



# APT 2021

19<sup>th</sup> Academic Practice and Technology Conference (APT2021)  
Co-hosted online by the London School of Economics & Political Science,  
Imperial College London and University College London.  
Friday 2<sup>nd</sup> July 2021

<b>Session Start Time</b>	10:30
<b>Breakout Room</b>	2
<b>Title of Abstract:</b>	Student engagement with online learning in a Psychology undergraduate programme: Reflections and next steps
<b>Presenters (lead &amp; co-presenters)</b>	Dr Pauldy Otermans Dr Sofia Barbosa Boucas
<b>Institution</b>	Brunel University London
<b>Format</b>	Case study
<b>Abstract</b>	This case study will discuss the teaching provision offered to the Psychology Undergraduate degree at Brunel University London in 2020/21, provide our reflections on student engagement, communication with students and student expectations, and our steps for 2021/22. In 2020/21 blended learning was used to provide pre- and post-session activities and tasks that would be interspersed with didactic teaching. This hybrid/blended approach included the use of didactic materials, other complementary asynchronous content, and interactive synchronous sessions (online and on campus). During the session we will explore in detail the outcome of our teaching approach, what worked well, what did not work well, what needs improving, what needs to be discarded, and based on these reflections we will touch on our insights on how to address teaching and learning from 2021/22 onward.
<b>Session Description</b>	This case study will discuss the teaching provision offered to the Psychology Undergraduate degree at Brunel University London in 2020/21, provide our reflections on student engagement, communication with students and student expectations, and our steps for 2021/22. In 2020/21 we had to adapt our approach to teaching and learning and use a blended approach where online teaching was interspersed with face-to-face activities, if safe and with appropriate social distancing and following the COVID-19 guidelines set by Brunel University London. This required a programme-level approach, in which

interactive teaching and active learning with regular student contact was achieved by considering the balance of activities across all modules. A minimum of eight hours of synchronous/face-to-face (whether in person or on-line) teaching per week, per Level was a requirement.

As part of the Programme Lead welcome talks, students were presented a programme-level synopsis of the teaching provision for their level; followed by an introduction to each week, covering all activities across all modules – providing an opportunity to relate topics to each other and the programme overall.

Blended learning was used to provide pre- and post-session activities and tasks that would be interspersed with didactic teaching.

Synchronous, live contact (online and on-campus) was blended with asynchronous, non-live content and activities. The balance of asynchronous and synchronous activities took into consideration different time zones and students with additional needs (e.g. interactive online synchronous sessions were recorded; interactive on-campus sessions either had a parallel online session or an asynchronous alternative; materials were made available at least one week in advance to allow for preparation; all recordings included captions; online synchronous sessions were conducted using MS Teams, which includes live captions, or for other platforms a note-taker would be present), and were, whenever possible, timetabled in the latter part of the week (Wednesday-Friday) to allow students to engage with the relevant asynchronous material in preparation for the interactive teaching. This hybrid approach included the use of (i) didactic materials, which were delivered asynchronously in the form of topic-focused ‘mini-lectures’ with a maximum duration of 20 minutes each (Guo, Kim & Rubin, 2014). These ‘mini-lectures’ were released on a weekly basis, in advance of the interactive synchronous sessions to allow students to prepare; (ii) other, complementary asynchronous content/material such as podcasts, YouTube videos, TED talks, etc. and links to online books, reports and peer-reviewed papers; (iii) interactive synchronous online sessions focused on discussions, debates, interactive activities (including team-based learning), group work, quizzes, cases studies, Q&A, etc. (or a combination of these); (iv) interactive synchronous on-campus sessions also took place, if safe and with appropriate social distancing. For each module there was generally a minimum of four on-campus sessions distributed across the term.

Both on-campus and remote assessments (formative and summative) were reviewed under COVID-19. The process ensured that formative assessments (e.g. quizzes, etc.) were included in all modules to allow for monitoring student engagement and student progression; peer- and self-assessment sessions were included. Traditional exams were converted into 48-hour, online, at home, timed assessments in order to not disadvantage our diverse student population.

During the session we will explore in detail the outcome of our teaching approach, what worked well, what did not work well, what needs improving, what needs to be discarded, and based on these reflections we will touch on our insights on how to address teaching and learning from 2021/22 onward. N/A.



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Title of Abstract:	Reflections on a successful 'online pivot': learning for the future.
Presenters (lead & co-presenters)	Doug Specht Peter Hartley; Peter Chatterton; Gunter Saunders
Institution	University of Westminster
Format	Case study
Abstract	<p>The summer of 2020 saw institutions across the UK, and indeed the world, forced into rapid transition to online learning in the face of the COVID-19 pandemic. This case study examines how we planned and implemented a strategy to support a school within a large post-92 university in this transition. The strategy was successful against a number of measures from both university and sector comparisons, e.g. the school maintained high student satisfaction rates in both theoretical and applied subject areas. With specific attention to academic identity and efficacy, we examine the approaches that were taken to help academics climb over the digital hurdle towards good online teaching, suggesting that a three-pronged approach is needed to overcome these barriers and create the belief in digital that is needed for a successful online transition, and for continued growth. This session will explain these three factors and invite discussion on their implications for future development: a collective 'all in it together' approach; placing curriculum rather than technology at the heart of the work; and ensuring solid institutional support that does not rely on early adopters. These are brought together in a framework of principles for future working.</p>
Session Description	<p>The University of Westminster is primarily a provider of face-to-face taught undergraduate and postgraduate courses over a wide spectrum of subject areas and contexts. Set in the heart of London, with an additional major focus for arts and media-based subjects on the</p>

outskirts of London, the University prides itself on its practice-based, research-informed courses and diverse student body. This case study focuses on experiences of transformation within the School of Media and Communication (WSMOC, one of 12 University Schools) which demonstrated a successful transition thanks to particular attention to staff training and development.

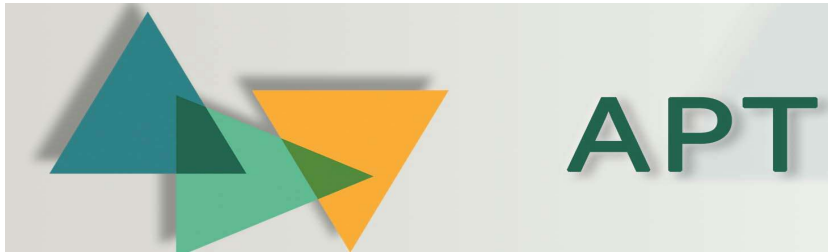
Before the COVID crisis, live online teaching was limited to a handful of academic staff and student users (approximately 100 per week). By the start of the second semester of the 2020/21 academic year, almost all academic staff and students were engaged in some level of synchronous online learning and teaching. For example, on one typical weekday in January 2021, over 450 separate live sessions involved over 10,000 unique attendees. These figures reflect heavy reliance on a live online delivery model for distance online learning, with little obvious use of asynchronous distance learning strategies.

To support the move to online learning, especially regarding the initial need to round off semester 2 of the 2019/20 academic year, the University's Learning Innovation and Digital Engagement team worked with academic colleagues in the School and external expert consultants to devise and deliver a 6-week staff development course - 'Planning and Implementing an Online Course'. This covered models for learning design and best practice in online distance learning, and comprised asynchronous learning units, live sessions, and bespoke consultations with external critical friends. Other Schools (8 in total) also enrolled their staff on the course, but none had the same level of engagement or co-ordination between local plans and the course as WSMOC.

Using both survey and interview methods, we evaluated the success of the transition strategy against University norms and sector data (Jisc, 2020; Meredith and Hardman, 2021). WSMOC was able to outperform in many areas of online teaching and learning, yielding high satisfaction scores from students. For example, through the first semester of teaching fully online, WSMOC maintained year-on-year satisfaction scores through module evaluations. 79.5% of students within the school reported feeling engaged with their online learning, compared with just 41% nationally (Brown, 2021).

Furthermore, and perhaps most importantly for long-term development, the school appears to have broken through the 'early adoption barrier' - many more academics now not only feel comfortable with educational technologies but are starting to talk more like early adopters. All of course is not perfect, and in many aspects members of the school rate their experiences of support and quality of infrastructure as no higher than the rest of the university. Indeed, some deeply critical points were raised, especially in relation to workloads. There does though appear to have been a significant shift in the way people think not only about their teaching, but about their 'place' as a teacher and how these might continue to interact with or be enhanced by digital technology.

This session will explain the strategy and outcomes in more detail and highlight the three key themes that enabled its success: a collective 'all in it together' approach; placing curriculum rather than technology at the heart of the work; and ensuring solid institutional support that does not rely on early adopters. These themes were implemented through a range of practical steps. For example, the 'all in it together' philosophy was emphasised through techniques including a focus on core technology, using in-house exemplars, and using our early adopters as 'supporters and cheerleaders' rather than simply 'innovators'. Delegates will be invited to discuss the potential application of our approach and findings to their own context. We will also discuss implications for future development, including a framework of principles developed by the presenters. For example, qualitative comments from our survey point to many academics rethinking their teaching long-term, and in a positive way. This suggests that they did more than just learn to use specific online tools, but rather learned to reimagine teaching – how can we best support this at both school and institutional level?



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<b>Title of Abstract:</b>	The Use of Blogs in Developing L2 Writing Skills
<b>Presenters (lead &amp; co-presenters)</b>	Maria Sibiryakova Leo Havemann
<b>Institution</b>	UCL, SSEES
<b>Format</b>	Case study
<b>Abstract</b>	<p>The presentation focuses on the use of blogs for developing second language (L2) writing skills for a linguistically diverse cohort of students at SSEES, UCL. The ZPD theory by L. Vygotsky was used to apply an individualised approach to developing L2 writing skills. To assess the outcomes of students' learning principles of Dynamic and Ipsative assessment were applied. Blogging was used as a pedagogical tool to a) increase students' motivation and confidence b) to engage students in systematic writing, and c) to improve their language proficiency. The session will include discussion of the preliminary findings of focus groups which explored students' perception and experience on how the assessment in this module differed from writing a traditional essay.</p>
<b>Session Description</b>	<p>The presentation is built on the experience of finding the ways to overcome challenges in developing L2 writing skills to a linguistically diverse cohort of students during their final year of studying Russian with the allocated 1 contact hour per week. The approach to teaching draws on both educational theories and research evidence from relevant existing practices. Blogging is used as a pedagogical strategy to enhance students' writing skills with the intention of facilitating confidence, systematic writing, considerations of audience, and increased responsibility for the content they create. In addition, this made it possible to structure the learning and assessment in a way that brought together students with varying language (L2) proficiency and</p>

made this difference work for everyone's benefit. The cohort's linguistic background, language (L2) proficiency, and degree of exposure to the target language varied as students came from varying linguistic and cultural backgrounds, were pursuing different degrees, and had varying academic and personal interests.

Offering a writing course to L2 learners poses two main challenges. First comes from the acknowledgment that writing is a skill, and any skill requires systematic approach and much practice. Second challenge lies in the development of writing skills in students' target language – Russian. Various theoretical and research sources have been drawn upon in order to design the approach to learning and assessment employed in this module. As a starting point, Lev Vygotsky's (1962) theory of the Zone of Proximal Development refers to the range of abilities which an individual student can perform with the help and guidance from a teacher or a more capable peer but cannot yet perform independently. The application of this theory allowed the teacher to support an individualised approach for every student in order to maximise their individual progress in learning Russian as a foreign language.

In conjunction with the ZPD based approach, the principle of Ipsative Assessment (Hughes et al 2014) was applied, whereby students work iteratively and measure their progress by -referencing, reflecting and building upon their previous work, in order to implement a process-oriented approach to teaching and assessing the development of writing skills. Assessment in the course was used not solely to measure a learner's level of knowledge and skills, but to act as a learning tool as well, in keeping with the concept of 'Assessment for Learning' which, according to Chappuis and Stiggins (2002) means that students should be part of the assessment process and by doing so should increase their learning awareness. The incorporation of self-editing, peer-reviewing, and working with feedback and feedforward allowed the students to take an active role in the assessment of their skills and the work of others.

In keeping with UCL's 'Connected Curriculum' students are developing skills in communicating their research findings to authentic audiences. In addition, the use of blogs presented an opportunity to be actively engaged in the research of open educational practices (OEP) in order to support learning and share teaching practices with the goal of improving education at many levels: individual, professional, and institutional. The idea of "openness" in using blogs was used to facilitate students' responsibility when creating content and using language. This was also used to boost their motivation by allowing them to track their own progress via their blog posts/language portfolios.