



European Society of Psychology Learning and Teaching

A MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT

DEAR MEMBERS...

A new academic year has now begun for many of us, bringing with it further changes and uncertainty as the world continues to deal with Covid-19 and its implications. Teaching has moved online across many universities, though there are still students (and teachers) on campus in some areas. In the Psychologist programme at Linköping University, for example, our first year students are on campus for workshops or skills-based classes, but with a limit on how many can be present at one time. Everything else, we handle through Zoom video conferencing and other online tools. It feels like a compromise; the best we can do in a challenging situation. I miss seeing our students in the classroom, but I have also discovered some benefits. Zoom backgrounds (the 'wallpaper') can be a way to find shared interests amongst colleagues or students, and pets can provide brief moments of informality to help break any tension.

The migration to online teaching has resurfaced questions about what it means to teach and learn,

and the specific role played by tutors. These are old arguments, but worth revisiting since they encourage us to discuss pedagogy in an ever-changing climate. Distance learning is not new. Those of you familiar with the Open University may remember when – before the digital age changed teaching – the postal correspondence, where students sent their (typed or hand-written) assignments by post, tutors graded them with hand-written comments, and returned them by post. There were also telephone tutorials: a bit like Zoom, but using land-line telephones, so no visual information and the potential for some very awkward silences! Now that most of us are distance teaching, there is comfort in knowing that the medium might change but the core principles stay the same. As tutors and students, we adapt, and as psychologists interested in teaching and learning, we are in the very best place to drive forward an understanding of how we can adapt.



I encourage you, therefore, to take part in discussions on distance/ online learning and other topics, through using the discussion forum on our new website (www.esplat.org) or by writing a [blog](#) for the website. How can we develop our teaching? How might we research these online spaces to contribute to more effective learning? There is an enormous amount of talent and experience in the ESPLAT membership, and sharing ideas can help us to really make a difference across our teaching and learning spaces.

See you online!

Sally Wiggins



THE EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE'S THOUGHTS ON...

Follow us on social media to keep up to date with more of ESPLAT's movements:

Twitter: @esplatorg

Instagram: esplat_

Website: www.esplat.org



HOW HAS (OR WILL) ONLINE LEARNING POSITIVELY AFFECTED YOUR TEACHING PRACTICE?

Dr. Sally Wiggins, President: "Using different online spaces can provide greater opportunities for students to ask questions or discuss things with tutors or fellow students. In Zoom lectures, for instance, it can be easier to write a question in the chat box without feeling like you're interrupting the lecture. In face-to-face teaching, students might not always feel able to raise their hand or speak out in class, even if we encourage this. So while online teaching creates some barriers to learning, it also breaks down others."



Prof. Susanne Narciss, Vice President: "The major lessons the online-semester has taught me include, (a) Generating and caring for social connections among students and among students and their teachers is crucial for successful (online) teaching and learning; (b) Organizing flipped classroom scenarios with self-regulated study phases, followed by synchronous online sessions with productive group work, and discussions of the group results, offered manifold ways for students in sharing their understanding, and deepening their knowledge and competences; (c) Establishing routines for formative feedback strategies from multiple feedback sources (self, peer, teacher) is very fruitful and can be implemented with online tools; (d) Students can be easily overwhelmed if confronted with asynchronous learning environments offering a lot of learning material they have to work through on their own, since not all of them are equipped with the self-regulated learning skills and strategies necessary for tackling the challenges of asynchronous online-learning."



Dr. Gillian Hendry, Secretary General: "I am excited at the prospect of inclusivity. The shift online has required that all our teaching materials are inclusive for students, so (e.g.) incorporating captions on recorded lectures and being cognizant of colour palettes being used. This is something often overlooked in face-to-face teaching so I am pleased that there has been this focus on ensuring all teaching materials are available for everyone."



Dr. Paul Wilson, Treasurer: "The shift to online teaching has allowed me to think more critically about how I use my face-to-face time with students in large classroom settings. Having considered what aspects could be (and as it turns out, would better be) delivered online and asynchronously, I've been able to develop more engaging content for face-to-face classes, capitalising on active learning opportunities rather than traditional passive lecturing. In our department, we used the [ABC framework](#) developed at University College London to storyboard modules and reflect on the structure of our curriculum. I think the new resources and changes I have made for the coming academic year will be a feature of my programme in the long term. It has certainly not been an easy summer, but with hindsight, I have developed resources and teaching plans that I have wanted to do for some time."



Abigail Jones, Student Representative: "Online learning offers the flexibility of learning within your best working environment (café, garden etc). Online learning also teaches self-discipline and organisational skills, as students must self-motivate to complete tasks and assignments. I have also been able to collaborate with others and network via online platforms which would have not been possible face-to-face."



We (still) want to hear from you!

Would you like to write a short blog for our website, or report back on some work you've been doing? Send anything of interest to Gillian Hendry, our Secretary General, at:

gillian.hendry@uws.ac.uk

Prof. Birgit Spinath, 2021 Conference Organiser: "I am a fan of face-to-face teaching with all participants in one room at the same time. However, Corona taught me that rethinking my classes as online courses is easier than I thought. Of course, it would not have been possible without the technical infrastructure and the beginning was bumpy in terms of WLAN stability and video systems' capacity. However, I was impressed by how disciplined and well-organized students were in this exceptional situation. And at the end of the semester I was surprised to see that in total students reached even better results in exams than in regular semesters. Taken together, I broadened my spectrum of teaching tools and I got new ideas of how to blend face-to-face and online teaching. Although I hope that we will be able to go back to teaching in presence, the experiences in this semester will definitely change my teaching in the future."



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Our aim is to advance the learning and teaching of psychology at all educational levels, and to provide a forum to engage researchers and teachers of psychology in communication and exchange.

Spotlight on...

Learning from home

A SCOTTISH 2ND YEAR PSYCHOLOGY STUDENT REPORTS ON HIS EXPERIENCE OF LEARNING FROM HOME...

It was inevitable that my university would require to change their teaching practices to **online learning** to protect its students and adhere to the health and safety regulations in the current climate. Certain attitudes and trends have risen from the early trials of this form of teaching:

1. Technology and Online Communication is a Necessary Evil: I've never been a fan of social media and prefer the experience of one-to-one interaction in a classroom, however, this technology must be embraced as there is no safe alternative. There are always going to be teething problems from staff and students in using modern apps such as Zoom and Microsoft Teams. Online teaching might not be a phase and potentially could be the future for teaching practices.

Factors for Success:

- a. Students' acceptance and commitment to make this medium work through enthusiasm and active participation during lessons.
- b. Teaching staff's knowledge and confidence of using online applications and offering a support base or advice regarding getting the best from these lessons.

2. Social Interaction: Students' mental wellbeing has been hit over the last 7 months or so. Although my morale and ability to undertake my work has not been severely hampered, I miss the freedom to mingle as I would with friends and visit public places as before. This has made me feel upset and low spirited on occasions without pinpointing exactly why. An increase in the number of inquiries in my role as a Student Representative have indicated similar emotions in the second-year students.

Factors for Success:

- a. It is essential that students communicate and look out for one another in this: we will get through this together.
- b. The Teaching staff have an added pressure to deliver on the health and well-being of their students. Without physically being there to interact with potential issues during class time or office appointments, the online medium will be their new method of communication for the time being, and students should use it.

**David Gillespie, 2nd Year Psychology,
University of the West of Scotland**

MEMBERSHIP

As you may know, we have recently changed our website and over-hauled our membership system. If you haven't already done so, you can join ESPLAT online at <https://www.esplat.org/join-esplat>. Annual membership is €80 for full and associate members and €30 for students registered on a Psychology programme and runs for 12 months from date of registration. We look forward to seeing everyone in the member's area of the website and building a vibrant international community for Psychology Learning and Teaching.

