

Designing flexible and inclusive curricula: A case study at Oxford University, UK

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Abstract

All universities faced the challenge of rapid curriculum transformation during the COVID-19 pandemic. While many described this transformation as a pivot to remote teaching and others drew on principles of blended learning, this report explores a different approach, which is grounded in organisational history, practice and culture. This approach begins with an understanding that teachers' design practices are contextualised within local traditions and constraints of institutional policies and practices. The challenge at the University of Oxford was to outline a broad educational approach, which would be responsive to rapidly changing conditions during the pandemic, while preserving the personalised education that is our hallmark. For this approach to be adopted, it was important for teachers to view it as being familiar and appropriate to their local contexts. We were also keen to align the new approach with an institutional strategic priority to encourage and embed inclusive teaching, and that efforts to maintain educational quality through the pandemic should have a lasting impact. This report describes the development of a Flexible and Inclusive Teaching (FIT) model, considers the ways in which learning design principles may inform the support offered to academic colleagues, and reflects on the role of a central teaching development unit in university-wide curriculum transformation within Oxford's tradition of a broad and personalised curriculum.

Keywords: Remote teaching and learning, business continuity, curriculum transformation, flexibility, inclusivity, accessibility

Introduction

The World Economic Forum (2020) defines the “Fourth Industrial Revolution” as follows:

The Fourth Industrial Revolution represents a fundamental change in the way we live, work and relate to one another. It is a new chapter in human development, enabled by extraordinary technology advances commensurate with those of the first, second and third industrial revolutions. ... The Fourth Industrial Revolution is about more than just technology-driven change; it is an opportunity to help everyone, including leaders, policy-makers and people from all income groups and nations, to harness converging technologies in order to create an inclusive, human-centred future. The real opportunity is to look beyond technology, and find ways to give the greatest number of people the ability to positively impact their families, organisations and communities.

This type of thinking or “way of living and working” was brought into sharp focus by the COVID-19 pandemic that struck in 2020. Not only did we need to cope with unexpected and rapidly changing global circumstances, but we also needed to ensure that our actions led to sustainable inclusivity for our students and communities.

No one could have foreseen the extent and impact of the pandemic, causing change and uncertainty in the lives of people from all walks of life. Abdullah, Husin and Haider (2020) assert that the “pandemic of COVID-19 will drastically change the world” and that the “higher education (HE) market is currently experiencing a tectonic change” (p. 201). The nature and extent of this “tectonic change” presented challenges for universities all over the world, with regard to resources, policy-making, curriculum design, staff development, technology-enhanced learning, and ways in which students learn and teachers teach. The pandemic placed sudden and unexpected demands on academic staff, course directors, administrators, and support staff, who had to quickly reconsider and adapt usual teaching and learning expectations and practices, and adopt more remote and online teaching methods. Furthermore, educational institutions had to implement business continuity measures at short notice, and confront issues such as staying up to date with government and health guidelines, maintaining safety for staff and students by enforcing social distancing in student environments, and planning for envisaged diminished income from student fees.

University students, who have developed their learning practices over many years of prior education, had to adapt their study methods to cope with recorded lectures, online tutorials, asynchronous learning tasks, and remote exams. According to the United Nations (2020) policy brief, the “COVID-19 pandemic has caused the largest disruption of education in history, having already had a near universal impact on learners and teachers around the world, from pre-primary to secondary schools, technical and vocational education and training (TVET) institutions, universities, adult learning, and skills development establishments” (p. 5).

The aim of this report is to reflect on the impact of the pandemic on transformational curriculum design by applying learning design principles within a specific institutional context. As a reflective case study by practitioners (Hamilton & Corbett-Whittier, 2013), it enhances our understanding of context and draws on our contemporaneous notes and findings from local evaluative data, including student surveys, on learning remotely in the early days of the pandemic.

Context

The University of Oxford is a historic, research-intensive, face-to-face university, which has, for centuries, offered a uniquely rich and personal learning experience to students, dating back to times when students would “sit at the feet of scholars” and read about their subject in ancient chained-up tomes in the Bodleian Library.¹

When students enrol at the university, they are assigned to a college, which offers them a living and learning environment, based on strong support from expert subject tutors and peers. For students, this means that while their academic departments offer a range of teaching opportunities (e.g., lectures, seminar classes, laboratories and practical sessions), the college tutor is responsible for monitoring their academic progress. In addition to seeing students regularly, tutors provide diagnostic assessments at the start of a term, reading lists, weekly tasks (e.g., essays or problem sheets) and arrange access to teaching (perhaps from another college) to meet each individual student’s learning needs. The outcome of the college-based tutorial system is a highly personalised education, where undergraduate students can pursue their own areas of interest, making choices later in the year about which papers (exams) they will sit for. While postgraduate teaching tends to be more prescribed, the emphasis on small group teaching persists, with support from college-based tutors.

Since the early 2000s, the University has placed increased emphasis on providing teaching and learning consultation, and professional development and support for academics – in units such as the former Institute for the Advancement of University Learning, the Oxford Learning Institute, and the Learning Technologies Group. Even so, advancements in these areas were sometimes slow and a change was therefore necessary. This change was dramatically accelerated by the COVID-19 pandemic, during which academics had to, out of necessity, reflect on all the implications for teaching and learning in new and sustainable ways, and adapt their teaching practices in the face of uncertainty. The Centre for Teaching and Learning (CTL) was established in 2019 through the merger of existing educational support units – a timely move, which enabled the centre to become a driving force in the University’s response to the COVID-19 pandemic. The CTL offers support from educational developers and learning technologists, in the form of professional development courses, consultation, guidance and training. In addition, the CTL recognises its role in cultural and institutional change. As Kim and Maloney (2020, p. 10) articulate in their analysis of learning innovation in the

¹ 2020 marked the 700th anniversary of the decision to build the first purpose-built central library for the University of Oxford (Bodleian Libraries, 2020).

USA, “learning innovation is as much about organizational change as it is about pedagogy and technology”.

The impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on teaching at Oxford

When the government of the United Kingdom (UK) imposed a nationwide lockdown on 23 March 2020, the spring teaching term had been completed, many staff were already working from home, and most students had returned home for the Easter vacation. There was a six-week period from lockdown until the start of the summer term in May, which is the final term of the academic year². This term involves less teaching compared to other terms, focussing instead on revision and examinations. At that point, preparations involved contingency planning for the possibility that staff and students would be unable to return to residence in Oxford, and it was expected that the duration of disruption due to COVID-19 would be short lived. Enabling students to progress and graduate in July was a matter of priority, and consequently, significant efforts were invested in providing the infrastructure to make it possible for students to write examinations remotely.

Business continuity planning

Business continuity planning activities initially focussed on the most expedient ways to replace existing teaching and learning in the event of the closure of university buildings. A Teaching and Learning Planning Group was established, with representation from academic divisions, the Student Union, professional support personnel, and support managers. The group’s main achievement was coordinating responses to support teaching and learning, including the following:

- Implementation of robust processes, making use of IT business analysts to select and recommend tools to support remote teaching;
- Enhancement of core IT systems for those teaching and studying from home – for example, increasing Virtual Private Network (VPN) capacity, creating additional course areas and logins in the Virtual Learning Environment (VLE), rolling out the lecture capture software, and stress testing of core IT systems;
- Rapid selection and implementation of additional tools and services required for remote teaching, for example, training additional staff to create online reading lists, implementing the [SensusAccess software](#) to

² The academic year in the northern hemisphere begins in September or October and runs through to June or July the following year.

- provide alternative document formats, and procuring additional tools for learning technologists to create interactive course sites and screencasts;
- Reallocation of resources within the rollout of the new VLE, to promote adoption by all academic departments before the start of the new academic year;
 - Coordination of support functions, for example, building a teaching remotely webpage to act as a single landing page for teaching staff; and creating a managed service desk and ticketing system to enable triaging and tracking of support requests.

However, it soon became clear that longer term contingency planning was required for the forthcoming academic year 2020–2021 (due to start in October 2020), in case that was also disrupted. There were thus two parallel strands of activity: preparations for teaching and assessing remotely in the summer term, as well as contingency planning for ongoing disruption at the start of the new academic year. The exact nature of the ongoing disruption was not clear; rather what was clear was the need to plan for uncertain and rapidly changing local, national, and international circumstances. It was because of this uncertainty that the “teaching remotely” and “Flexible and Inclusive Teaching (FIT)” approaches were conceived.

Teaching remotely

In common with many other universities around the globe, the educational approach at Oxford for the new term was called “teaching remotely”. Teaching staff needed to understand that they were not required to design online learning interventions from scratch, but should rather adapt their current teaching and assessment practices with tools that would most quickly and simply enable them to continue with their existing practice as much as possible.

Guidance and advice focussed on centrally-supported tools and approaches that were familiar and most likely to enable successful adoption of remote ways of teaching and learning; these include Canvas (the University’s central VLE), Microsoft Teams (for virtual classroom/meetings and collaboration), Panopto (for lecture capture and recording) and Talis Aspire (Oxford Reading Lists Online – ORLO). Finally, while most of the teaching and learning planned for the new term was moved online, some was postponed in instances where technical constraints made it impossible to design online solutions in the time available.

The pivotal location of the teaching remotely resources was CTL’s new web pages (Centre for Teaching and Learning, 2020). From April to June 2020, we also implemented the following support initiatives:

- a University-wide mailing list for academics and course administrators (called “Teaching Oxford Remotely”) to share ideas, suggestions, and concerns;
- a teaching remotely service desk with a single email address – to which we assigned additional staff resources in order to address staff queries and requests for assistance;
- an online teaching remotely resource in the VLE – a collection of ideas and real examples from Oxford teaching practice;
- a series of webinars – for staff to experience being a participant in an online meeting while learning about teaching remotely.

The student experience of teaching remotely

A review was conducted on students’ experiences of remote teaching and learning. The CTL and the Student Union compiled an online form which was made available via Canvas, asking students to indicate what was working for them and what was not working. This was publicised through the weekly ‘Student News’ email sent to all students by the Academic Administration, and the Student Union also publicised it through their own channels. Students were able to submit responses as often as necessary throughout the summer term (the period 1 May–30 June 2020 recorded 382 responses). At the end of term, the Academic Administration distributed a questionnaire by email to all undergraduate and postgraduate taught students (the period 8 June–17 July recorded 3188 responses, an 18 percent response rate). The students took full advantage of the ample space provided for comments, resulting in over 2500 free text responses (Turner, 2020). These provided vivid insights into students’ experiences of studying remotely. Clearly, the respondents to both surveys were self-selecting, but this method enables researchers to collect information from a large number of respondents, fairly quickly and at limited cost (Sterba & Foster, 2011).

In brief, the review found that although students were satisfied with the emergency teaching and assessment model put in place, they had a very strong preference for in-person classes and tutorials, where possible. Satisfaction with live-streamed teaching sessions decreased as the size of the group increased. Students were most satisfied with video lectures and more than half preferred these to in-person lectures. Students also valued the additional library resources that had been added to their reading lists. The biggest challenge that students faced, while working remotely, was lack of motivation to study – even more so than technical problems, which had been largely resolved during the term. Many found the home environment to be far from ideal for studying, and they missed the ambience of the Oxford University buildings, peer support and college life.

The responses to open questions provided insights into which teaching strategies were most beneficial for remote students. It was clear, for example, that in live online classes engagement needs to be planned for and actively stimulated. Shorter live sessions were welcomed, as were video lessons broken down into smaller chunks. With regard to improving motivation, students benefitted from regular check-ins with their tutors, academic-related social activities organised by their departments, and schedules for working through the digital learning resources.

More than half the respondents identified remote teaching experiences that they hope to keep – with one very clear theme – that video lectures should be continued. Students clearly appreciate the ability to replay lectures to improve their notes, consolidate their knowledge, and revise complicated topics. Finally, and importantly for our future plans, students appreciated the accessibility of online learning resources and the flexibility to engage with these, as well as asynchronous activities at different times, thus reducing dependence on live events. For students with disabilities, in particular, the experience of a live lecture appears to be a particularly challenging learning situation, and one which can be significantly mitigated by the availability of video lectures.

Moving on from teaching remotely

While the teaching remotely approach had been successful in allowing students to complete the 2019–2020 academic year, it was recognised that this approach would not be adequate for students beginning in the new academic year (2020–2021). The Pro-Vice Chancellor (Education) set out four guiding principles for academic planning for the new academic year (University of Oxford, 2020a):

- To protect and safeguard the health, wellbeing and safety of our staff and students;
- To preserve Oxford's high-quality, personalised education in spite of the constraints imposed by the COVID-19 pandemic;
- To cater for the needs of staff and students who may need to access some teaching remotely, or may miss significant amounts of teaching time;
- To retain the ability to switch to remote teaching in the event of a change in business continuity planning level.

While the new academic year was nominally an improved situation as it did not start in total lockdown, there were several challenges that we had not faced previously:

- The first term (October) is a more intense teaching term, with more than double the extent of teaching schedules compared to the summer term (May);
- While the University decided to maximise the availability of in-person teaching, this was applicable only in certain scenarios, and had to anticipate staff and students needing to self-isolate at any point; thus, there had to be an online option for all in-person teaching;
- Students had been grateful for the emergency response of remote teaching, but were likely to expect a higher standard, given more time for the University to prepare;
- All students in the summer term had pre-existing relationships with staff, but new first-year students would be starting without any previous opportunities to build relationships with staff and each other.

A new approach was required to account for these issues, taking cognisance of the Oxford context. Academics at Oxford are often passionate about teaching, but teaching development programmes are not mandatory. Additionally, the highly decentralised college structure means that academics are more likely to enlist the help of their local colleagues than consult a central support team for help with teaching challenges. Thus, any approach taken had to quickly demonstrate that it understood the most common teaching scenarios at Oxford, could suggest simple-to-implement solutions for anticipated challenges for teaching under these new conditions, and would allow easy customisation to ensure a bespoke solution for every department or college.

Flexible and Inclusive Teaching

We designed a Flexible and Inclusive Teaching (FIT) model, to ensure that existing teaching sessions were not merely moved online, but were rather replaced by a combination of asynchronous online activities and real-time interactions (see figures 1 to 3). Within the Oxford context, flexible and inclusive teaching is defined as follows:

- Flexible learning is about accommodating students' needs for when, where and how they study – even as conditions change;
- Inclusive teaching involves recognising and minimising the barriers that hinder students' learning and participation.

The FIT model differs from other approaches that were actively promoted during the pandemic, such as blended learning and hybrid learning (Quality Assurance Agency, 2020). *Blended* learning allows institutions to realise the potential of blending the best of face-to-face learning environments with online

opportunities and tools (Garrison & Kanuka, 2004; Littlejohn & Pegler, 2007). In a blended learning curriculum, designers determine which teaching elements all students will attend in-person, and which they will study online. This choice is fostered by the affordances of the different modes and is pre-determined and fixed. However, during a pandemic, curriculum designs need to be determined by health and safety considerations, and the need for flexibility to respond to rapidly changing conditions.

Hybrid learning offers some flexibility, in that students can engage in real time, either in-person or online, with the audience split between the two modes. For example, the University of Edinburgh (2020) developed a hybrid model where some students within a cohort may be learning wholly online, while others in the same cohort attend some sessions face-to-face. However, the hybrid approach is less inclusive in that it requires students to attend at a set time, and during a pandemic, students may be absent due to illness, or sadly, bereavement. There is also the very real concern that such reliance on real-time events is dependent on buildings being open, and staff being on site to teach and support the use of audio-visual equipment.

The notion of *flexible* learning addresses some of the above-mentioned shortcomings. AdvanceHE (2020) offers a framework for flexible learning in higher education and believes that “flexible learning is about empowering students by offering them choices in how, what, when and where they learn: the pace, place and mode of delivery”. An inclusive educational approach requires that we consider “ways in which pedagogy, curricula and assessment are designed and delivered to engage students in learning that is meaningful, relevant and accessible to all” (Hockings, 2010, p. 1). Inclusive teaching minimises barriers for students with disabilities, and many of these adaptations benefit all students, such as having learning materials in advance, being able to adapt the format of materials, and having asynchronous alternatives for real-time activities.

Together, flexible learning and inclusive learning form a model that was well suited to the needs of students during the COVID-19 pandemic. A key feature of FIT is that real-time interactions may take place either in-person or online, and one can easily switch back and forth between them, at short notice if necessary. Replacing longer real-time sessions with such combinations offers several benefits for staff and students:

- Asynchronous activities can be prepared in advance for students to engage with in flexible ways, so that challenges (such as different time zones, the lack of a quiet place to work, illness, or the need to self-isolate) are no longer exacerbated by the requirement to be in a certain place at a certain time.

- In-person, real-time sessions focus on types of teaching that most fully take advantage of this mode – for example debate, discussion and collaboration. By keeping these focussed, any need to run sessions multiple times and/or have subsets of students interacting in different ways is minimised.

At Oxford, the FIT approach was able to coalesce the sustainability of all our efforts and continues to move purposefully in the direction of a more inclusive education for all our students.

Designing flexible and inclusive teaching

Although the CTL is well practised in applying learning design approaches to curriculum planning – for example, having adapted the University College of London ABC workshops (Young & Perović, 2018) for the Oxford context (Masterman, 2019) – these approaches are of value in only a minority of courses where learning outcomes, activities and assessment are brought together into discrete modules. The curriculum at Oxford does not exist as a syllabus, map, or plan for action, but as a lived curriculum emerging from the interactions of teachers and students as the course is enacted (Aoki, 1993). In such a curriculum, learning design toolkits, which rely on the teacher determining the sequence of learning activities, are of little use as a planning framework.

In the undergraduate curriculum and some postgraduate programmes, the student – in negotiation with their tutor – designs their own “course”. Oxford undergraduates have an extraordinary amount of choice in the subjects they may study. For example, History offers over 100 different options, even in Year 1. Further, while the department offers lectures or classes, college-based tutors set weekly formative assessments. As Dawkins (2008) reflects on his own experiences as an Oxford zoology undergraduate, “the examiners when setting the papers, and our tutors when handing out essay topics, neither knew nor cared which subjects had been covered in lectures” (p. 74). The implications of this approach for a rapid pivot to online teaching are profound.

Oxford, in this regard, has a very clear and shared understanding of the pedagogic intent of different forms of teaching. The purpose of the Oxford tutorial is to develop discipline-appropriate, transferable skills such as asking a question, researching a topic, collecting and using evidence, and presenting and defending an argument (Lane Fox, 2008). In effect, this demonstrates the methods of the disciplinary scholar (Shale, 2000, as cited in Trigwell & Ashwin, 2003). Our challenge was to support staff to take their repertoire of student-centred tasks used in common teaching scenarios, and adapt it by designing opportunities for flexible, inclusive and active learning.

Flexible and inclusive teaching (FIT) learning pathways

Given the extreme time pressures on academics to prepare teaching offerings which would be resilient to the changing circumstances of the pandemic, we illustrate the core elements of the FIT approach through “learning pathways”. Each pathway is designed around activities and tools (“components”) to address a particular teaching scenario at Oxford, including lectures (Figure 1), tutorials (Figure 2), and laboratory work (Figure 3).

The pathways enable individual academics to conceptualise how they might adapt their existing practice to encompass FIT ideas. Academics are encouraged to explore ways of breaking down longer teaching sessions into smaller segments, using the variety of digital tools available (namely the Canvas VLE, the Panopto lecture capture system, Microsoft Teams, the online reading lists (ORLO) system, amongst others). In particular, the pathways highlight how in-person teaching can be moved to a mix of asynchronous and synchronous study. This ensures more flexibility around how students and staff engage and ensures that real-time contact is concentrated at the point where it adds most value to the teaching experience. Furthermore, real-time contact may be “in-person” or “virtual”, depending on the prevailing circumstances.

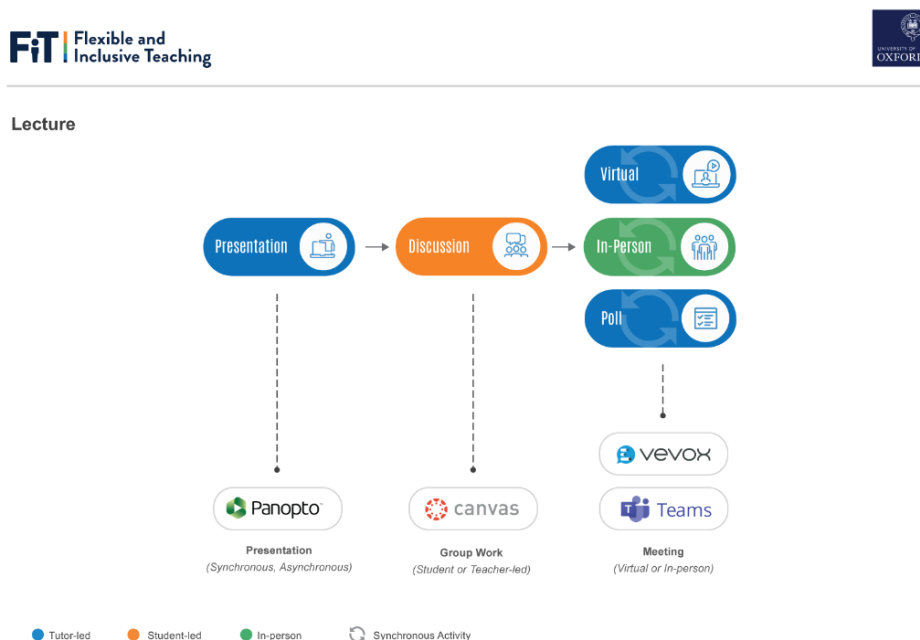


Figure 1: FIT pathway for a lecture

The FIT pathway for a lecture (Fig. 1) shows that a spoken lecture can be replaced with a recorded presentation, either recorded in advance or shared after the recorded live lecture. However, not all lectures consist solely of an academic presenting to passive students, so this pathway suggests additional

elements. Polling tools can be used both in live lectures and online, enabling students to ask questions of the lecturer, the lecturer of them, or they may discuss ideas among themselves and provide feedback to the lecturer. Asynchronous discussion forums can be used to manage this dialogue entirely, or to collect queries in advance of another live session (either in-person or virtual).

Tutorial

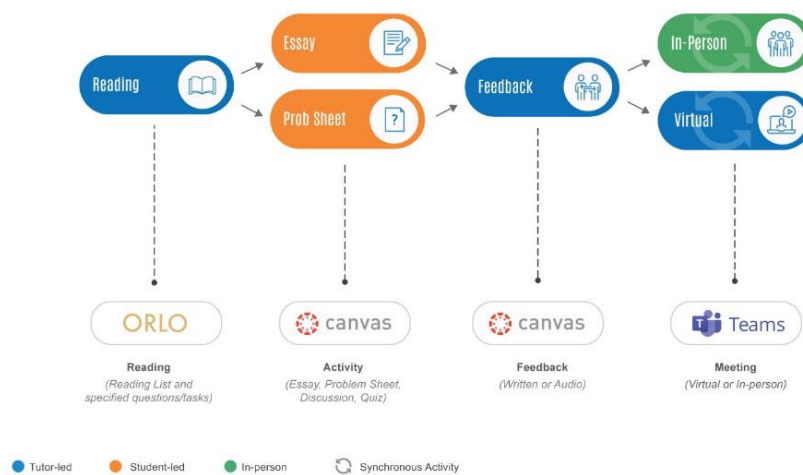


Figure 2: FIT pathway for a tutorial

Tutorial teaching focuses much more on student work and feedback from the tutor. This pathway (Fig. 2) show how students start with pre-work, such as reading and essay writing or completing a problem sheet. The tutor provides formative feedback on the student work and students may then demonstrate what they have learned by giving a short presentation on a topic to the rest of the tutorial group; this can be done remotely so it doesn't matter where students are physically located. The tutor may also run a real-time activity (either in-person or virtual), using the student presentations as a trigger for discussion and focussed collaboration, or to provide further feedback.

Lab Work

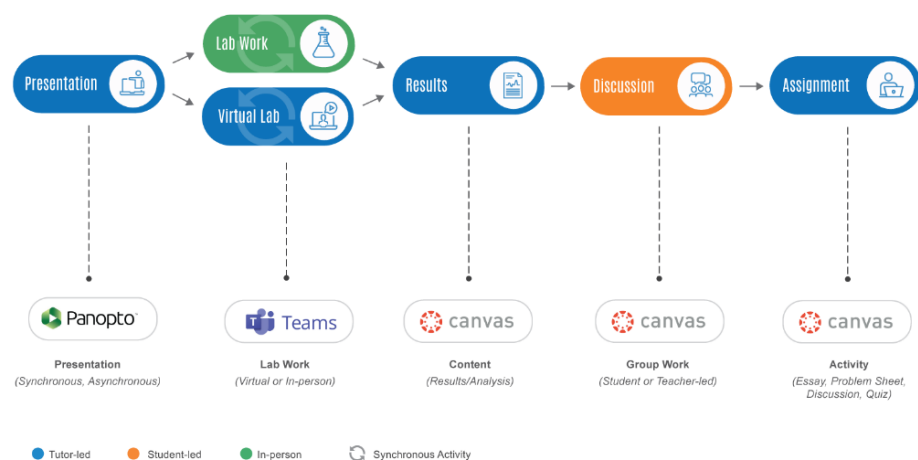


Figure 3: FIT pathway for laboratory work

The pathway for laboratory work (Fig. 3) starts with communicating any background information students need before the laboratory experiment. This could be shared in an online presentation, through other content in the VLE, or via a third-party tool. This information should include instructions on how the lab activity works and what students are expected to do at each stage. Physical attendance in the lab may be all students in staggered sessions, students attending one week in the lab and one week out, or other alternatives. The lecturer should consider a way for remote students to observe the activities in the lab – either through real-time streaming or by pre-recording the experiment. As labs are as much about dealing with the results of experiments as undertaking them, the process can then return to remote flexible engagement with experimental data. Students can be given a task to discuss and analyse their data in the VLE, and submit a piece of work using the assignment tool, either for formative feedback or to contribute to their mark for summative lab work.

Not all components in each pathway will be appropriate for each scenario, but they may stimulate thinking around combinations that help to solve particular challenges. Each pathway is supported by a template in the VLE, to show how the tools may be combined. These templates model text, content and structure around common tasks to help staff build courses more easily, manage collaborative activities (e.g., discussion forums), and conveniently link to the tools and resources that students need.

In practice, the templates have been taken forward in very different ways, inspired by the FIT ideas of breaking sessions into smaller elements and allowing a mix of asynchronous and synchronous engagement. Thus, learning design occurs on many levels, from adaptation through to the creation of new approaches and combinations.

Reflections and recommendations

Given that the FIT approach was implemented rapidly during the COVID-19 pandemic, and that the conditions and restrictions placed on universities continue to evolve, this reflective case study has enabled us to review student feedback, university documentation, and our own field notes, to reflect on our experiences and interactions. We set out to understand more fully: (a) the impact of the pandemic on transformational curriculum design within a specific institutional context; and (b) ways in which learning design principles may inform the support offered to academic colleagues in rapidly changing circumstances. Each of these aims is explored in turn in this section, offering recommendations for other higher education institutions to consider in their own contexts.

Our first recommendation is to ensure broad strategic planning involving key stakeholders across the institution. Despite the rapidly escalating crises we faced, we were able to implement strategic curriculum changes in the form of “organisational level planning that involves reviewing the institutional mission, deciding how to respond, planning activities and allocating resources appropriately” (Sharpe & Armellini, 2020, p. 135). The FIT approach reflects the commitments made in the University Strategic Plan (University of Oxford, 2018) “to equality of opportunity, to engendering inclusivity” (p. 2), and enabled us to progress work we had already started, to enhance and embed our support and guidance for inclusive teaching.

We also recommend that institutions should provide academics with a model for an educational approach that is meaningful and relevant to their specific contexts. At the University of Oxford, the FIT model was approved by the Education Committee in early May 2020 and quickly gained acceptance from academic departments. The model recognises the value of the college-based tutorial system, which provides close personal supervision and support that is at the heart of Oxford’s distinctive approach to teaching. Resources were allocated, which enabled us to employ additional learning technologists and offer follow-up services such as “FIT-for-Canvas” and “FIT check-in” (consultation with a learning technologist and review of Canvas courses according to FIT principles). The impact of this model will become clear as we

return to a fully campus-based teaching model and are able to observe which of the FIT elements have been sustained.

Course design teams should use learning design principles to inform the support offered to academics. Researching teachers' design practices at Oxford had previously revealed that a student-centred approach – which begins with students' needs and preferences – can influence teachers' design practices towards approaches that are more cognitive (focussing on students' learning progress), agentic (empowering students by designing opportunities for active learning), or humanist (taking account of students' individual interests, aspirations, life situations, and cultural backgrounds) (Masterman, 2020). Using graphics to present the student-centred FIT pathways (as illustrated earlier in figures 1 to 3) was informed by evidence of the value of visual representations of learning designs, so that they can be evaluated, shared, and repurposed (Agostinho, 2011). What our approach perhaps lacked was creating spaces for conversations about the designs within disciplinary groups – something that other institutional case studies of curriculum change have found to be important (Sharpe & Armellini, 2020).

Lastly, we recommend that institutions should collect and disseminate feedback on students' learning experiences. We shared the findings from our surveys as soon as they became available, both through presentations to committees, and reports circulated via crisis management communications. This iterative approach enabled student feedback to inform plans for the coming academic year, even in a fast-moving situation, and is something we continue to promote (University of Oxford, 2020b).

Conclusion

While designing material for learning within an organisational context has often been regarded as a venture that takes years to achieve (Sharpe & Armellini, 2020; Weller, 2019), the COVID-19 pandemic has shown how quickly wide-scale change can be enacted. What we had to remember through such trying times was that these changes should not be shifting our focus – they should be about taking us where we were going anyway, at a faster pace, without leaving anyone behind.

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