of Economics was that the faculty management responded promptly and procured video sets - cameras and conference microphones that were installed in every classroom. Additionally interactive whiteboards, LCD touch screens, or monitors were purchased for some classrooms. As the number of these was limited due to limited resources, priority in their use was given to those whose subject included mathematical or graphical display. At the start of online teaching in the summer semester of 2020, almost all online teaching was taking place directly from the home of the lecturer to the home of the student, due to the strict restrictions on the movement of people.

Before the online teaching commenced, teams were formed within each department of the faculty (and university) for each course taught in that semester. Students were either automatically added to these teams, or the lecturer generated a team code to send to the students, who then signed up for the team on their own. Lecturers assisted students via email when needed. The schedule for online courses corresponded with the original schedule before the interruption of the full-time form of study. Despite occasional technical or other complications, online teaching was provided in all departments and in almost all subjects of the semester.



Photo: Kristiania University College (Norway), 2022

3.2 Student motivation

Students' motivation for the subject and learning can to a large extent be influenced by the learning environment, learning activities and emphasis on theoretical (knowledge-based) versus practical (skills-based) learning goals. To stimulate student motivation, I would like to highlight the following activities that my experience (gleaned from surveys, interviews, and conversations with students, both before and during COVID-19 restrictions) indicates contributed to increased motivation. They include:

- excursions (academically relevant where the goal is to see 'reality', or to research results)
- interviews
- practical exercises
- shared breakfast where we prepare the food, eat, and clean up together
- challenges where students must try to change their living habits over a certain period
- practical project assignments
- digital assessment methods
- open examination assignments and examiner guidance where the focus is on the learning process rather than blind testing
- courses and certification from public institutions

These activities are all based on one or more points related to the learning environment, learning activities, or learning design and examinations. The philosophy is that to facilitate learning, the environment where the learning takes place should be experienced as a safe space, thus nurturing trust within the user. The activities that are set must be perceived as useful by the student, so they are more open to acquiring the learning outcomes that are described. Learning design is important because students must experience the coherence between learning outcomes, teaching, and examinations - a good learning design ensures that students see the connection between these factors, and the learning activities help to illuminate themes from different angles and different levels. The examination can have several roles - it can measure if the students have acquired the relevant knowledge, skills, and competence (assessment of learning), and it can also help students to acquire and increase their knowledge, skills, and competence during the course (assessment for learning). An examination form that contributes to increased learning through the course can contribute to motivation.

The list of activities above refers to some measures aimed at expanding the learning environment, for example through excursions and shared breakfast. Measures to increase the learning environment can increase motivation and confidence by the aiding the students in getting to know their fellow students and lecturers better. Although the main focus is the learning environment, there are academic elements in the activities - for example, a presentation online exploring the challenges faced by health workers in a specific district could be followed by an excursion to a public health establishment within the named district, talking to and witnessing how the health professionals work practically to solve these challenges. This creates social interaction centred around an academic content, but the framework for interaction with public health workers, lecturers and fellow students becomes less formal than in a classroom. At a shared breakfast, my experience is that the students get to know each other in a different way than in the classroom - firstly, because they have to work together on tasks that will benefit the community, secondly, because eating a common meal is an arena that invites dialogue and fun, and thirdly, it gives me as their lecturer an opportunity to talk about expectations and goals in a context that is perceived as pleasant and positive, and where I can more informally receive input from the students.



Photo: Kristiania University College (Norway), 2022

Traditionally, medical subjects involve a lot of skills training; it is seen as necessary to develop good nurses, doctors, and other health professionals. In public health, however, it is necessary to facilitate skills training alongside practical tasks. Learning activities such as interviews, exercises and practical project assignments mentioned above are measures that are used to strengthen the achievement of skills goals. Interviews are often a good tool for understanding a user perspective or experience of a life situation. In the subject Public Health Work, interviews are conducted with people who have undergone a major weight loss, people who have undergone cancer treatment, and people who have had a drug problem and/or a criminal past. The benefits of using interviews will be explained later in the report under chapter '4.1 - Active learning'. Students' feedback highlights the fact that having personal contact and listening to the experiences of others makes a strong impression on the learner, and gives them a new and closer perspective on various topics; this gives future public health workers important reflections and memories. Practical skills training often takes place in groups or pairs - for example measuring

blood sugar levels, blood pressure and body composition - and includes communication and simulation tasks and assignments under the auspices of voluntary organisations. An example that can be highlighted is a simulation task where students in pairs are put in a situation where, in the role of public health workers, and are visited by a person who has been referred to them by his/her doctor. The person speaks very poor Norwegian and English, and the students are tested on how they manage to communicate with the person. Halfway into the simulation, students receive guidance in the form of techniques and tools they can use. After completing the implementation, they receive feedback on what they did well and what could be improved. This is important learning in terms of intercultural communication. Another practical skills example is assignments which are carried out on behalf of voluntary organisations. Here, the students in the course must take the responsibility of a supervisor's role as part of their examination and complete at least two missions for residents in need of assistance in a district in Oslo. After each mission, students write down reflections from the experience, both what they considered positive and what was negative. They also write what they have learned and what experiences they will utilise the next time they have a similar activity. Learning design affects students' motivation; this is about putting varied activities together into a sensible whole and coordinating it with the teaching that is given and the assessment that is to be made. Learning design is a combination of the activities described under learning environment and activities and a combination of assessment methods. Challenges where students must change their living habits over a certain period of time, practical project work, and courses and certification from public institutions are examples of activities that enable students to see the whole picture and the usefulness of what they are learning. Changing living habits is difficult, and if the students have the opportunity to experience the changes to their own body at the same time as we teach the topic, they will more readily relate to the subjects in the research literature. Practical project work is relevant because it gives students the opportunity to take ownership of carrying out a project within a chosen topic - they have responsibility for designing goals, implementing plans and establishing the criteria which deem the project a success. To create utility, students have to step out of their comfort zone and complete the project in collaboration with an external partner. Examples of projects that have been completed are: 'Mobility Training Three Days a Week with Office Workers in a Company over Five Weeks'; 'Activity Training Two Days a Week over Five Weeks with Participants in Weight Loss Courses'; and 'Six Weeks of Strength Training for Adult Women After Completing Cancer Treatment'. The feedback from the students is that the projects are extensive, but relevant to working life and something they learn a lot from them. Certification in courses that are used in several areas of Norwegian public health work is another tool for strengthening learning design. Examples of such courses include 'Coping With Depression' and 'Signs and Symptoms', the latter to uncover the use of various drugs. The courses are important to strengthen the relevance of the subject to working life - they make the reason for learning visible to the students and show how such skills learned on the course can be implemented in a real-life situation.

Examinations and assessments are important for motivation. If the goal of the examination is to create learning and understanding, my experience is that open examination assignments and examiner guidance are more positive for creating a focus on process, rather than just results. In this case, the examination is used as an assessment for learning. There are two reasons why this is perceived as positive; firstly, students focus on what they need to learn and how to solve an assignment, and they put away the stress and worries of an exam that must be completed at a single moment in time; secondly, this kind of examination is perceived as being more in line with how tasks in working life are organised. To succeed in using this form of assessment, it is important to spend time on the design of the exam paper and the assessment criteria. This will be exemplified later in the report under the heading '4.1 Active learning'.

The impact of the pandemic on the learning environment was severe; in addition to the lack of contact on campus and in teaching, we were unable to offer activities such as excursions and shared breakfast during lockdown. One measure we used to compensate for this was an increased degree of digital guidance, via Zoom and via coffee meetings. Coffee meetings were digital meetings with the course leader where the students could address topics, questions and challenges related to the way of studying (this will be explained in more depth in the chapter '4.7 - Questionnaires and surveys'). Digital teaching was characterised by black screens and a lack of interaction, conditions which were not conducive to learning. However, the use of the chat service in Zoom, digital guidance individually and in groups, and using interviews as a teaching and learning tool were a few examples of activities that succeeded in creating interaction. It became clear that transferring regular teaching to digital teaching did not provide the same learning outcome, and adaptations to the old model were necessary. Small digital group rooms were not considered positive, as some students left the group rooms without any form of communication. During project work, digital tutoring hours in groups worked well. This was also true for digital group work where students practised communication tasks and motivational interviews with different patient cases. Practical project work had to be converted into digital projects, such as mapping projects and projects with digital training guidance. This was more successful than expected and the students delivered

project work to the same standard as before the pandemic, although the design of the projects had to be adapted to a digital everyday life. The course programmes with certifications did not have the same quality when conducted digitally, mainly due to the lack of interaction with the students. However, there was evidence of greater student participation than with regular teaching, explained by the students' perception of the need to be visible in order to obtain a course certificate. In periods with fewer restrictions, excursions and outdoor teaching became possible if we complied with the social distancing rules. This was considered very positive and resulted in a high proportion of participants. During the same period, skills training in some subjects was also opened up. The trainings were done in groups, which entailed additional work related to organisation and time for implementation - but the students' experience was positive, and this was important for motivation. Exam assignments with a focus on assessment for learning were also considered very positive for motivation. This meant that the students could work with exam-relevant material and acquire the learning outcomes necessary for the course. In some courses, available material from online studies was distributed - video resources and assignments were considered an enrichment by the students as this material is designed to be studied digitally and alone.

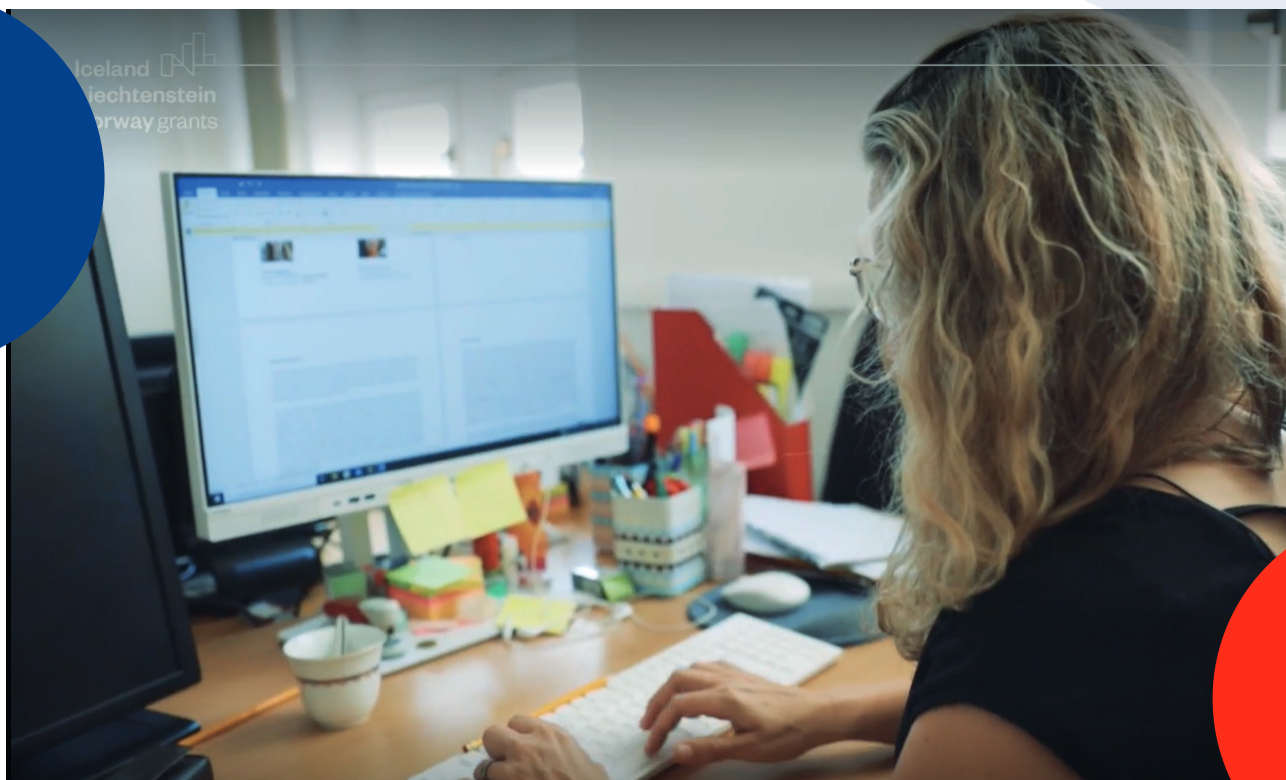


Photo: Matej Bel University, Faculty of Economics (Slovakia), 2022

3.3 Encouraging the students to be active

The following are activities that can be used to reveal prior knowledge, activate the students as the lesson proceeds, and sum up after the session and check what has been learned. The best result is achieved if the same set of questions/quizzes is repeated two or three times, e.g., before and after a teaching session. Also, note that tools such as Mentimeter and Paddle enable questions to be asked by both the student and the teacher – both ways.

Activity	Comments	Method/Tool	Little	Big	Synchro- nous	Asynchro- nous
Create a word cloud	Questions of the type: “If I say..., what do you think of? You can answer several times, but only one word at a time. „	Mentimeter	X	X	X	
Create and run a Quiz	Questions such as: „Which of these options is the correct answer?“	Poll Zoom - Meeting Poll Zoom - Webinar Mentimeter Kahoot Socrative (https://www.socrative.com/) LearnLab	X	X	X	
Rank options or rank on a scale	Questions such as: „ What is best, what do you think is the right thing to do, what do you want to prioritise?“	Mentimeter	X		X	
Choose between images and other visual expressions	Questions such as: „Which term fits which term?“	Mentimeter	X	(x)	X	
Ask open-ended questions (both ways)	With most systems, it is possible to limit the response length. Mentimeter and Paddle also give students the opportunity to ask questions.	Poll Zoom - Meeting Poll Zoom - Webinar Mentimeter Padlet Socrative (https://www.socrative.com/) LearnLab, Miro	X	X	X	X

Source: Own elaboration

A good way to get student involvement and activity beyond the use of student response systems is to create digital discussions through good questions and/or smaller tasks suitable for solving in groups there and then.

Activity	Comments	Method/Tool	Little	Big	Synchro- nous	Asynchro- nous
Plenary discussion	Clarify the rules of the game first. In slightly larger groups, it may be a good idea to have a chairperson (student?)	Raise Hand in Zoom	X		X	
Written questions and comments	Clarify the rules of the game first, including when answering questions. In slightly larger groups, it may be a good idea to have a facilitator (student?)	Chat in Zoom	X	X	X	
Think, pair, share	Use small Breakout rooms, assign automatically and allow a set time for summary in plenary	Breakout Rooms in Zoom	X		X	
Group discussions and short group assignments with summary	If there are regular groups, participants in Breakout Rooms are predefined	Breakout Rooms in Zoom	X	(x)	X	
Group discussions via Padlets	In Paddle you can both work together synchronously, and then continue the work asynchronously until the next synchronous session (which students can join)	Padlet (can also be used asynchronously)	X	X	X	X
Join the Forum *	Forums can be used synchronously, but are probably best suited for asynchronous discussion where the individual enters when needed, and preferably after push notifications (a pop-up message)	Canvas, Padlet, Facebook groups, subject hooks in Twitter, Padlet (https://no.padlet.com/), Miro (https://miro.com/), Rubrics in LearnLab (https://learnlab.net/en/no)	X	X		X

Source: Own elaboration

*Forums are often used when students need to develop knowledge by sharing their experiences and perceptions of the subject matter, understanding through discussing the subject matter, getting feedback on their own perceptions, analysing and solving complex problems in collaboration, reflecting on academic issues, and assessing themselves and others. Examples of such discussions that can also take place outside organised teaching are newspaper articles and blogs with comment fields, Twitter messages that follow the same topic, or threads in Facebook or one of the many different online forums. There are different types: questions and answers, posts with comments, debate, brainstorming, role-playing games, feedback and threads of collaboration are some examples' (Kristiania University College, 2022).

Formative evaluation of teaching

In a digital space, it is more difficult to see each other than when we physically meet in the same room. This means that short checks in the form of simple evaluations become important in order to follow and continuously adjust digital teaching and learning outcomes to optimise learning outcomes for the student. You should therefore conduct short formative evaluations frequently in digital teaching. Often one question is enough - a check with Zoom's extended emoji set in Nonverbal Feedback or a quick Zoom-Poll is sufficient, frequency being more important than the quantity of questions. This type of feedback can be used for all class sizes, but for large and complex groups it can also be an idea with a reference group. These short formative evaluations come in addition to the regular course evaluations.

Activity	Comments	Method/Tool	Little	Big	Synchro- nous	Asynchro- nous
Get feedback on what worked, why you participated, what was lacking and so on	Word cloud - write down a word that best describes... several answers are possible, but only one word at a time	Mentimeter Learn Lab	X	X	X	
Get feedback on the extent to which a scheme has worked	Quiz - on a scale from 1 to 4, what do you think about ...	Poll Zoom-Meeting Poll Zoom-Webinar Mentimeter Kahoot Socrative (https://www.socrative.com/) LearnLab	X	X	X	
Get feedback on what can be done better or in another way	Open questions - what advice would you give before the next session...	Poll Zoom-Meeting Poll Zoom-Webinar Mentimeter Padlet Miro Socrative LearnLab	X	X	X	X
Get an immediate response after an activity / session	When you cannot physically be with the students, it becomes important to quickly check how the students experience an activity. Direct questions can work in a safe group and small groups.	Digital discussion in a Zoom room with sound and image; alternatively Zoom Chat	X		X	
Get a satisfaction survey	Sometimes for feedback we can use the symbol 'thumbs up' for OK, or use the extended set in Zoom Nonverbal Feedback	Zoom Nonverbal Feedback Poll Zoom-Meeting Poll Zoom-Webinar	X	X	X	
Get feedback teaching and learning in large groups	For medium to large classes and composite classes, the use of reference groups is recommended, preferably with the union representative in attendance, who reports to you according to the plan.	Reference group		X		X

Source: Own elaboration



Photo: Kristiania University College (Norway), 2022

EXPERIENTIAL ACTIVITIES DURING ONLINE LEARNING

Even experienced teachers and lecturers sometimes find it difficult to overcome the hurdles presented by online teaching. Lack of in-person interaction, dwindling student motivation, and technical difficulties are just a few of the reasons. Additionally, there is an entirely different set of challenges posed by finding effective instructional strategies, or online teaching activities that are impactful in engaging students online. The following section of the text is devoted to active learning and practical examples of methods to activate students during online distance learning.

4.1 Active learning

Student-active forms of learning promote in-depth learning among students. The activities could vary from a month-long project work to micro-writing in 60 seconds, but their commonality is that they both contribute to supporting and strengthening the students' learning process. The choice of activity depends on which learning goals you want the students to achieve in the teaching session, as well as the location - whether you meet the students in a lecture hall, a seminar room, or in an online space.

Lecturers should feel free to discuss with the students the reason they have chosen specific teaching activities, and how they intend the activities to support the students' learning. Most activities can be customised to be performed digitally through Zoom.

Example 1 of teaching activities

Activity	MICRO-WRITING
WHAT	Short writing exercises (3-5 minutes) to practise writing about a subject.
WHEN	In a lecture, in seminar groups, and in Breakout Rooms (Zoom).
HOW	Give clear instructions, everyone in the room participates. Set a time of three to five minutes. Students and subject teachers write separately until the time is up. The subject teacher then gives the go-ahead for discussion in pairs or small groups and sums up the discussion in plenary at the end.
EXAMPLE	"Before the break, we will do a short writing exercise. I will set the timer for three minutes, and everyone will spend the time writing a short definition, a maximum of three sentences, that explains the subject term 'periodic movement'. The most important thing is that you write something, not that you write a correct and perfect definition. Write a maximum of three sentences, without looking at notes or in the textbook. After the three minutes are over, we will discuss the definitions with each other. Is everyone ready?"
VARIANTS	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Definitions of subject terms2. Explanations of snippets, figures, tables, or graphs3. Comparison of two or more concepts4. Write short snippets of code, draw figures and / or graphs

Source: Own elaboration

Example 2 of teaching activities

Activity	THINK PAR-DEL
WHAT	Exercise to activate all students in discussions about the subject. Sometimes referred to as „sum groups“.
WHEN	In lectures, seminar groups, and colloquia.
HOW	Give students an assignment from the syllabus or from a lecture. First, students get one to two minutes to think on their own, preferably by writing down some key words or drawing mind maps. Then the students discuss in pairs or small groups for two to three minutes before sharing their findings with the whole group in a joint summary. The form of the exercise ensures that both the active and the cautious students are able to contribute.

Source: Own elaboration

4.1.1 Flipped learning

The model of flipped learning redesigns the usual classroom paradigm, in that students learn initial course concepts outside the classroom while the class time is used for active problem-based learning and practice activities (Love et al., 2014). In the flipped classroom model, the delivery of content is usually obtained through online videos prepared by the teacher/lecturer or a third party. Students watch the assigned short instructional videos by themselves before the lecture or lesson, which is effective in making the learning process begin prior to the class. This can play a positive role in reorienting students' attention to learning (Abuhmaid & Mohammad, 2020). In previous research, students showed a positive attitude towards blended learning (Nanclares & Rodríguez, 2016). Leszczyński et al. (2018) indicated that blended learning is one of the most effective methods that support traditional forms of teaching. The difference between blended learning and flipped classroom have been explored (Capone et al., 2017) and, compared to blended learning and traditional teaching, the flipped classroom model significantly improved student outcomes, (Thai et al., 2017).

Flipped classroom is a “pedagogical approach in which direct instruction moves from a group learning space to an 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” (The Flipped Learning Network, 2014).

The Four Pillars of F-L-I-P:

- **Flexible environment.** Flipped Learning allows for a variety of learning modes; educators often physically rearrange their learning spaces to accommodate a lesson or unit, to support either group work or independent study. They create flexible spaces in which students choose when and where they learn. Furthermore, educators who flip their classes are flexible in their expectations of student timelines for learning and in their assessments of student learning.

F.1	<input type="checkbox"/> I establish spaces and time frames that permit students to interact and reflect on their learning as needed.
F.2	<input type="checkbox"/> I continually observe and monitor students to make adjustments as appropriate.
F.3	<input type="checkbox"/> I provide students with different ways to learn content and demonstrate mastery.

Source: Flipped Learning Network (FLN). (2014) The Four Pillars of F-L-I-P™

- **Learning Culture.** In the traditional teacher-centred model, the teacher is the primary source of information. By contrast, the Flipped Learning model deliberately shifts instruction to a learner-centred approach, where in-class time is dedicated to exploring topics in greater depth and creating rich learning opportunities. As a result, students are actively involved in knowledge construction as they participate in and evaluate their learning in a manner that is personally meaningful.

L.1	<input type="checkbox"/> I give students opportunities to engage in meaningful activities without the teacher being central.
L.2	<input type="checkbox"/> I scaffold these activities and make them accessible to all students through differentiation and feedback.

Source: Flipped Learning Network (FLN). (2014) The Four Pillars of F-L-I-P™

- **Intentional Content.** Flipped Learning Educators continually think about how they can use the Flipped Learning model to help students develop conceptual understanding, as well as procedural fluency. They determine what they need to teach and what materials the students should explore on their own. Educators use Intentional Content to maximise classroom time in order to adopt methods of student-centred, active learning strategies, depending on grade level and subject matter.

I.1	<input type="checkbox"/> I prioritize concepts used in direct instruction for learners to access on their own.
I.2	<input type="checkbox"/> I create and/or curate relevant content (typically videos) for my students.
I.3	<input type="checkbox"/> I differentiate to make content accessible and relevant to all students.

Source: Flipped Learning Network (FLN). (2014) The Four Pillars of F-L-I-P™

- **Professional Educator.** The role of a Professional Educator is even more important, and often more demanding in a Flipped Classroom than in a traditional one. During class time, they continually observe their students, providing them with feedback relevant in the moment, and assessing their work. Professional Educators are reflective in their practice, connect with each other to improve their instruction, accept constructive criticism, and tolerate controlled chaos in their classrooms. While Professional Educators take on less visibly prominent roles in a flipped classroom, they remain the essential ingredient that enables Flipped Learning to occur.

P.1	<input type="checkbox"/> I make myself available to all students for individual, small group, and class feedback in real time as needed.
P.2	<input type="checkbox"/> I conduct ongoing formative assessments during class time through observation and by recording data to inform future instruction.
P.3	<input type="checkbox"/> I collaborate and reflect with other educators and take responsibility for transforming my practice.

Source: Flipped Learning Network (FLN). (2014) The Four Pillars of F-L-I-P™

4.1.2 Training Assistants

Training Assistants are students who assist academic staff and faculty members in teaching. At Kristiania University in Oslo such training assistants are used in large classes (100 or more students) where the lecturer uses two assistants to collect suggestions from students during teaching. Training assistants in such cases assist the lecturer in teaching the students, reviewing the seminar papers and organising the timetable and room reservations.

The main duties of the training assistants are:

- to support (and sometimes help in) seminars and tutorials
- to assist undergraduate and graduate students in working on their final projects
- to support students in the technical aspects of their studies
- to provide students with valuable and timely feedback to support their development
- to assist in the preparation and implementation of fieldwork
- to gather input from students

4.2 Norwegian projects encouraging students to be active

In this chapter, four projects are described that contributed to increased student activity and to an increased degree of self-study during the pandemic. Project 1 was developed and implemented before the pandemic, but further developed during the pandemic; projects 2, 3 and 4 were developed in advance of the pandemic's restrictions in Norway but had their first implementation during the pandemic. The projects are:

1. Digital examination using video and blog

2. Photobook examination

3. Interviews

4. Digital examination using video clips and a video diary

4.2.1 Digital examination using video and blog

In 'My Dream Exam' we wanted to strengthen the digitalisation of teaching and assessment methods to create better coherence in teaching. The background for this is the need in the labour market for candidates with digital skills and knowledge of digital tools, as well as a better utilisation of the pedagogical opportunities inherent in the digital tools. A digital assessment form was developed with the use of video films and blog posts, and a new learning design was developed with an increased use of group supervision, self-study, and external practice.

The goal of the project 'My Dream Exam' was to create a form of assessment that contributed to three major changes in the subject of project management and dissemination, which in turn would contribute to better learning and understanding. Firstly, the digital assessment form should contribute to skills training which is more practical. Secondly, as the project is in the form of a digital assessment, it should contribute to a real external project implementation where the phases of the project process are followed. Thirdly, the digital assessment form should contribute to a better mapping of students' acquisition of learning objectives.

The three main areas of the project were as follows:

- Both project management and dissemination are practical topics, and it was desirable to create a form of assessment with practical elements that clarifies whether the students can use theory in practice.
- The form of assessment should reflect the process from idea to finished product, which meant that the students had to carry out and document a real external project. The aim was to enable a better understanding and learning of the process, both theoretically and practically
- The assessment form should create better working methods through the course and make the students' achievement of learning outcomes in the categories of skills and general competence more visible.

Throughout these three main areas, the intention of the project 'My Dream Exam' was to change the teaching, work, and assessment methods with the aim of improving learning and assessment of learning (fellow student response). Furthermore, the students were able to improve their use of digital tools and skills such as video production and the preparation of blog posts, thus increasing their digital competence. The projects were digitalised to an even greater extent during the pandemic.

4.2.2 Photobook examination

Given the uncertainty the pandemic gave us in the academic year 2020/2021, it became important to think about working methods that could be implemented digitally and in a way that could ensure student centring through active options and self-organised learning. One method of achieving this was through photo books. In the context of a photobook examination, students are challenged to document, through pictures and text, a particular public health problem in a specific geographical part of a district. The students are required to:

- document a self-chosen public health problem in a district of their choosing
- illustrate what the municipality/district can do to improve/solve this challenge
- use statistical data obtained from the municipal health statistics bank
- make everyone's participation in the examination project visible

The photobook contains photographs taken on different days and involves all the participants in the group; in this way, the photobook acts as a social activity that contributes to the students getting to know each other better, thus having a positive effect on the learning environment in the class. The photobook has to illustrate what the municipality/district can do to solve the public health challenge, which makes it necessary for the student groups to contact the municipality/district directly to get more information about the situation and the people involved; in this way, the photobook contributes to increased self-study and in-depth knowledge within a specific topic area.

The feedback given about the merits of this project gives me the impression that the students appreciate it and think it is fun to do a 'different' exam assignment that is more practically oriented to what they are used to. The fact that it is necessary for the students to walk around and photograph public health challenges in groups over a period of time seems to contribute positively to social cohesion in the class, and hence encourage a positive and safe learning environment. Documenting a public health challenge using images rather than just copying and rewriting information forces students to think creatively and reflectively about the public health challenges - in summary, this project contributes to a better understanding and learning of public health issues. "If one is to succeed in helping a human being, one must start where the human being is" (Søren Kierkegaard); the photo book tries to illuminate the human being for the benefit of the students, and therefore this type of project is well-suited and appropriate for the subject Public Health Work.

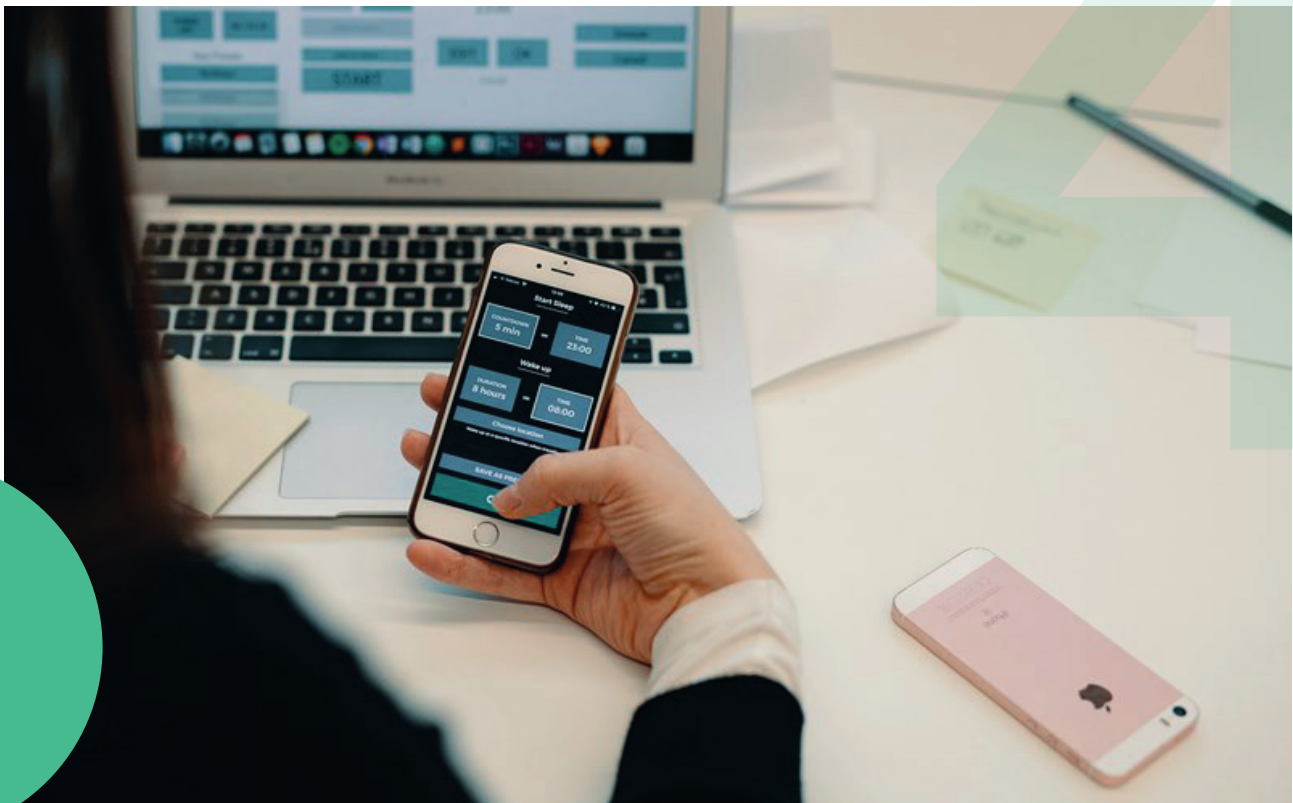


Photo: Kristiania University College (Norway), 2022

4.2.3 Interviews

As part of the course 'Public Health Work', we chose to deliver several teaching topics with the use of interviews - mainly because digital teaching leads to an even greater degree of passivity than traditional physical plenary teaching in classrooms. Two of the interviews were conducted digitally where the interviewer and interviewee were physically at Kristiania University College premises, one was conducted where the interviewer and interviewee were together in the interviewer's apartment, and one was conducted where all participants (both interviewer and interviewee) sat in their respective home offices with their own PCs. The interviews dealt with the following topics: 1) drug abuse and the way out of a drug environment; 2) the importance which Vålerenga street football team places on staying drug-free, and how the team acts as a tool to aid the players' rehabilitation back into society; 3) ways of changing a criminal's career path to becoming a citizen who contributes to the local community; and 4) lifestyle changes to enable a person to change from being overweight to becoming an athlete, and how finding joy in an activity can change your life. The interviews covered topics and themes from the course material and were used to stimulate the students and create reflections on important topics. To tempt the students to participate, teaser videos with the theme of the interviews were recorded prior to two of the interviews and posted on the students' learning platform.

Positive experiences and the benefits of using interviews as a form of teaching include:

- a more personal experience; the students get closer to the topic through the life experiences of the interviewee
- a better structure for asking questions and making comments when compared to regular teaching; within an interview they are a natural part of the session
- a chance to experience first-hand the reality related to the topic. Rationales that are often presented in tables etc are replaced by an individual who talks about his or her feelings and experiences of depression, drug abuse, and/or anxiety, providing a stronger learning tool than merely using numbers and tables (which they learn from the course literature)
- the method gives me, as the course coordinator, a better opportunity to steer the content towards the learning outcome of the course. I can ask follow-up questions, ask for an explanation of a statement, ask critical questions, set content in the conversation against literature, and speak about things we have previously reviewed in the course – more so than in the traditional external lecture

- the form allows variation in the teaching; this is especially important now in the period of digital teaching, but this method also gives a great degree of variation when it is used in traditional teaching, and it is therefore something I would like to keep in physical teaching as well
- constructive feedback and high levels of satisfaction from the interviewees, all of whom had been used as external speakers before and reported that the interviews were productive and instructive for them. The use of interviews led them to get closer to the students, and the form of questions and feedback led to the topic constantly changing; consequently, a rapport was developed, which led the interviewees to think that they had kept the interview relevant, and they perceived the overall outcome as a success
- livelier and more comfortable dynamics and interaction than merely listening passively.



Photo: Kristiania University College (Norway), 2022

4.2.4 Digital examination using video clips and a video diary

In addition to professional knowledge, communication skills are important to be able to give guidance to other people. For those of us who teach in public health work, it is important to facilitate learning arenas where students can independently achieve and document learning. In the course 'Physical Activity in Public Health Work', the goal is to make the students proficient as instructors in physical activity. To achieve this through the pandemic we prepared a digital manual with video clips. Using this as a reference, the students learn how to give each other instruction. The work is documented through a video diary. Given the uncertainty the pandemic gave us in the academic year 2020/2021, we experienced a great advantage with working methods that could be implemented digitally and in a way that could contribute to student centring and self-organised learning. The digital training manual with accompanying video clips and video diary contributed positively to this.

The training manual with video clips and the video diary were intended to:

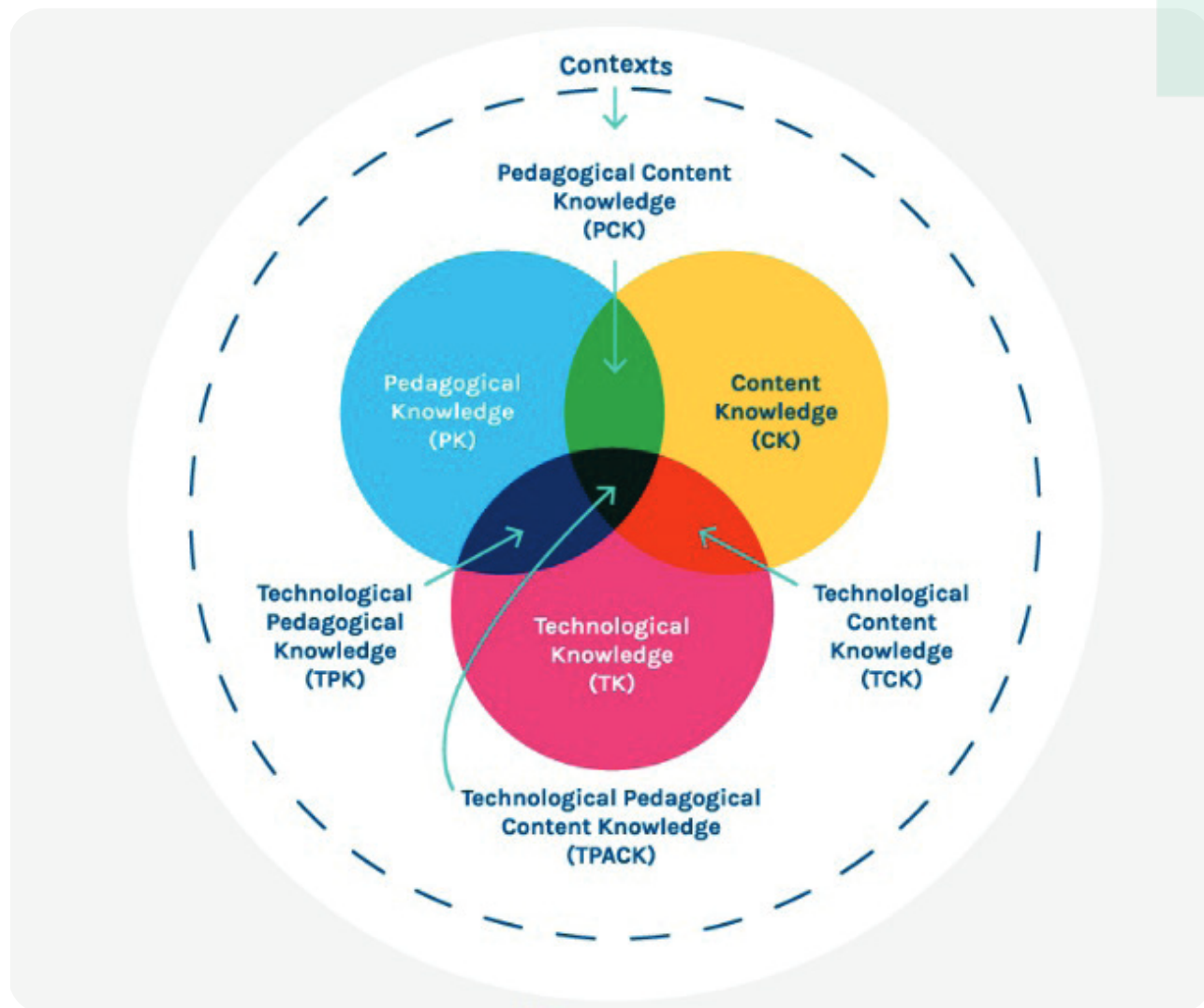
- be a digital reference work that students could use as a basis for practical training
- increase the amount of self-study, regardless of teaching/supervision times
- create reflection on one's own exercises and the work of fellow students, as well as reflection on the challenges in following a training programme with a longer duration

- contribute to highlighting the authenticity and practical exercise of the skills goals, and to allow for self-evaluation and the responses of fellow students

In summary, we believe that learning design developed with the use of technology will help to ensure a greater degree of active learning, especially active learning in terms of independent work (self-study).

4.3 Screen sharing, dividing into groups, Raise Hand and Chat

When preparing teaching, one should take into account the three components of the TPACK model.



Source: TPACK Model (2022): <https://www.powerschool.com/blog/the-tpack-framework-explained-with-classroom-examples/>

Three didactic questions can be asked for all teaching, with the goal being the students' learning:

- What will the student do?
- How will the student do it?
- Why will the student do it?

In the following we will discuss practical experiences, and in particular the ways of communicating with students during the implementation of digital teaching in the period of the COVID-19 pandemic, including the use of screen sharing, grouping, show of hands and Chat. Traditional onsite teaching can involve multiple ways of presenting the subject matter, for example lecturing with PowerPoint, lecturing with a whiteboard, alternating lecturing and group discussions, or using digital equipment such as Mentimeter or Kahoot.

Digital presentations such as PowerPoint, Keynote or Google Presentation are often used. Well organised slides can be good visual tools helping the students to concentrate during lectures. Tips for producing more successful presentations include reducing the information per slide to the minimum and using illustrations and photos to underline the essence of the content, varying the background colour, and using a short video integrated in the presentation to make it more attractive.

During COVID-19, our experience of teaching in a digital classroom was a far cry from lecturing in an onsite classroom. A classroom or auditorium full of students was changed into black, silent screens with only the students' names as a point of reference. When teaching I felt that reaching out to the students – not only physically, but emotionally and psychologically – was much more difficult than in onsite teaching as we were not physically in the same room. I couldn't hear anything other than my own voice, and it was the same for the students – unless their concentration was disturbed by other people they were living with. The new situation demanded new ways of communicating and organising the teaching.

The classroom allows the lecturer or teacher to wander about, pointing at the screen or whiteboard as he or she is speaking, additionally making gestures and emphasising important points with expressions. This enhances the learning experience by making it both visually and auditory. Online teaching binds the lecturer or teacher to a chair, without the benefits of whiteboards, blackboards or interactive boards to focus the students' attention when necessary. Screen sharing, I experienced, was a satisfactory substitute. The presentation is clear and at the front of the users' computer screen. I quickly found out that students did not get actively involved just by watching the presentation while I was talking. I tried having fewer pictures and less text per slide and switching the slides more often, considering that changing pictures and text would help them keep their concentration for longer. This was a move that worked to some degree. Through experience-sharing with colleagues I learned that screen sharing has a function where I could write while I was talking. With a little practice, I found that this was a good solution to engage students in the best possible way. This is almost the equivalent of using a whiteboard. The advantage of writing while I speak is that it limits the speed of my delivery so I do not go too fast. I have experience with this in the onsite classroom as well and I found that this was especially important in digital teaching. It is challenging to follow when the lecturer is only seen in a small picture in the corner of the screen and the notes are static. Writing and illustrating along with speaking allows the students to make notes and illustrations at the same time.

From onsite classroom teaching, we know that many students hesitate to ask or answer questions in front of the class. As mentioned in the introduction, one way of teaching onsite is to break up the lectures by putting the students into smaller groups to discuss whatever is the subject. This makes a significantly larger proportion of the students active, and I initially believed the function 'Breakout Room' would be a satisfactory substitute when teaching online. What I experienced, however, was contrary to my expectations; students in classes with more than about thirty students disappeared from the class when they were divided into Breakout Rooms. In the smaller classes, Breakout Rooms worked well. One student for one of the larger classes told me: 'It's not that I don't want to discuss the tasks, I don't want to discuss them with people I don't know, especially not digitally. I discuss these tasks outside class with my study group and find that this gives me my learning outcomes.' This statement reassured me at least that there was a desire for discussion about the subjects and a desire to learn the subject matter. The take-home message for me was that breaking the class into discussion groups worked better in onsite teaching than in online teaching in large classes.

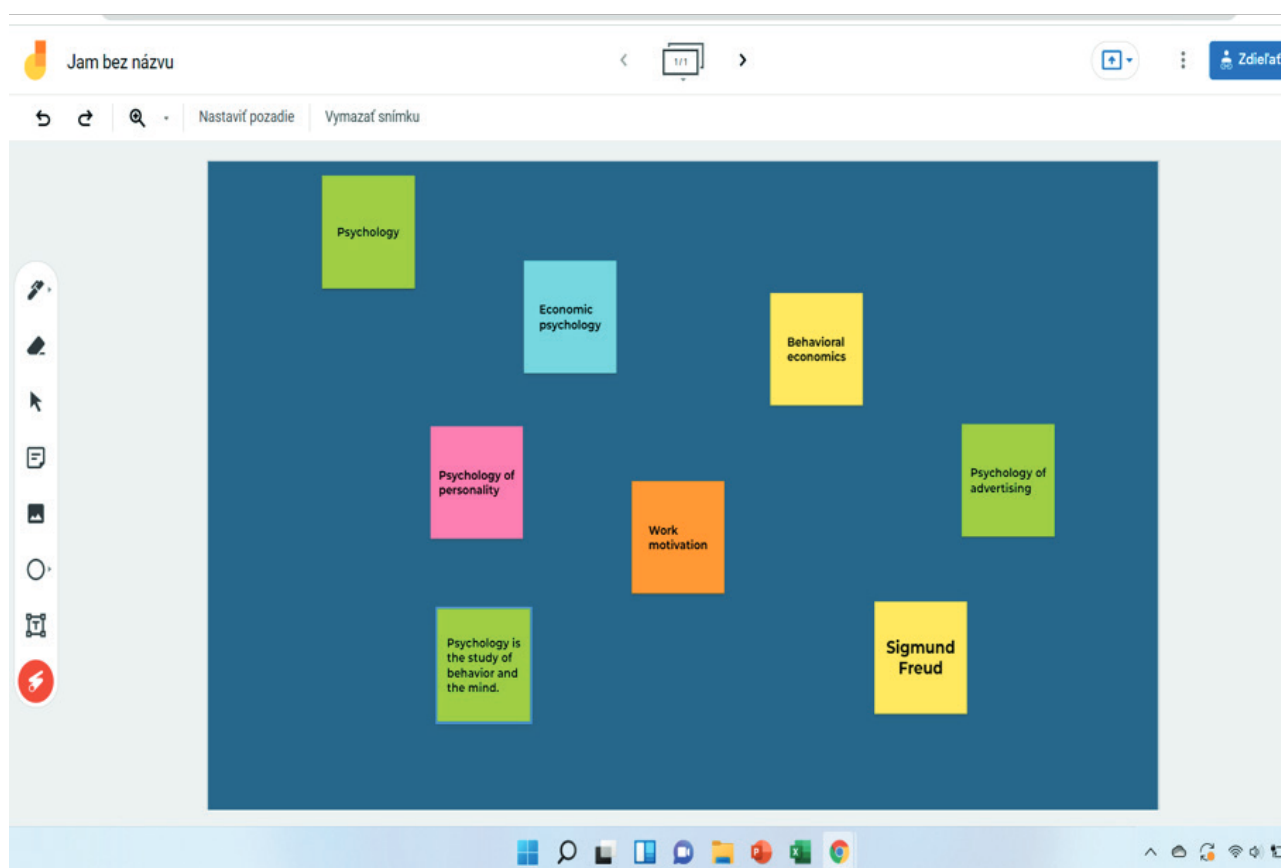
However, there are several tools for achieving activity among students in teaching. What about 'Raise Hand' and 'Chat'? As experienced in onsite teaching, it is always the same students who raise their hand, and it is the same in online teaching. In the large classes there are only a few students who volunteer information, and in digital teaching there were even fewer. In small classes, I am used to having good discussions and engaging a large section of the students. Digitally, it was like in the large classes; fewer students raised their hand to ask questions or answer questions from me. So, what about the 'Chat' function? Questions can be asked either 'to everyone' or 'directly' to someone who is present in the class. Students were encouraged to ask questions in Chat if they did not want to talk in front of the class. Some of the students asked questions to everyone, while the vast majority asked questions directly to me. In exchanging experiences with colleagues, everyone said this was also the case in their online classes. We interpret this as meaning that the students do not want to be exposed and feel vulnerable in front of the whole class. To summarise: more questions came from students via Chat than we experience in onsite teaching. We saw this as positive as we assumed that most of the students had become involved in the learning process.

The disadvantage was that sometimes several questions were written that dealt with the same theme since the students had not seen what other questions had already been asked. Furthermore, it was challenging for me to keep track of the questions at the same time as I had to keep structure in the teaching. This was largely solved by me using the breaks to go through the questions, gather them in topics and start the next lecture answering them. I still answer questions along the way if I find them pertinent to the topic right there and then. I informed the students about my questions and answers system at the beginning of the lecture so that they would understand that all questions would be answered.

4.4 Sharing common ideas - JAMBOARD

Jamboard is a smart display which we used during the COVID-19 pandemic. Using it to share links with the participants is useful, but it is necessary to set it up in advance and give the participants a link so that it can be properly accessed by the relevant people. The lecturer can then share the application on the screen. In this way you see what others are writing there, or additionally you can create something together, write a discussion, etc.

This application provides various creative tools, e.g., using sticky notes.



Source: Own elaboration

Using this shared screen to draw participants into the activity as if they were typing on a flipchart keeps their attention, while at the same time actively bringing your own observations, thoughts, attitudes and ideas to the group.

Motivating participants to actively participate

Throughout the pandemic of 2020 students of all ages experienced some kind of online learning. Many universities moved to become fully online, while primary and secondary schools were forced to teach via video link to students at home for several weeks.

Even before the pandemic, there were plenty of online courses that happened solely through distance learning, so understanding how to motivate students in online courses was already vital for those providers; now it is necessary for bricks-and-mortar schools to adapt to new ways of teaching.

The first recommendation for activating your students is: **'Make Your Class Interactive'**. The simplest way to check if your students are actually listening is to ask them questions. Online classes – especially for university students – are lecturer heavy, with the opportunity for discussion only provided afterwards in the form of smaller, grouped seminars. In a two-hour lecture, it is easy for the student to mentally switch off or get distracted, as they are just expected to listen and take notes, rather than actively take part in any activity.

Teachers and lecturers can maintain student engagement by keeping them on their toes with questions throughout the class. Even the thought that they could be asked a question is enough to keep students that bit more engaged throughout the duration of the lesson. Seminars are great for working through class projects, but if students do not really understand the topic to start with these classes are quickly taken up with recapping the lecture. If students are asked questions during their lecture, they will be more focussed and will be better able to absorb the information.

University is usually attended by students who have not known each other previously, and therefore it is common that at the beginning of their course there is distrust, a certain block, or fear among the participants. There can also be tension between the participants and the lecturers. Students may feel inhibited by the presence of others and might be embarrassed about stating their opinions, answering questions, and engaging in discussion. A very good icebreaker activity for this situation is **'My personal coat of arms'**. Icebreakers are very suitable activities for relieving tension; they relax the mood and atmosphere of the training and 'breaks the ice' among the students. What would you draw in your personal coat of arms? What you are good at? What describes you? What do you like doing?

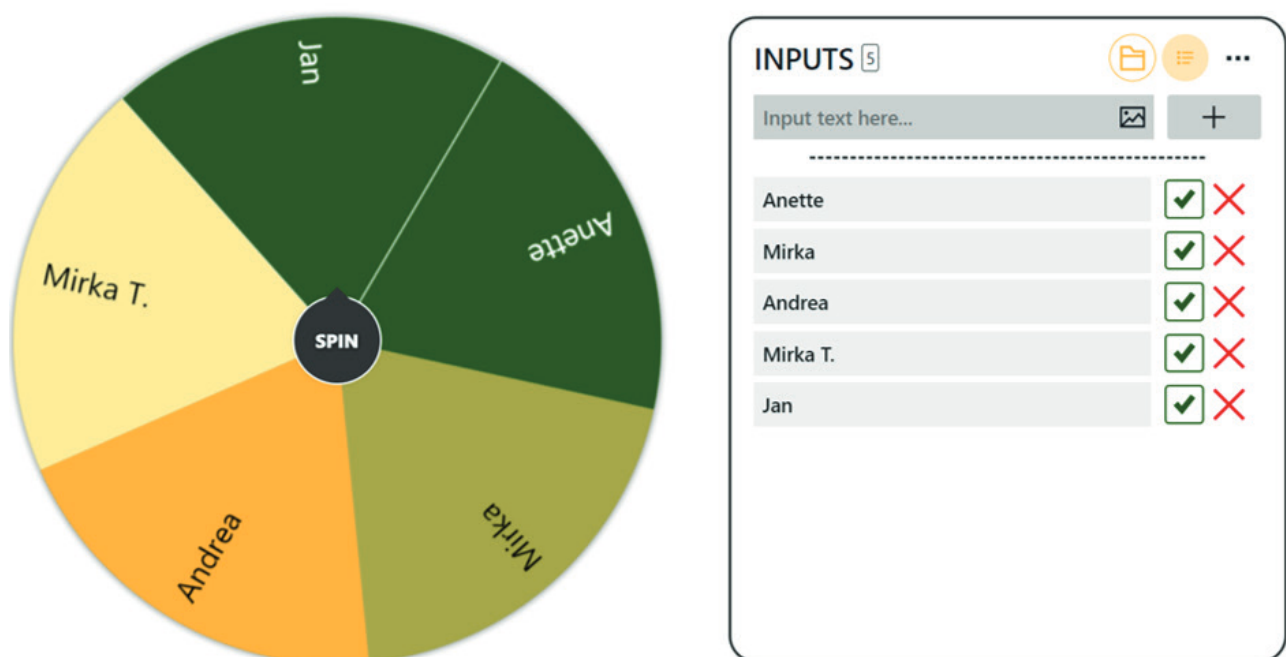


Source: Own elaboration

4.5 Online quizzes and challenges during online education

The second recommendation for making your students more active is: **'Add Quizzes & Challenges to Your Online Lessons'**. Everyone loves a pop quiz. Challenges and online quizzes are great for helping students stay motivated during the lesson, as well as for recapping what was covered in the previous classes. Spontaneous quizzes are particularly good for motivating those less engaged students, who may be unprepared for classes. Even though they had only a little time to get their head into gear, a recap quiz at the start of a lesson will help them to remember key information and get focussed. Making the quiz a little competitive – maybe with a prize or a points system – will make it even more engaging for students. It is a really easy way to make online learning fun and interesting for everyone involved, as well as rewarding those students who are working hard.

One method of interacting with the students is to ask them questions or make a quiz via **Picker wheel**, a stylish wheel spinner with various functions and customisations. Just input the data, spin the wheel and get your random result. During online lessons, there is often a problem with the distribution of speaking – some students are reluctant to speak while others dominate the conversation. To initiate a discussion and to equalise the time that the students 'have the floor', we can use the internet wheel of fortune to raise a random name.



Source: Own elaboration

4.6 Feedback from students

Another great way to increase student motivation is by taking on board their feedback. Students should be made a part of the teaching and learning process and given the chance to have their say. By asking students their opinion of the course and if and how they would change the classes, lecturers can adapt their lesson plans accordingly.

People often underestimate students; often, it is the lack of engagement that leads pupils to being easily distracted or going off topic rather than a problem with a willingness to learn. By encouraging an open space for feedback, students will have no excuse for not staying focussed if their suggestions are put into practice.

Perhaps a questionnaire could be sent out for each student to answer halfway through a module; with the feedback, lecturers will be able to identify downfalls in their own teaching patterns, as well as gain insight into how supported their students feel. Pupils will feel much more valued and engaged if they see their lecturers making positive changes and adapting to the needs of the class.

4.7 Questionnaires and surveys

As an extraordinary offer for the students during the lock-down, the study programme leaders arranged digital 'coffee meetings' via Zoom to create a digital meeting place where the students could talk about what it was like to be a student during the pandemic. During the spring semester 2021 at Kristiania University College (KUC) in Oslo we arranged four such coffee meetings with each batch of the bachelor programmes, conducted in the months of January, February, March, and May. There was no specific layout for the meetings and each study programme leader could shape the meetings as they wished. In addition to conversations, KUC chose to use anonymous surveys using Mentimeter to map the students' thoughts and feelings. KUC results are based on five classes divided into two study programmes. In the first survey conducted in January 2021, KUC mapped the following questions:

- Is it difficult to be a student in this new situation?
- What do you think and worry about most as a student now (priority ranking)?
 - the social life
 - how to keep up motivation and self-effort
 - subjects and exams
 - the financial situation
- Do you have someone in the class to talk to if you feel lonely?
- What are the consequences of social restrictions and digital education (scale ranking, agree-disagree)?
 - more time to read and prepare for the exam
 - more difficulties following the teaching and the content of the course
 - I meet fellow students digitally to talk about subjects and exam preparations
 - everything felt more distant and more difficult than with face-to-face education

In summary, most students who answered this first questionnaire felt that the social restrictions had not had a positive effect on self-studies.

In the second survey, conducted in February 2021, KUC drew attention to the topics that the students had studied that semester, and KUC mapped the following questions:

- Has the topic xxx worked well in terms of teaching?
- Has the examination in the subject of xxx been communicated clearly and do I know what is expected of me?

The answers to the questions varied from course to course, both in terms of teaching and clear communication around the exam. Digital competence among lecturers and varied digital teaching arrangements were reported as positive. It was courses led by lecturers with a high level of digital competence that scored the highest on the first question. These lectures were reported to use variation in digital teaching arrangements. Clearly communicating the form the exam would take under lockdown, and how the students could best prepare for the exam, was an important factor for the students to avoid stress. The students reported a greater degree of confidence in the courses where the course coordinator successfully adapted the exam to the pandemic situation in addition to providing clear and complementary information to the class about the exam. Technical challenges, poor networks, conducting exams in student dormitories with a lot of noise, and poor access to books/syllabus literature were nevertheless reported as stress factors that had a negative impact on the exam experience. In conversations with the students, my role as study programme manager was to ensure that the course supervisors followed up the students' concerns. The students reported that in this phase of the pandemic they had difficulty maintaining motivation. The proportion who attended the second digital meeting had decreased from the first meeting in several of the classes. The proportion varied from 10-70%. All participants answered the survey.

In the third questionnaire conducted in March 2021, KUC had the same focus as in the second questionnaire, but I added questions related to the course coordinator/lecturers:

- Have lecturers increased their use of digital tools?
- Have lecturers published assignments and previous exam assignments to enable the students to practise?
- Do the lecturers answer emails, and do they answer questions in class?
- How do you rate the overall process of studying for a bachelor thesis and the supervision from the lecturers (only the third grade)?

There was mostly positive feedback from the students to the lecturers' efforts. It was reported that, in the students' experience, the lecturers were trying hard under more difficult teaching conditions. Digital competence and the use of digital tools were still considered to be somewhat variable, but the level of competence of all lecturers had increased since January-February of the same year. The use of assignments, previous exam assignments, other exam preparation activities, and clarity around the exam had all improved and these factors were considered positive. In March 2021, the campus was opened for skills training in groups, which was considered particularly positive and important for the students. For students in the third year, questions were added about the work on the bachelor thesis; these students reported the greatest degree of challenges, including such facts as it was difficult to structure everyday work when in isolation, there was no access to the library, the library's online services were not as good as personal contact with lecturers, and having to work in pairs digitally made work processes slower. The students in this cohort also reported concerns about the situation after graduating. The proportion who attended the third meeting varied from 0-80%. All participants answered the survey. The fourth survey was conducted in May 2021. The topic of the meeting was up to the students. The conversations dealt with a review of the semester and how the students could motivate and prepare for the autumn semester. Several examinations were completed, and attendance varied from 0-60%. For the third-year students, a separate questionnaire was submitted about the internship, and it included the questions:

- Have you been given an internship?
- What conditions are necessary for you to get worthwhile benefit from the internship period?
- What can you do yourself to get the best out from the internship period?

Almost all the students reported that they had received an internship, but several reported that this largely had to be completed digitally. When asked what it takes to get a good outcome from the internship, the majority answered that physical attendance, relevant tasks, and regular communication with a supervisor were essential. A large proportion of the students were unsure whether they would receive as good a benefit as previous students had received. When I asked what they themselves could do to ensure a good outcome from their internship, factors such as 'being positive', 'saying yes to all tasks', 'being structured and participating actively even if isolated', and 'being flexible and creative' were highlighted by the students. The proportion who attended the fourth meeting was 30-50%. The motivation among the students seemed to be somewhat lower than among the first- and second-year students. Completing a three-year study programme without meeting fellow students, the difficult process of writing a bachelor thesis, and a feeling of having to complete an internship with a lower learning outcome were, in addition to uncertainty for the future, highlighted as mentally difficult. The use of 'digital coffee meetings' can be summarised as having been important for a certain percentage of students. The fact that we took the time to meet them, listen to them and try to help them was considered positive by those who participated. The conversations contributed positively to improving communication between course coordinators/lecturers and students, gaining a greater understanding of the students' situation and directing attention to areas where the digital competence of lecturers had to be improved. Despite this, it became clear that the digital teaching and the social restrictions affected the students negatively to a great extent - and perhaps the graduating students in particular. An interesting finding was that when the physical presence was absent, it was not replaced by digital communication between the students. Several students reported feelings of loneliness and isolation, several moved back to the family home to save on rent, and digital collaboration between students did not work optimally.

4.8 Tips and good practice to aid troubleshooting

Tips and advice for recording lectures.

What should lecturers and teachers take into consideration when recording lectures at home or in the office? Some of the tips in this chapter apply to teaching and lectures in general, while others are more specifically related to teaching on video. In chapter 5 you will find tips and advice from others in the sector.

Video lecture advice

1. A simple 'lecture from home' with a dedicated lecturer is highly valued by the students. Research on online studies (Moocs) indicates that students consider a simple home production with a committed professional to be at least as engaging as a professional studio production.
2. Good sound is important. Try recording with and without a headset, find a place with good acoustics, and make sure the sound level is set correctly (so that the recording volume is not too low or too high and producing a crackling sound).
3. Divide the lecture into shorter parts. A lot of research has been done on using video in teaching / online studies, and the results show that students prefer lecture videos to be short (preferably 5-15 minutes). Short videos are perceived as more engaging.
4. Webcam - be aware of the choice of clothing, background and lighting. It might be preferable to wear solid-coloured clothes (patterns and stripes can create flicker), use a simple background that does not attract too much attention, and adjust the light so that you are clearly visible (make sure you do not have strong light from behind - it makes it difficult to see your face properly).
5. Practice using the recording tool before recording the lecture. Zoom, PowerPoint and other apps are designed to be user-friendly and to make it easy to record lecture videos, but you should attempt the actual recordings only after you have familiarised yourself with the different tools available. It is an unnecessary waste of time to record several times due to a technical or human error.
6. Use a webcam, but it is not important for the students to see the lecturer or teacher all the time. It can be pleasant and add a personal touch if you, for example, start and end a lecture with a video image of yourself (where you look into the camera), but some research suggests that both a split screen and a video image of a lecturer in a review of subject matter can draw students' attention away from what the lecturer shows and explains.
7. Make sure the image from the webcam does not cover the content of the presentation. If the lecturer or teacher wants to have the webcam image visible throughout the lecture, they need to find a place for the video window so that it does not interfere with the PowerPoint or anything else being shown. Alternatively, a fixed space for the video window in the PowerPoint template can be set, or the settings in Zoom can be changed so that the video window is fixed next to (and not on) the window where the teacher is showing a PowerPoint, web pages or other. In the Zoom settings, it is possible to change the setting so that the webcam does not appear when sharing a screen / PowerPoint.
8. PowerPoint - 'Let what you show in the video support what you say'. Therefore, the pictures and text should strengthen and complement what you say, not distract from it. A lot of text, or showing ambiguous pictures on screen while you are talking, will disturb the students' attention. Therefore, use only a little text, and find good and pertinent illustrations to support what you say. Some research shows that students appreciate it more when the lecturer draws and explains during a review of the subject matter, rather than just using pre-produced pictures and models, but it obviously depends on the subject area.
9. Have a casual, enthusiastic tone to hold your students' attention. Research on video in online studies shows that students become more engaged by a lecturer who speaks both relatively quickly and engagingly (it perhaps seems obvious, but it is still important).
10. Put videos into a larger learning context, with associated assignments, interactive elements or other homework related to the video. Feel free to create self-tests related to the video in Canvas or ask the students to send the lecturer questions before meeting them online or in the classroom. In this way, the lecturer has information about what the students understand and what knowledge they lack.
11. Make sure there is enough free disk space on your computer. By default, Zoom recording ends up in the 'Documents / Zoom' folder on your computer. Make sure there is enough disk space to store the recording. An hour of recording can be 2-3 GB, so there should be at least around 5 GB of free space on the computer.

WELL-BEING FROM THE PERSPECTIVES OF NORWAY AND SLOVAKIA

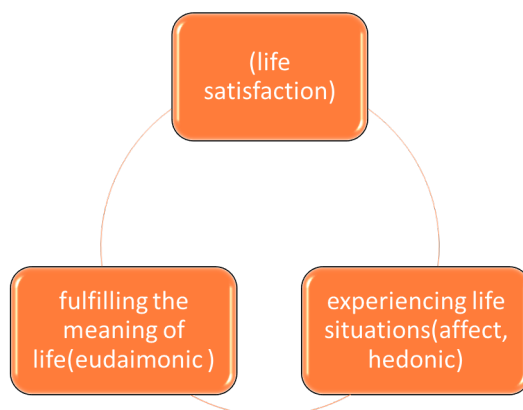
Norway

The coronavirus pandemic has been an unprecedented event, disrupting our way of life and causing increased stress and anxiety for workers everywhere. The instigation of social distancing and lockdown measures have had an impact on employee well-being. At Kristiania University College (KUC, 2021) in Norway employees received support and practical advice from the leadership, such as:

- physical treatment was offered to all employees through health insurance
- the use of KUC's own massage service, to which all employees had access (with partial payment)
- the opportunity to spend one hour of working time each week on physical training. During the pandemic this time was extended to two hours a week. Management encouraged all employees to take advantage of this as much as possible; getting out a little while in the daylight is important for all of us, especially during a pandemic
- management encouraged all employees to block out 30 minutes in the calendar each day for a lunch break somewhere between 11 a.m. and 1 p.m. Lunch breaks away from the computer are enjoyable and important for good mental health! Everyone needs a break, and a half hour of relaxation works wonders.
- employees were able buy equipment for their own home office which would be refunded up to a value of 200€, including VAT. If necessary, it was possible to apply for double this sum for work equipment at home. In this case, the purchase had to be agreed with the lecturer's immediate superior.
- KUC offered 'someone to talk to' through health insurance, access to ordinary psychological assistance without a referral from a medical doctor.
- follow-up support was offered by the HR department to employees with increasing addiction problems related to drugs/gaming etc.
- staff were encouraged to inspire, support and give positive reinforcement to their colleagues in connection with the slogan: "Be extra generous now"

Slovakia

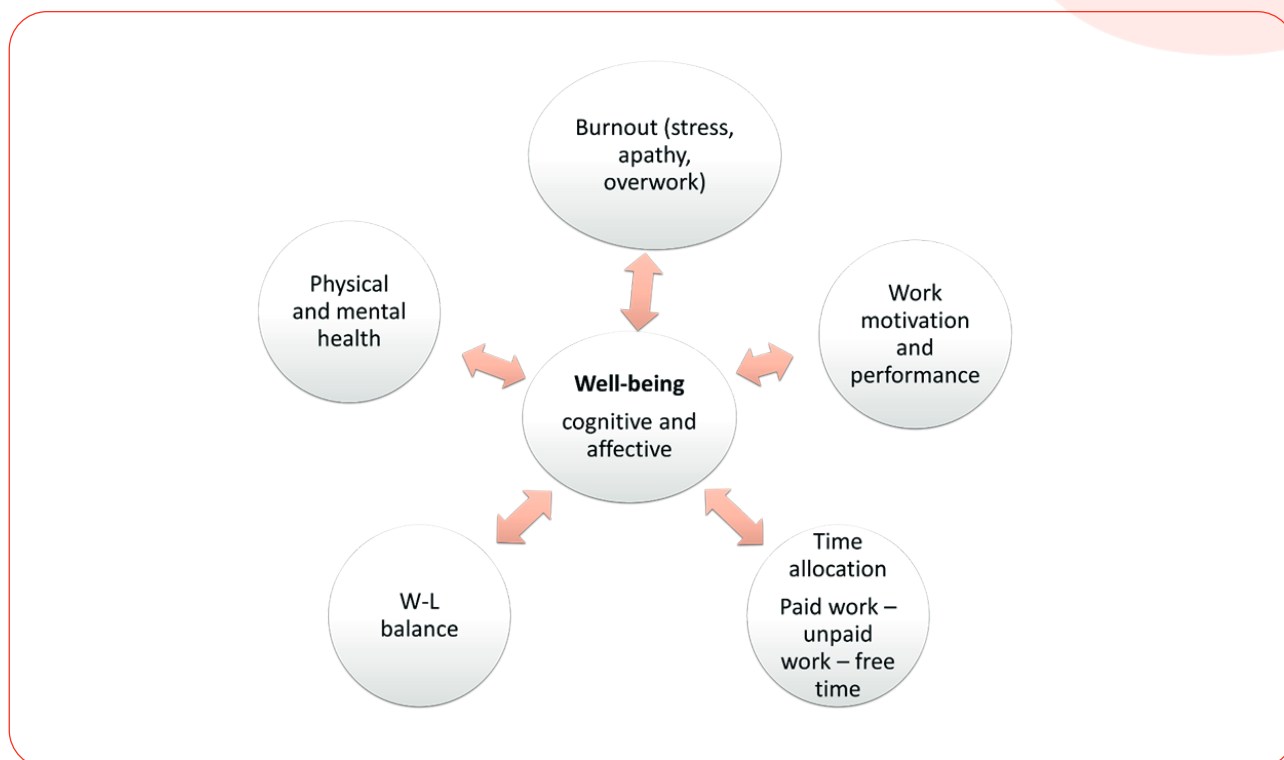
Nowadays, research on the quality of life is more and more individualised and focusses primarily on the subjective perception and evaluation of an individual's own life. Besides the term 'quality of life' other synonyms are used, such as 'social well-being', 'subjective well-being', 'personal well-being', 'human development', 'standard of living', 'happiness', 'wealth', or 'satisfaction'. The comprehensive term used for all these concepts is 'well-being', or 'subjective well-being' (Martinkovičová, Knapková, Kaščáková, 2020). The following figure displays the basic concept of the well-being.



Source: own processing.

Hedonic well-being is defined by pleasure or affective experience and is often operationalised as the presence of positive emotions and life satisfaction, and the absence of negative emotions (Diener, Lucas, & Oishi, 2018). It refers to everyday feelings or moods, such as experiencing happiness (not evaluation), sadness, anger, or stress, and is measured by having respondents indicate their experience of particular emotional states, such as being happy, sad, or angry (Martinkovičová, Knapková, Kaščáková, 2020). Eudaimonic well-being is defined as the presence of personal and social skills and abilities (e.g., meaning in life, a sense of continued personal growth, and social contribution) that contribute to optimal psychosocial functioning (Ryff, 2018). It reflects general judgments about the meaning and purpose of life. It is a reflection on the overall meaningfulness of life, the fulfilment and satisfaction or disappointment of (not) achieving life plans and goals (Martinkovičová, Knapková, Kaščáková, 2020).

Life satisfaction refers to people's thoughts about the quality of their life, their overall satisfaction with life, or their satisfaction with particular areas of life (health, family, work) (Martinkovičová, Knapková, Kaščáková, 2020).



Source: own processing

In the transition to online learning, priority attention was given to students and their ability to cope with the changed learning conditions, and how the new conditions would affect their perception of higher education. Only marginal attention, however, has been paid to university lecturers, their challenges in the transition to online learning, their increasing workload and time commitment, and their overall well-being. This is a pity, because the well-being of university lecturers has a significant impact not only on the educational process itself, but also on other aspects of their work and life. The following example illustrates just some of the consequences that can result from a lack of lecturer well-being: Initially, an increased workload affects the overall allocation of time between paid work, unpaid work and leisure time; this in turn leads to an inappropriate work-life/family balance; work-life imbalance, as well as inappropriate allocation of time between paid work, unpaid work and leisure time, can lead to negative consequences for lecturers' physical and/or mental health; all of this can, in borderline cases, lead to burnout. In the field of work, the above-mentioned negative effects of ill-being are mainly manifested by a decrease in the motivation to work and an overall reduction in work performance.

PSYCHOLOGICAL SAFETY DURING ONLINE EDUCATION - 'ZOOM FATIGUE'

Online education offered an avenue for students to continue learning while maintaining the required safe social distance. This massive, abrupt pivot to fully online instruction provided both opportunities and challenges for educators in colleges and universities. The major transformation in instructional delivery was met with mixed results as the unanticipated disruption caused significant distress and turmoil for instructors and students alike (Quintana, 2020). Faculty members from Slovakia struggled with how to best communicate with their students since their previous in-person lectures, discussion, and office hour times had been unexpectedly replaced by a variety of digital instructional tools, including learning management systems (LMS), email, and videoconferencing (VC) platforms. Notably VC tools, such as Zoom and Microsoft Teams, became a considerable part of many faculty members' and students' everyday activities. While VC was heralded as the closest substitute to face-to-face instruction, many faculties and students reported that using the tools was exhausting, prompting journalists in the popular press to label this new phenomenon as 'Zoom fatigue' (Bailenson, 2021; Supiano, 2020). As universities and colleges strive to plan for the uncertain future of higher education, it is apparent that a mixture of face-to-face, hybrid, remote, and online instruction will be both necessary and advantageous in the coming years.

Zoom fatigue can have notable biological, psychological, and social impacts. Biologically, videoconferencing is confounded by the more sedentary daily rhythm experienced during the pandemic. Stanford University researchers recently published the first peer-reviewed article on the topic; they found that (Bailenson, 2021):

- in-person communications make our brains happier. Brain scans showed greater activity in the reward regions of the brain during in-person communications compared to virtual interactions. On the flipside, screen-based interactions can feel intense. You are viewing someone's head at an unnatural size, at a closer distance than you would normally be in-person, and people are staring at you. The brain can interpret all these factors as threats
- virtual interactions make it easier to zone out. People tend to pay more attention during face-to-face interactions than screen-to-screen ones (and not just because the internet browser tab is a click away)
- screen-based interactions can make it harder to connect with others. The idiosyncrasies of video meetings, such as lags in audio and an inability to make direct eye contact with people, can negatively impact our ability to follow and relate to other speakers
- our brains have to work harder to make up for lost context. The fact that we are not getting all the nonverbal cues we would normally perceive when we are in the same room with a group of people means we have to expend more cognitive effort overall
- being forced to watch ourselves on a screen is mentally exhausting. The quirky feature popular video conferencing platforms have of defaulting to show you your own image is basically like performing in front of a mirror, which previous research has found to be stressful, particularly for women

Recommendations for controlling physical space include keeping the laptop or desktop at a comfortable height, avoiding mobile phone usage during Zoom sessions, and setting up an external webcam instead of using the internal camera on the laptop/computer so the webcam can be moved into a comfortable position. Furthermore, making specific adjustments to the workspace, such as propping the screen up with a couple of books to create a straight line from one's face to the people on the screen, can help users see and read micro-expressions and feel more connected (Walker, 2020).

Physical space can be further controlled by incorporating regular breaks for educators and students who are not required to partake in-class activities/tasks, along with setting up and adhering to a specific start and end time; educators are also advised to dedicate a few minutes to diaphragmatic breathing before and after sessions, while also setting aside some time during sessions for relaxation exercises

According to McWhirter (2020), educators should create boundaries by setting virtual office hours that are separate from teaching hours, physically leaving the teaching/office space once the tasks are complete for the day, dressing professionally when teaching and meeting with students, and changing clothes after daily tasks have been completed. Leazenby (2020) offered similar suggestions, including:

- scheduling time to 'let off steam' with friends or family
- changing scenery between meetings
- putting away computers when work or school is finished, thus completing that part of the day.

Institutions, on the other hand, need to actively support their faculties' academic efforts by providing training on how to more effectively and efficiently use video conferencing tools to reduce stress and fatigue. Additionally, colleges and universities can create a culture of self-care and wellness for their faculty.

Since a faculty may experience the social and psychological effects of their employees' isolation, creating an initiative to ensure that all staff members are aware of how to access psychological and social support services and resources offered through the institution can be helpful. Creating a platform where the faculty can share their mindfulness/meditation or exercise routines can help reduce stress and fatigue and increase well-being; other approaches might include encouraging the staff to take regular breaks, along with providing resources for all staff to incorporate health and well-being principles in their classes or training. As a part of each module, the faculty can give its employees access a variety of readings, videos, podcasts, and apps. When health and well-being are addressed, faculty members are more productive and will more easily find satisfaction in life.

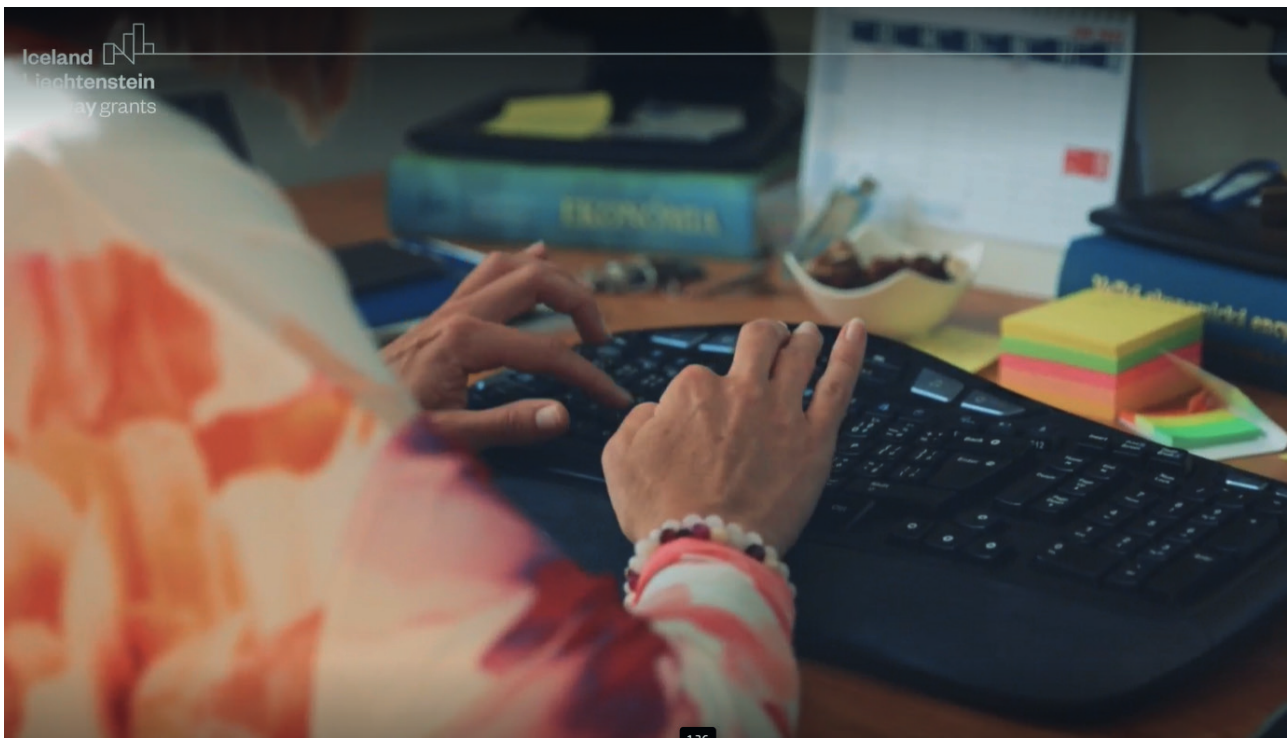


Photo: Matej Bel University, Faculty of Economics (Slovakia), 2022

Recommendations for the future

Each of us hopes that a situation similar to the one caused by the COVID-19 pandemic will not happen again. However, expectations and reality often differ, and so we should prepare for further emergencies in the future which could again affect the teaching process in universities.

Despite the initial problems at both Slovak and Norwegian higher education institutions, the circumstances caused by the pandemic have brought about a number of positive changes. The modernisation of technical equipment has been significantly accelerated, the digital skills of university lecturers (as well as students) have been strengthened, and there has been the opportunity to use a variety of innovative and creative applications. These positive changes must not only be maintained, but also strengthened in the future period when a return to full-time teaching takes place. Additionally, familiarity with the LMS Moodle or with other platforms will continue to facilitate the work of university lecturers in the future. On the other hand, the transition to online and hybrid forms of teaching has brought a significant increase in administration and additional workload for both university lecturers and students. It is questionable to what extent this trend will continue into the future, but it is clear that the increasing administrative workload is one of the main problems of the decreasing well-being of university lecturers.



Photo: Kristiania University College (Norway), 2022

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